Chapter 5
Rational Autonomy as an Educational Aim

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We have become rather shy about stating aims of education. There is wisdom in this attitude. Discussion gets further if it deals with the known. Talking about defects to be removed is therefore more productive than talking about goods it would be nice to attain, because the defects are part of most people's experience and so are known, whereas the goods for which we might strive are *ex hyp*. not present and hence our picture of them is less clear (see further Popper 1966, Vol. 1, pp. 158–159, 284–285 [n. 9, Chap. 9, and text]).[1] Modern schooling has some clear defects. To name just three, there are young people whose ability to do what they want is hindered by their lack of skills in decoding print, whose ignorance of simple mathematical operations makes them look foolish,[2] or whose credulity leaves them open to exploitation.[3] Nevertheless, it is sometimes useful to step back from the tasks of the moment and try to find a short formula which unifies and systematises the varied activities in which we are engaged. One such formula which has perhaps been too hastily dismissed as an aim of education is rational autonomy.

Rational autonomy has certain strengths as an aim of education. It provides an answer to the question *what right have you to impose your ideas on children?* To the extent that one's educational aim is to promote the rational autonomy of one's pupils, one is not trying to impose ideas on them, but to enable them (*empower them*, as current jargon inelegantly expresses it) to deal with ideas themselves.

To adopt rational autonomy as an aim avoids the manifest moral blindness of the European Union's *White Paper* (1996) suggestion that the aim of education is to serve the economy, whose plausibility so obviously relies on looking only at economic aspects of education. A similar categorisation of other activities with economic consequences would miss the point of those activities in the same way. Religions may provide soup kitchens for the unemployed and reduce anomie among workers, but they also try to lead us to salvation; Maxwell's equations may be useful in the design of communications technology, but they also help us understand the universe in which we find *ourselves*; economic theorists reassure the economically privileged who form the main market for their writings that existing economic arrangements are justified, but they may nevertheless provide understanding of economic relationships.[4] If the *White Paper*'s definition were to be adopted, the curriculum would contain rather more science, foreign languages and

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hospitality studies, and considerably less history, religion, civics and personal development; but like most pronouncements at such levels, it will be quietly ignored by those who actually do things.

In some ways, rational autonomy is preferable to other aims which have been prescribed for education:

> When students hear that D.H. Lawrence claimed that education should aim to "lead the individual nature in each man and woman to its true fullness," that for Rousseau the aim of education was "to come into accord with the teaching of nature," that R.M. Hutchins saw the aim of education as "cultivation of the intellect," that A.S. Neill believed that the aim of education should be to "make people happier, more secure, less neurotic, less prejudiced," and that John Locke claimed "education must aim for virtue and teach man to deny his desires, inclinations and appetite, and follow as reason directs": hopefully the penny has dropped. Just in case it hasn't, I add that while Pope Pius XI was declaring that the aim of education was to "cooperate with divine grace in forming the true and perfect Christian," Sergei Shapovalenko insisted that education should aim "to inculcate the materialist outlook and communist mentality." That usually does the trick. (Harris 1999, p. 1)

In the Renaissance, it had been, "to win universal favor with lords and cavaliers and ladies" (Castiglione 1528, ii. 17, p. 109).[5]

Rational autonomy as an aim provides educators with a clear criterion for inclusion in, or exclusion from, the curriculum. It is very clear how one's rational autonomy is increased by literacy in a print-saturated environment, or by numeracy in a society which uses money, or by critical thought in a society in which unscrupulous and dishonest people are to be found. There are specifiable and reasonably common circumstances in which knowledge of chemistry or of accountancy, the ability to speak Japanese or to sew on a button, increases one's options and therefore one's autonomy. These circumstances are less common for other items on the curriculum – many people can go for several days without needing to think of anything they learnt in trigonometry, and pointing out how each piece of writing or narrative one encounters ignores, marginalises or patronises the poor, women, gays and those not of European descent or Anglo ethnicity soon becomes tedious in ordinary life. As an educational aim, rational autonomy provides criteria for the inclusion or exclusion of curriculum topics, and teachers of some subjects will find it easier to meet them than will teachers of other subjects.

