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Power and authority in schooling and education in South Africa

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alternatives. As such, it would be wrong to perceive autonomy as some sort of excuse for anarchic, self-indulgent and licentious behaviour as some positions in their fear of freedom are wont to do.(4) In the same way that there can be no freedom of choice without authority, so there can be no autonomy without liberty; the two (i.e. autonomy and authority) are closely related, sharing the same conceptual framework, in contrast to power.

It would, nevertheless, not be sufficient for an autonomous person to equate authority with what is naturally right; instead s/he would need to evaluate its appeal in terms of impartial criteria and personal standards of morality. Winch gives an illuminating illustration of this point. He considers the absolute authority of the Pope over Roman Catholics in religious matters and suggests that were the Pope to issue a decree denying the existence of God, his papal authority would probably no longer be recognised. From this he concludes that the Pope's authority is not completely beyond the possibility of criticism and that is so because all authority is essentially bound up with systems of ideas which are always open to discussion and criticism. Acceptance of authority presupposes an identification with what it represents as just and moral.

In some areas such as politics, this openness for negotiation creates difficulties in ascertaining the right ways of proceeding. In cases of non-agreement Winch concedes that appeals in deciding what is correct must be directed to individuals whose decisions may be regarded as authoritative only in so far as they are made in the belief of what is perceived as right. Otherwise, an appeal to individuals as individuals is likely to degenerate into undisguised power or the ability to influence, as opposed to genuine authority. There is a conceptual link between who decides and what is decided upon via the exercise of authority. Aside from the controversy surrounding what actually constitutes right or wrong, in order to maintain any credibility, 'authority' must be concerned about what it sees as right or wrong i.e. whether 'authority' is right or wrong is not as important as whether it can claim to be acting morally.

There are two senses in which the word 'authority' is most often used, associated with the adjectives, 'authoritative' and 'authoritarian'. The former coincides with Peters's description of 'an authority' and the latter corresponds to being 'in authority'.(5) The way in which these meanings are connected will be more clearly illustrated in the discussion which follows.

Paradoxically, it is the role of the teacher which combines both of these functions out of which contradictory consequences emerge.

As 'an authority', the teacher is equipped in a specialized field of knowledge which s/he is employed to transmit. An individual's position as 'an authority' is established according to the recognition of his/her expertise, usually in a restricted area of knowledge, and is correspondingly reinforced in proportion to the number of previous successes, but it can never be final in that it emanates from knowledge which is constantly changing and developing. An individual may be recognised as 'an authority' by others within the discipline who share an agreement concerning criteria of appropriate acceptability. In order to challenge such an authority, it would be necessary to share an understanding of the same standards on which that discipline rests and to offer new knowledge and/or a re-interpretation of existing knowledge in terms of reasons.

Various positions sensitive to the operation of power relations in society are critical of the notion of knowledge implicit in 'an authority'; these include, for example, Michael Young and Kevin Harris.

A brief look at some of their objections and the way in which these may be countered will serve to clarify what is involved in being 'an authority', as distinct from exercising power.

Young (6) claims that knowledge reflects the dominant relations of power in society. As such, he associates high status knowledge with the following general characteristics: literacy, where reading and writing skills are elevated above the oral tradition; individualism, such as encouraged through the pursuit of solitary activities and fostered by the competition inherent in examinations; abstractness of knowledge that is structured and presented independently of the learner and a separation of academic curricula from common experience. Conversely, low status knowledge stresses oral presentation, group work, concreteness of content and a relevance to daily life and lived situations. Since the stratification of knowledge into high and low status follows the distribution of rewards and power in society, Young concludes that knowledge is socially constructed and therefore, subjective.

Harris (7) adopts a similar standpoint, arguing that formal education in capitalist liberal democracies provides a structural misrepresentation of reality which serves the interests of the ruling class. He is

critical of empiricism and he shows that the way in which we come to know and interpret the world is influenced by our theoretical position. Knowledge, which it is the business of education to transmit, instead of being 'out-there' and neutral, is selected according to a particular point of view so that education becomes a political activity: those with power in the system determine what constitutes worthwhile knowledge and then succeed in imposing their definition of reality on others.

Influenced by Althusserian thinking, both Young and Harris have difficulties in distinguishing between knowledge and ideology. They tend to locate the source of all knowledge in ideology so that there can be no appeal outside the realm of ideology in validating or falsifying any of its propositions. Knowledge emerges within thought, without reference to experience and/or empirical investigation of what is external and objective. The only reasons for behaving in one way as opposed to another can be offered in terms of ideology. Thus, instead of reasons deriving their sense from rational principles of behaviour embedded in rules, about which there is agreement, they may well be explained in terms of the irrationality inherent in ideology. Not only does this raise doubts about the

veracity or validity of the reasons, but also about the integrity of the individual expressing them.

Furthermore, as illustrated earlier, without rules which imply reasons, there can be no freedom and consequently, no autonomy. Always located in ideology, the individual's freedom of choice is restricted as is the opportunity for understanding behaviour through notions such as purpose, agency and moral responsibility. The only conception of behaviour possible through an account of ideology is in terms of a power relation, which must discount an important way in which human, as opposed to animal, behaviour is explained.