Rational autonomy is congruent with notions of liberal democracy, which presuppose citizens have the capacity to choose their own ways of life. Democratic citizens are supposed not to follow like sheep, but to make their own decisions, to choose, to make up their own minds.[6] Citizens of democracies should be more autonomous, on average, than citizens of other polities. "He who lets the world, or his own portion of it, chooses his plan of life for him, has no need of any other faculty than the ape-like one of imitation. He who chooses his plan for himself, employs all his faculties" (Mill 1859, iii. 4, p. 307).

Rational autonomy has recently had something of a bad press. Autonomy, we are told, is impossible. We are all members of communities. Our decisions and choices only make sense within a social structure. (For a man to wear a necktie in our society shows respect and formality, to wear a toga would show the opposite; it was otherwise in ancient Rome. A choice of what to wear makes sense only within a

system of social expectations.) Nobody can be a wholly isolated, uninfluenced decision-maker. So it is argued, by MacIntyre (1981), by Sandel (1982), and by those who have read their writings. They do not say against whom they are arguing: where anyone expressed the doctrine that to be autonomous one must be free of all influences, that to be free a decision can only be made in a social and emotional vacuum. It was certainly not in the Enlightenment, for the orthodox teaching of one of the most seminal thinkers of that period, David Hume, was that "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions; and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them" (1740, II. iii. 3 [SB, p. 415]). The answer is not hard to find. The exaggerated emphasis on free, unconstrained choice by Jean-Paul Sartre dominated French philosophy from the 1950s (though even he admitted that "Consciousness is its own foundation but it remains contingent *in order that there may* be a consciousness rather than an infinity of pure and simple in-itself. The absolute event or for-itself is contingent in its very being" [1944, II. I. ii. 7 (1969, p. 82), his emphasis]). Reactions against the inability of this view to provide understanding of social issues arose in France in the later 1960s and under the names Structuralism and then Post-Structuralism became *de rigueur* in that country in the 1970s; and the after-effects of these events still linger here and there even now.

Actually, the case that such autonomy is impossible can be made much more strongly than either the communitarians or the French postmodernists managed, both on conceptual and on empirical grounds. When that case has been made, we may evaluate its force against the concept of autonomy. Before that, however, we need to distinguish rational autonomy in the sense in which it might be an aim of education from similar notions which may be given the same name.

1 Other Notions of Autonomy

For Kant, autonomy is that about a person by which she can be morally obligated, and which grounds others' obligations to her; and these imply each other. Our exercise of practical reason presupposes that we understand ourselves as free, as making our own decisions by our own will.[7] Since these decisions, according to Kant, can have no content arising from the contingencies of our situation, they must be universal; hence the first formulation of the Categorical Imperative, that we must act only on those maxims we can consistently will as universal law (1785, p. 421 [1964, p. 88]).

This capacity to impose the moral law upon ourselves is, for Kantians, the ultimate source of all value. But as this capacity does not depend in any way on anything particular or contingent about ourselves, we owe the same respect to anything else which has the same capacity, which means to all other persons.[8] Hence, in the second formulation of the Categorical Imperative, we must treat others only as ends in themselves, in virtue of their autonomy (1785, p. 429 [1964, p. 96]). Reading Kant in the light of Hume – and it was Hume's work which Kant credited with waking him from his dogmatic slumbers (1783, p. 260 [1966, p. 9])

– avoids the picture of Kant's decision-maker as a coldly calculating, purely cognitive being. Practical reasoning must involve the passions – emotions, desires, felt commitments, attractions and aversions, alienation and comfort. In deciding what to do, we must decide in what manner, with what affect, to do it. Judgement must be understood as including the ability to engage in actions passionately, and our evaluations must include engaging with the right passions. A baby must not only be fed and changed, but loved. We thereby value ourselves and others as passionate reasoners, not merely as calculators.

The force of Kant's argument is to define a kind of autonomy which everyone has all the time, whether they are conscious of it or not; not to be conscious of it is, of course, what Sartre called bad faith, *mauvaise foi* (1944, p. 48). A condition which all moral agents necessarily instantiate cannot be the same as a moral quality developed and valued more by some education systems than by others, by some political regimes than by others, which varies among moral agents. If Kantian autonomy is the idea that we *are* responsible for our actions, then the rational autonomy advocated in education is the different idea that we should *take* responsibility for them, and be prepared, even prepare ourselves, to do so.

Autonomy is also presupposed in some economic theories – customers are taken to be autonomous and responsible for their behaviour (or revealed preferences), although the ways in which customers come to form their wants are treated by those theories as beyond examination (in Boulding's phrase, "the immaculate conception of the indifference curve", 1970, pp. 118–119). Autonomy in this sense is attributed to all customers, and therefore it too must be different from something merely aimed for, as against achieved.

In discussions of politics, autonomy is attributed to citizens in order to institutionalise the frameworks of public deliberation that make possible social justice in the democratic sense (Habermas 1994, p. 111; cf. Benhabib 1996; Young 2000). Again, the sense of autonomy as something to be attributed to all (adult, legally competent) citizens cannot be the same as the sense of autonomy in which it should, and therefore can, be increased by education.

The notion of autonomy presupposes that each person is, or has, a self (i.e., a locus of responsibility). It is very hard to make sense of this (Goffman 1959, pp. 244–247), but also hard to do without it.

> One of the normative social statuses instituted by any scorekeeping practices that qualify as discursive is that of being an individual *self*: a subject of perception and action, one who both can *be* committed and can *take* others to be committed, a deontic scorekeeper on whom score is kept. Selves correspond to co-responsibility classes or bundles of deontic states and attitudes – an indispensable individuating aspect of the structure of scorekeeping practices that institutes and articulates discursive commitments. (Brandom 1994, p. 559, his emphases)

There is a spectrum of cases in which we talk about responsibility. The clearest and simplest are those in which (*a*) *there is an explicit policy or rule* which we are prepared to affirm. It is in this class of cases that we find the discrepancies between policy and practice which allow the most obvious form of moral critique, the attack on hypocrisy. This is the critique of the parent who condemns drugs while holding

a beer in one hand and a cigarette in the other, or the telephone system which assures you that "Your call is important to us" before putting you on hold for an hour and a half. In other cases of responsibility, (*b*) though we might lack an articulated policy *we are* at least *conscious of making a choice*. I may settle on a certain school as most suitable for my child without thereby endorsing that school for other children, let alone endorsing other schools of that kind in other neighbourhoods.[9] Still more widely, (*c*) we are held, and are, responsible for *actions we have no consciousness of having chosen*. I do not sit down and deliberate whether I will drive negligently, I simply drive; if I do so with insufficient care, I am to blame for the deaths, injuries, and damage my driving causes. Nothing prevented me from driving more carefully. There was no event of my choosing to drive negligently apart from my driving and the way I did it.

In this third sense (*c*) of responsible action, we are responsible for far more aspects of our conduct than we could ever consciously consider. These responsibilities are within a context of changing and subtle social and contextual expectations. A skirt which is too long is dowdy; one too short is daring; and the point from which these deviations are measured changes from season to season, and is different on different kinds of occasion.[10] When I come indoors, do I take my sunglasses off, or leave them on or push them up onto my forehead? Which two of these are unspeakably uncool in this context? When investigating pronunciation, the linguist William Labov asked shop assistants in various stores where a particular department was located, thus eliciting the answer "fourth floor" and, by pretending not to have heard, a more emphatic and careful utterance of the same phrase. He thus had a measure of how store staff pronounced /r/ (a socially marked variable in the speech of New York at that time) in both preconsonantal and final positions, in both casual and emphatic speech (Labov 1972, p. 50), and these could be correlated with, for example, the apparent age of the subject and the social status of the customers for whom the store catered.[11] And so on for innumerable aspects of my conduct on which I may be judged, and of which I am blessedly mostly quite unaware.