In equating all knowledge with ruling class ideology, Young and Harris limit the opportunities for change in terms of authority by ignoring the potential of knowledge to expose contradictions and induce critical awareness. While Young's account is open to criticisms of relativism, Harris avoids these by adopting a Marxist research programme which according to his interpretation of Lakatos's criteria of a good theory, is 'objectively' better than other alternatives. Although this 'progressive' perspective allows Harris to be critical of the role of education in capitalist liberal democracies, it also blinds him to the contradiction inherent in perceiving the ends of education as fixed

and prescribed in terms of a particular set of social arrangements. As such, the liberating potential of change implied by the concept 'authority' is diminished in favour of that which is analogous to the natural processes corresponding to power, where change merely secures the subordination of the working class to a new ruling class.

Richard Pring (8) shows that in any intellectual discipline there are standards for deciding what is acceptable, true or false according to a shared set of meanings. The development of knowledge arises out of challenging rules and convincing others of the value of modifying their inter-personal agreement. Social change occurs in relation to authority, not merely as a response to power. There are factors outside the control of an individual or group in which agreement is not negotiable as it derives its sense from the context of rule-governed activities. Consequently, it is impossible to decide to change a whole tradition of thought without reference to the limits by which we conceptualize experience.

Furthermore, that knowledge is socially constructed and constantly changing does not imply the denial of objective criteria because there are always logical reasons for deciding between rival theories. In order

to appreciate what is incorrect, one must have an idea of what is correct. Thus, the truth, for Pring, must remain as a conceivable ideal against which to juxtapose what might count as a falsification of belief. Consequently, he refutes attacks which propagate the subjectivity of 'an authority' in favour of objective and binding standards which must fulfil the requirements of logic. On this view, an appeal to general principles of rationality is of crucial importance in accepting and maintaining a notion of authority.

In addition to being 'an authority', the teacher, 'in authority', appointed by the school board or national education department according to standard, professional criteria, is expected to function as a representative of social control in transmitting and preserving the values and culture of society. S/He is invested with the right to supervise and control behaviour within the jurisdiction of the school.

Following the distinctions made by Weber between traditional, legal-rational and charismatic authority, Peters wants to distinguish between formal/'de iure' and actual/'de facto' authority. The former occurs where someone has the right to exercise authority in a particular situation, but whether s/he is actually successful in exerting such authority will be a measure

of the latter. The two are not necessarily dependent on each other, for example, one may exert 'de facto' authority without having the right to do so; although 'de iure' authority may sometimes facilitate the exercise of 'de facto' authority. Peters suggests that whether an individual actually exerts authority is related to personal characteristics such as bearing, voice of command, personal magnetism, "the outward signs of inner certitude".(9) He associates 'de facto' authority with the ability to influence others without recourse to force, bribes, propaganda etc. and claims that it is a way of regulating human behaviour distinct from power.

Winch is quite rightly sceptical of this way of perceiving authority as there is no clear distinction between 'de facto' authority and power/authoritarianism. In order to distinguish between 'de facto' and 'de iure' authority, Peters attributes its operation not to rights but rather to personal characteristics, claiming there is something about the wielder of 'de facto' authority "which people recognize in virtue of which they do what he says simply because he says it".(10) This sounds very much like a causal relation with the wielder of 'de facto' authority exerting some sort of influence (power?) over the wills of others; whereas authority is

an internal relation involving concepts about which there is mutual agreement.

A further shortcoming in Peters's attempt to explain authority in terms of external characteristics lies, as demonstrated by Winch, in the suggestion that an assured demeanour is a manifestation of authority. While such poise may be a sign that the bearer knows the right thing to do and while it may even inspire some acceptance for the bearer's position as authoritative, a confident attitude can hardly serve as a criterion of authority. The test of whether the individual acted correctly, i.e. in accordance with the rules embodied in authority, must depend on a subsequent assessment of the actions evoked.

Winch shows with reference to charismatic or natural leaders that the reason their decisions are accepted is that they derive sense from the tradition in which they occur, i.e. it is not that people respond to the external expression of 'de facto' authority but rather that they recognize the proposals to represent the right course of action in terms of the concepts they already possess. Even if reasons cannot be given as Peters claims, they are embedded in the context of the activity from which the actions originate. Thus, for Winch, authority can never be located in an individual and be

conceived of as the peculiar, personal force or influence of one will upon another. Authority always refers to rules which offer reasons for right and wrong ways of acting in terms of concepts about which there is shared understanding.