2 The Conceptual Case that we cannot be Autonomous

There are far too many possible decisions to take them all consciously. All of us do the "natural", or socially prescribed, thing in most aspects of our lives. At best one can become conscious of, consider, and follow or deviate from accepted practice in just a few. It is not whether one does what "everybody" does, or does what dissidents do, but whether one has one's own reasons for doing whatever it is that one does. Nobody can be conscious of, let alone consider, all aspects of her conduct, so nobody can be completely autonomous in this sense, not because our conduct is within a social context (though of course it is), but because there are too many ways to examine it. Sunglasses and preconsonantal /r/ are merely two of which I have become conscious. To the extent that we do bring some aspect of our conduct under conscious control, its social context is among the things about it that we consider.

Except in the face of a social convention, few would ever even consider wearing a necktie. There is more to autonomy than bringing our conduct under conscious control. The person who hands over her money to an armed robber may be in full conscious control of her actions, and expressing her preferences by her actions – she prefers staying alive without the money to being shot. Members of an ethnic minority in countries which lack compulsory voting may prefer not to vote than to suffer the kinds of police attention which an attempt to exercise that right would bring upon them. Autonomy does not provide an escape from external constraints; it focuses on the extent to which, even within those constraints, we are further constrained by our own failure to consider alternatives, to take conscious control of (and responsibility for) what is within our control.[12] We can, and rational autonomy as an aim is the proposal that we should, strive to bring more of our conduct under conscious control, to examine our lives from different angles and consider what we do and how we do it. If an unexamined life were worth living, it still could not be known to be worth living. The demand of rational autonomy, like the demand of Socratic philosophy, is to examine our lives more thoroughly. In this sense rational autonomy is clearly different from the notion of autonomy important to Kant: an examined life cannot be attributed to all moral agents. It is also clearly different from the notions of autonomy discussed by economists and by political philosophers, which can be achieved: nobody can claim to have completed examining her life.

This examination is itself part of our lives, and so is itself open to examination. I may conclude that examining some particular aspect of my life is simply not worth the trouble. This is particularly so in commercial decisions, even by merely commercial criteria. The time I would need to spend to understand the advantages and disadvantages of the various mobile phone plans on offer is more valuable to me than any possible savings from choosing the best plan could be.[13] The decision not to care is itself a decision for which we are, and may be held, responsible.

To elucidate an idea of autonomy, Harry Frankfurt (1971) developed the idea of second-order desires, desires to have desires.[14] I may desire X without desiring to desire X; the victim of the armed robber doubtless desires that she did not have to make the choice which confronts her. A being with only first-order desires is delightfully called a wanton.[15] Autonomous action is then action endorsed by a second-order *volition*, a reflexive desire both to have the first-order desire, and for that first-order desire to be effective in action. There is an obvious problem here of infinite regress, for if a person is manipulated, indoctrinated or oppressed, her higher-order desires and judgements could also be subject to manipulation (Friedman 1986; Meyers 1989, pp. 25–41; Thalberg 1989). Any account of autonomy along the lines of Frankfurt can at most deal with responsibilities of kinds (*a*), explicit policy, and (*b*), conscious choice. But we are also held responsible for actions we have no awareness of having chosen, kind (*c*).

People with power have always looked for ways to increase their power and reduce their responsibility. "By fostering the notion that the individual is an autonomous actor located on a stage where she/he carries personal responsibility, reflective practice tends to obscure the socio-cultural factors that limit the range of

possible classroom performances" (Mayo 2004, p. 170). To attribute autonomy and thereby responsibility to one's subordinates is a long-standing gambit in this endeavour. As the Emperor Ming Wang remarks of the Code of Yaou and Shun,

> In that imperishable Statute every phase of misdoing is crystallized with unfailing legal skill into this shining principle of universal justice: one crime, one responsible official. That firmly grasped, the administration of an otherwise complex judicial system becomes purely a matter of elementary mathematics. In this case, as there are clearly four crimes to be atoned, four responsible officials suffer the usual fatal expiation. (Bramah 1928, p. 35)[16]

Again, this move consists of *attributing* autonomy to subordinates as something they have, and is therefore different from the kind of autonomy proposed as an educational ideal, as something towards which one should strive, and thus does not yet possess.

3 The Empirical Case that we cannot be Autonomous

The empirical case that we are not autonomous, indeed are much less autonomous than we think, relies on ingenious experiments largely by American psychologists in the innocent days before investigations of human behaviour were expected to meet ethical standards. In 1951, Asch showed subjects lines of varying lengths and asked them to match these against target lines. The subjects heard the opinions of other "subjects" before giving their own. But these other "subjects" were in fact collaborators with Asch, and had been instructed to give judgements which were in agreement with each other but clearly wrong. Asch's subjects had no difficulty in matching the lines when by themselves, but when they did so after having heard the staged wrong answers, more than one third gave the same incorrect answer as the stooges. They either doubted their own eyes, or went along with the group even though they knew the group was wrong. Not very autonomous.[17]

Stanley Milgram's celebrated experiments (1974), in which subjects thought they were giving electric shocks to other subjects who failed memory tests – in fact the learners were actors and the shocks imaginary – found that 65% of his subjects continued shocks up to the maximum level. In a variant (Milgram 1974, pp. 59–62) the experimenter left the room on a pretext, with the instruction that he could be contacted by phone. The proportion of subjects who continued to shock to the maximum fell to 2%. Milgram's subjects were insufficiently willing to stand up for what they clearly knew to be right against personally present authority, here a person dressed as a professional psychologist. The Milgram experiments could not be replicated today, but as sometimes happens, conditions in real life situations can provide what is called a *natural experiment*. On 16 March 1968 at My Lai, Vietnam, soldiers of Charlie Company under the command of Second Lieutenant William J. Calley junior slaughtered almost the whole population of the village, almost all of them elderly people and children. Some soldiers – James Joseph Dursi testified that he was one – refused to fire, but did nothing to restrain their comrades. Chief Warrant Officer Hugh Thomson saw what was happening from a helicopter, landed and did what he could to shield survivors. He ordered his men to train their

guns on Calley's troops, and to open fire if they tried to kill any more people. Thomson was eventually awarded a medal. Calley was the only person convicted of a crime arising from this incident, and based his defence on *respondeat superior*, that he was only following orders. This plea precisely expresses the state of mind of Milgram's subjects. It is the state of mind least appropriate to a citizen of a democracy, to one who accepts personal responsibility for his or her actions.[18] Calley and his soldiers showed themselves unwilling to take responsibility for their actions, just like Milgram's subjects. Those who scan the news media with attention may have noticed subsequent natural experiments with similar results.

Humans generally, even citizens of democracies, do not do well on such experiments. Dogs, of course, have better manners than people.[19] Animals also do better than humans on Milgram-like experiments. In one laboratory experiment, rhesus monkeys (macaques) received food only if they pulled a chain and electrically shocked an unrelated macaque, whose agony was visible to them through a one-way mirror. After learning how the situation worked, macaques often refused to pull the chain – in one trial, 87% preferred to go hungry. One monkey went without food for nearly two weeks rather than hurt a fellow monkey. Those who had been hurt in earlier experiments were even less willing to behave like humans than inexperienced macaques (Masserman et al. 1964; Wechkin et al. 1964).[20]

4 Autonomy as an Educational Ideal

There are strong conceptual arguments that complete autonomy is impossible, and disturbingly suggestive empirical arguments that humans are less willing to make autonomous judgements than some of our furry cousins. So what? Autonomy was (and is) an ideal. Engineers of course strive to increase engine efficiency despite the Second Law of Thermodynamics which implies that no engine can be completely efficient. We can strive to increase our autonomy, to examine our lives, even if we realise that those efforts will never be finished and that they need not maximise our happiness.[21]