Although Peters sets out explicitly to develop a distinction between power and authority, because of the way in which he characterizes his account, he is unable to do so. Instead, power and authority merge in the sphere of social control and are presented as existing at different stages along the same continuum, whereas in Winch's account each occupies an entirely different conceptual space with divergent implications for regulating human behaviour. Winch quotes Jouvenel from Sovereignty :

> Authority is the faculty of inducing assent. To follow authority is a voluntary act. There is in every state a margin of obedience which is won only by the use of force; it is this margin which breaches liberty and demonstrates the failure of authority.(11)

Other criticisms arising out of the teacher's dual role of being 'an' as well as 'in authority', have focused on the 'repressive' aspects of authority and led to calls for the rejection of authority. There is, however, an inconsistency in this position as a result of the failure to distinguish between power and authority. According to the distinction, it would be more appropriate to demand a resistance to power, not authority, but this avenue is not open to those critiques which conflate authority with authoritarianism or power, as, for example, the Marxist (12) position does.

Underpinning this theoretical position is a notion of social control based on the concept of power which expresses the operation of human society in terms of structural constraints. In particular, the relations of production are responsible for maintaining and perpetuating inequalities of class into which individuals are locked, and it is these structures rather than the conceptual agreement characteristic of authority relations that provide an understanding of behavour. The emphasis on external factors dictates a conception of the individual in causal terms from which perspective behaviour is perceived as a response to the imposition of external structures, rather than as emanating from within the individual. While this may explain some

areas of human behaviour, it cannot account for action that arises from an internal relation of authority which offers guidelines for acting in accordance with rationality, nor can it account for action that occurs as a result of conscious decision-making.

Not only do Marxist theories fail to make a distinction between power and authority, but indeed, because it would be logically incompatible with a causal explanation of human behaviour, entailed in an account directed towards exposing the structural constraints imposed on society as a result of power relations, they cannot make the distinction. Consequently, in rejecting authoritarianism or power, they also reject authority and this has been shown to be unintelligible. For to reject authority is to dispose of rule-governed activities, to withdraw conditions for the exercise of freedom and to abrogate the practice of reason on which autonomous behaviour rests. It is to abdicate moral responsibility and invite the conditions whereby anarchy may gain a purchase. It is to create a space for the operation of power, sans limit, and thus to question what is fundamental to the continued existence of human society as we know it.

Summary : Part II

I want to consolidate what for me seems to be central to this understanding of authority and which by implication, is absent in the concept of power: that society is characterized by authority which presupposes rule-governed activities based on the practice of reason which in turn affirms the exercise of liberty. Reason, as opposed to ideology or natural laws, for example, is crucial to an understanding of the way in which authority regulates behaviour. It enables individuals to choose to act in certain ways rather than others and to change their behaviour according to rational principles. It involves objective criteria established through rules and agreement about the use of rules. Reason is embedded in the concept of authority and provides a means of explaining motivation and behaviour that is specifically human, as opposed to animal. Paradoxically, to accept authority is not to be subjected to another's will and thereby reduce one's freedom, but to assert voluntarily the necessary conditions for the exercise of liberty. Conversely, to abdicate or reject authority, is to increase the possibilities for one's subjection to power.

Following Winch's criteria for making a distinction between power and authority, I have attempted to pinpoint some of the differences between the two concepts. Implied in this distinction is a conception of human behaviour which relies on notions of purpose, agency, reason, rules and autonomy for understanding. Failure to make the distinction emphasizes power relations, which generate a causal account of human behaviour that can never of itself be sufficient. On this view, change occurs as a result of the imposition of external constraints and the individual loses agency, becoming a passive bearer of the structures, powerless to act autonomously and effect purposeful change.

These irreconcilable conceptions can be seen to be expressed in different processes - schooling and education - which it is the purpose of the next section to explore.

PART III : SCHOOLING AND EDUCATION

The starting point for my discussion in this section is that it is crucial to make a distinction between schooling and education. I shall briefly show (i) why it is important and then illustrate (ii) how a distinction may be drawn by referring to the work of P.S. Wilson, T. Pateman and R. Barrow. (iii) Further criteria for articulating a difference between schooling and education will be suggested by extrapolation from the analysis of the concepts of power and authority in Part II.

In differentiating between these processes and also that of indoctrination, I am providing a foundation from which to evaluate practices in the context of South Africa. What I have to say about C.N.E. and Pedagogics in Part IV is prefigured here. It is my contention that neither is able to distinguish between power and authority and ultimately, therefore, between schooling and education. However, before I can attempt to demonstrate this, some account of education as distinct from schooling must be given, as it underlies my criticism of both C.N.E. and Pedagogics.

Section i) Why is a distinction between schooling and education significant?

An answer to this question would be that if the concept of education were narrowed into what occurs in schools, then it would become impossible to entertain a yardstick against which schooling might be measured. By analogy, the distinction between justice and the legal apparatus ensures that it is possible to object to a particular aspect of the latter (i.e. such as practices in court, detention without trial) on the grounds that it does not promote justice. But this objection only stands on the condition that the distinction between the two concepts is not blurred. An ideal of justice must inform the practice, in the same way that an ideal of education provides the criteria by which schooling may be assessed.(1)

If the distinction between education and schooling is obscured, this will have further consequences for a distinction between education and indoctrination. A brief consideration of the way in which these two processes stand in contrast to each other affords insight into the notion of education I want to advance. Both processes imply that teaching has occurred: education represents a favourable judgement on teaching, while indoctrination offers a judgement that is

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