Autonomy is not inconsistent with law-abidingness. There are certainly some laws which can be rationally justified by anybody who thinks about them, such as keeping to one side on the roads, or stopping at red lights. Philosophers have often made a case for obeying even less sensible laws out of respect for the decisions of the people and for due process. Autonomy is not the rejection of laws and customs, but the consideration (and then perhaps rejection, but also perhaps endorsement) of them by each person on that person's own responsibility. The social consequences of taking rational autonomy as an aim of education are neither as negligible nor as self-evidently desirable as liberals sometimes pretend. There is a wide area of agreement between different traditions about the permissibility of violence, deception, theft and so on in a range of typical everyday situations, leading some theorists to talk of a Public Moral Language (PML) in multicultural societies over and above the community moral languages of each culture (Strike 1994). The agreement is not perfect – Kantians and utilitarians commend different answers to *Does*

my bum look big in this? when it does. Nor can a PML be taken as authoritative: within living memory, different treatment on grounds of race, gender and sexual preference were accepted in the PMLs of familiar societies, including our own not so long ago. It is part of the nature of the PML of a multicultural society to be always contested as well as a site of agreement. Nor is everything in the PML simply the common part of various community moral languages. The obligation to respect the various traditions and not impose values derived from one tradition on others need not be part of any. Its converse, the impossibility of accepting parts of any tradition which entail lack of respect for another tradition, is another (see Raz 1998).

Education can be disruptive of traditional cultures and communities, and therefore can be seen as a threat by members of those cultures and communities. DeLoy Bateman, brought up in the United Effort Plan (UEP, or "the Work"), a religious community following the Book of Mormon (distinct from the better known and much larger Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints centred on Salt Lake Temple), but who has now become an atheist, told an interviewer:

> I loved college. Looking back, I suppose it was the beginning of the end for me. I stayed in the religion for another twenty years, but going to college in Cedar City was when I had my eyes opened. That's where I took my first geology course. Afterward I came home and told Uncle Roy [*viz*., LeRoy Johnson, then leader of the UEP], 'There's a professor over there trying to tell us the earth is four and a half billion years old, but the religion says its [*sic*] only six thousand years old. How can that be?' Which shows you why education is such a problem for the Work. You take someone like me, who was always as stalwart as could be, and then you ship him off to get an education and the guy goes and apostasizes on you. Happens over and over again. And every time it does, it makes the leaders more inclined to keep people from learning. (Krakauer 2003, p. 332)

It should be remembered that the overwhelming majority of people who have a formal affiliation as Christians, whatever their personal beliefs may be, belong to churches whose official positions avoid denying scientific estimates of the age of the earth or accounts of the origin of species.

Harvey argues that in the Arkansas Governor's School (an educational experience for talented middle-school students),

> [T]hrough its pedagogical procedures, students are being indoctrinated, that is, 'educated', into the values of a pluralistic, democratic liberalism. This is done through teaching, rational discussion and argument. . . . A lesson they learn, though perhaps never stated, may be this one: If all positions are 'liveable', and all up for argument, then the right way to be is to be tolerant and understanding of all of them. (Harvey 1997, p. 120)

Those who claim a right to preserve their own traditions have difficulty in refusing the similar claims of others.

After one realises that one's beliefs can be questioned, that there are alternatives, one cannot return to an earlier state of accepting them as the only possibility. To reaffirm the original belief becomes a conscious affirmation of one's identity against other possibilities, and is therefore different from the earlier state in which one thought of oneself as simply saying how things are. As Ghazālī; (the Algazel of the scholastics) pointed out some 900 years ago,

> There is certainly no point in trying to return to the level of naïve and derivative belief (taqlīd) once it has been left, since a condition of being at such a level is that one should

> not know one is there; when a man comes to know that, the glass of his naïve beliefs is broken. (Ghazālī, Munqidh, ch. 3, ¶ 2 [1994, p. 26])

Or as Oscar Wilde puts it, "Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit; touch it and the bloom is gone" (1895, Act 1, p. 151). Autonomy is corrosive. To advocate it as an aim of education is neither nugatory nor uncontested.

5 Autonomy and Schools

And we may fear that schools do less than is desirable in the promotion of autonomy, even in democracies where that quality is especially to be prized. Schools are often accused of promoting docility, mindless obedience, being quiet and having neatly combed hair and doing what one is told.

It would be customary at this point in a paper to say how very badly schools are doing with regard to the advocated characteristic, and to specify how they ought to be doing things differently and much better. I find myself in the surprising position of not having to say anything like that. What schools *say* may give us concern that they go too far in promoting docility and servility, but if we look at what they *do* the picture is much less grim. A healthy scepticism towards authority, certainly a necessary if not a sufficient condition for an increase in one's range of autonomy, can be promoted directly by a school discipline policy which is rigid, pointless and applied haphazardly. This appeals to a primitive sense of injustice and enables even quite young pupils to identify the enemy clearly and to struggle against it with some hope of success, until eventually the sceptical attitude becomes a habit. It is pleasing to be able to report that discipline policies with precisely these advantageous properties are widespread in our schools already. The educational contribution of dress codes should not be underestimated, even if that is not what it is often thought to be. (Skirt hems must be no more than 2.5 cm from the floor when kneeling.)

What I am here suggesting is that we look at the effects of schooling more broadly than we have previously done. We are familiar with the *formal* curriculum, the subjects in which instruction is given and on which examinations are conducted. We are familiar too with the *informal* curriculum, those activities outside the formal curriculum but nevertheless promoted and encouraged as having educational value, sports, musical and dramatic performances, dances, competitive debates, a school magazine. Since Jackson (1968) and Illich (1971, 33ff.), we have been familiar also with the *hidden* curriculum, those lessons about punctuality, dress, behaviour, the legitimacy of certain kinds of knowledge and authority, which are conveyed implicitly by the way the school organises its own functioning. We have yet to look at what may be called the *adversarial* curriculum, those lessons learnt by pupils in the course of successfully defying the school authorities.[22]

It is in this area of their activities that schools, whether consciously or not, are doing so well. Though independent schools in general have sillier rules than Catholic systemic schools, and they in turn than government schools, schools of all kinds are making a massive contribution to the development of the attitudinal

precursors to autonomous judgement among our young people. These contributions may be less than fully conscious, but that does not diminish their effectiveness.[23]

Endnotes

[1] Aristotle focused on negatives when addressing the question of competing ends, *Eth. Nic*. iii. 5 (1113b30–14a31) and v. 1 (1129a32), even though he knew that "For men are bad in countless ways but good in only one", which he quotes from an unknown source, ibid. ii. 6 (1106b35). A negative focus is generally a mark of serious writers on moral issues.

[2] There is reason to suspect that this defect is not confined to the young, nor to those with little formal schooling (Sokal & Bricmont 1998, *passim*).

[3] Fraud and white-collar crime tend to flourish more in regions with high proportions of fundamentalist believers (Krakauer 2003, p. 275 n.)

[4] Though some doubt whether they have yet done so: . . . for over a century *economists* have shown that economic theory is replete with logical inconsistencies, specious assumptions, errant notions, and predictions contrary to empirical data (Keen 2001, p. 4, his emphasis).

[5] Castiglione gave due emphasis to the role a knowledge of music and of the other arts has in courting (or as it is now called, dating): . . . and especially in courts where, besides the release from vexations which music gives to all, many things are done to please the ladies, whose tender and delicate spirits are readily penetrated with harmony and filled with sweetness (1528, i. 47, p. 74). The usefulness of knowledge of, and a capacity for judgement of, music, dress, lyrics, movies, and so on in these contexts was rarely mentioned by those seeking to justify arts education in the 20th century, perhaps from reluctance to engage with the real concerns of adolescents.

[6] We all know the joke question, "Why are sheep so important to Australia?", and the rueful, self-deprecatory answer, "*Someone* has to take the initiative."

[7] This gives autonomy its status among Kantians as not simply one value among others, but as presupposed by, and hence at least *prima facie* trumping, any other value (May 1989, p. 15).

[8] Thus the second "anything" in that sentence should be "anyone"; the English language makes the same sharp distinction as Kant between moral agents and mere things, a distinction made less sharply by, for example, some forms of Hinduism.

[9] I had a friend at school whose parents sent him there because it was not the school to which his one-year-younger brother had won a scholarship; they thought, wisely, that the boy's school experience would be better without having his very bright, and as it happened physically bigger, younger brother treading on his heels.

[10] I oversimplify dreadfully; but my point is that such judgements are *at least* as complicated as this. A fuller discussion of the kinds of issues which arise in such circumstances is by Gombrich (1974).

[11] Saussure complained about spelling pronunciations in French, calling them *prononciations vicieuses* (1916, p. 53 [1959, p. 31]), and de Mauro added that they have also been noticed in Italian (1972, n. to p. 53). Derrida was surely being disingenuous when, in commenting on Saussure's discussion of spelling pronunciations, he asked where the evil is in them (1976, p. 41). Derrida must have known that to use a word is to profess familiarity with the discourse in which it is used, and that pretending to a familiarity one does not have, which is what a spelling pronunciation betrays, is vulgar.

[12] And if we cannot bear it, "the door stands open" (Epictetus *Diatr*. I. ix. 20 [vol. 1, p. 69]; II. i. 19 [vol. 1, p. 219]; etc.).

[13] Similar reasoning may explain some philosophers' lack of attention to dress and personal appearance.

[14] This is close to the idea of a "meta-preference" appealed to by Sen, e.g., in his 1977 paper.

[15] The assumption is that non-human animals, small children, and severely mentally defective people do not have second-order desires. Dennett considers as a possible counter-example a male dog at stud observed masturbating (1976, p. 284 n.).

[16] His Majesty's final statement is no exaggeration. In the imaginary Empire in which Bramah set his Kai Lung stories, citizens could be put to death for breaking the law, a custom known as capital punishment.

[17] Subsequent experiments have found that the situation is rather more complicated than Asch thought: Perrin & Spencer 1981; Harris 1985; Larsen 1990; Friend et al., 1990; Lalancette & Standing 1990; Neto 1995 (see also Asch 1956 and 1956a).

[18] All this goes back to Kelman's (1958) distinctions between three possible bases for obedience to authority: Rule followers (who *comply*, at least while they think they are being observed); Role followers (who *identify* with a particular role, for example that of a good soldier or a good student); and Value followers (who *have internalised* values and require of any action that it be consonant with their personal overriding values). As Bottery (1994, p. 58) noted, Kelman's three-level formulation independently coincides with Kohlberg's (1981) six-stage hierarchy of moral development, which was also originally developed in the late 1950s.

[19] When a member of the household or pack returns home, people sometimes do not even grunt in acknowledgement, but a dog will always welcome you. But then dogs have been civilised for much longer than humans by the relevant measure, biological generations.

[20] We also know that in a primate community, the last to catch on to a new and better way of doing something are usually the high-status mature males, who still eat a mixture of grain and sand long after the rest of the community has learnt to throw the mixture into the water and scoop up the floating soggy grain after the sand and grit have sunk (Kawamura 1959, 1963; Kawai 1965; Tsumori 1982; Nishida 1986). A democratic community which consistently chose its leaders from that group would be exhibiting a belief that its environment was stable, a reluctance to adopt innovation, and a fear of change.

[21] Considering the possibility that if he and his wife died, their children would be brought up by relatives in the religion they had left, DeLoy Bateman said, "I think those kids would be happy with that – they'd probably never know the difference. But they'd never get to exercise their imaginations" (Krakauer, 2003, p. 333). As Mill argued, "It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the fool, or the pig, are of a different opinion, it is because they only know their own side of the question. The other party to the comparison knows both sides." (1863, ii. §10, p. 197).

[22] Doing so is not entirely without precedent. It was one of the themes of the stories in which Kipling fictionalised his own school experience (collected in his 1929); see further, Mackenzie 2002.

[23] Work for this paper was hindered by the inadequate funding of Australian academic libraries. An earlier version, titled "Education and dissent", was presented to the thirty-third Annual Conference of the Philosophy of Education Society of Australasia at St Patrick's campus of the Australian Catholic University on 26–28 November 2004. Penny Enslin encouraged me to expand the earlier parts of the paper.

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