

Self-discipline: A Challenge for Personality-oriented Education

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While a well-behaved individual can be brought up by simple disciplining or external pressure, self-discipline can only be achieved by a systematic and reflective upbringing and self-upbringing¹. This paper presents self-discipline as an important educational category and at the same time a virtue which, despite its complexity and internal contradictions, shouldn't disappear from the educational discourse of our current time.

1 Self-upbringing: An Overlooked Goal of Education

Many theoretical papers about education state that self-upbringing is the goal of educational activity. Self-upbringing comes at a moment when the subject begins to strive for the self-improvement of his/her own personality in accordance to goals set under the influence of education, and therefore he/she starts a process of self-education (compare e.g. Vorlíček, 2000, p. 21). Self-discipline can be perceived in a similar manner. The subject sets himself/herself a task, chooses a path to follow, subordinates to himself/herself and also defends himself/herself against his/her own bad inclinations (Uher, 1924). Considering that in fact these are the goals of education across contemporary educational paradigms, they are given only marginal attention in today's educational theory (and practice).

It is telling that self-upbringing has not even been included in the most influential Czech educational dictionary of recent years (Průcha, Walterová, & Mareš, 1995 and onwards) and in the similarly popular dictionary of psychology (Hartl & Hartlová, 2000 and onwards) self-upbringing takes up only two rows of text. It is also worth noting that self-upbringing is not included in the Czech version of Wikipedia. A similar situation occurs in the field of periodical and non-periodical specialized literature in both the Czech

¹ I intentionally use the less common term of *self-upbringing* in the text, mainly because the more commonly used term of *self-education* is often understood in the sense of *self-instruction*. The subject of this text is, however, the real educational effect on oneself. The term *upbringing* seems more suitable also because the subject of education, even when concerning adult individuals, is the "child" aspect of their personality – to be explained later.

Republic and neighboring countries. The last Czech monograph dealing with self-upbringing was published in the seventies and interestingly was written by a psychologist. The book title is *Self-education and mental health* written by Libor Míček (1976). During this time period, besides Míček's book, the only other books in this area were a couple of ideologically-tinted handbooks about the "self-upbringing" of frontier guards, the remarkable *How to improve by yourself* written by Jiří Toman (1980), and a Czech translation of the popular work *The art of self-mastery* by Russian psychiatrist Vladimir Levi (1981).

2 From Upbringing to Controlling: Inconspicuous Dehumanization

The topic of self-upbringing and self-discipline hasn't vanished from professional nor non-professional discourse. Quite the opposite, it is flourishing, although in a slightly altered form. When modern educational science renounced self-upbringing and self-discipline, management theory took it up. The substitution of self-upbringing with self-management or self-coaching is not just the disguising of traditional content behind a modern garment, as might initially be perceived. This change also reflects a fundamental shift of paradigm: from upbringing to controlling, from protecting to manipulating. It would be a great mistake to underestimate this danger with the justification that when a person is managing himself/herself, he/she acts freely. As has been pointed out by Michel Foucault, the person who manages himself does not usually act of their own free will but is rather conforming to norms set by society (Foucault, 1991). He considered *normalization* to be an extremely effective form of so-called pastoral power which, since the beginning of modern times, has gracefully replaced harsher forms of oppression. The interests of the institutions of power are not manifested solely by *laws* that govern people from the outside, but above all by *norms* which are being interiorized and therefore are acting from within. Hence, self-discipline can also be involuntary, forced. The oppression by norms is ubiquitous, especially apparent in institutions that are constantly evaluating people, thus also at school. Conformation and its product – the conforming person – were born after normalization. Today the omnipresent dictate of norms is greatly supported by the mass-media through the employment of visualization (a repressive technique paralyzing the imagination) and by spreading fear. Foucault's observation, that even the innermost and freest – that is our own self-relation – could be entirely

governed by outside mechanisms, is still underestimated. Nevertheless, the path to freedom still exists and, according to Jaroslav Puchmertl, the key is in the process of inner transformation (Puchmertl, 2008), by which he means the restoration of cooperation between critical thinking and the imagination. It is possible to achieve this solely by creative self-upbringing.

3 Healthy (self)discipline as a top Educational Category

Discipline is quite a complicated term which has a lot of different, often even contradictory, nuances (Bendl, 2001). We can talk about inner discipline, outer discipline, as well as blind, slavery, critical and other forms of discipline. In his school discipline works, Stanislav Bendl uses discipline in a strictly positive sense, with the objective of protecting every actor in the educational process and he suggests labelling it as healthy discipline. It is that emphasis on protection which anchors discipline in the pedagogy domain. We can briefly summarize that while the core of upbringing and self-upbringing is (at least in humanistically-oriented education) protection and cultivation, the essence of management and self-management is to control and shape. If we disregard the fact that in the phrase healthy discipline the current omnipresent tendency to medicalize various areas of everyday life is reflected (which also relates to social control), this phrase probably best captures the desirable naturalness of discipline.

Self-upbringing and self-discipline are absolutely natural concepts because a person is not a machine, even though he/she may still be looked upon in that way in the Cartesian tradition. Somewhat more probable is that a person is an auto-poetic system, that realizes himself/herself in a complicated interaction with the environment. A person being brought up has to be in fact bringing himself up much the same way as a successfully treated person is in fact treating (healing) himself. It is not about being able to do it alone; it cannot be done because one always exists in a relationship (compare e.g. Buber, 2005, p. 37). The one being educated has to open up to the educational action, he/she has to absorb it, whether coming from another person, his/ her own conscience or from the environment. It can also be explained by the psychological concept of self-regulation. External influences do not affect person's behavior directly but are mediated through his self-regulation processes (compare e.g. Mareš, 2013, p. 225). A developed ability to pursue self-education, self-regulation and self-control is therefore a solely human skill of relationship development, therefore a virtue, which has to be constantly taken care of.

4 The Key to Healthy (Self)discipline is a Healthy Environment

The danger of manipulation most likely could be overcome by the educational sciences taking up self-upbringing and self-discipline, namely via a humanistic education which puts an emphasis on the self-relation and self-development of the subject being educated. A self-relation is focused on the young and undeveloped aspect of a personality. In popular literature this is sometimes labeled as the inner child. Eric Berne, for instance, emphasizes that a person has to understand his inner child, and not only because it will be with him for his entire lifetime, but also because it is the most valuable part of his/her personality (Berne, 1972). This fact disqualifies not only management from the field of self-education, but also andragogy (theory of adult education) and other progressive disciplines which have parted from educational science. A child cannot be managed like a machine or a company, a child has to be brought up. Upbringing and self-upbringing therefore belong to the sovereign field of pedagogy, which of course shouldn't limit its scope to youth or school but has to focus on all educationally relevant situations regardless of environment or the age of the participating subjects.

However, according to Ondrej Kaščák and Branislav Pupala, postulating (radical) self-development in individualized conditions opens up further questions, most notably a question of what will happen to the teacher in such a conceptualized education? (Kaščák & Pupala, 2009). Will there remain enough room for his/her actions? The teacher's position in education doesn't have to necessarily be weakened, despite the fact that this tendency can be observed in today's schools. The teacher has to focus increasingly on adjusting and arranging conditions suitable for upbringing and education. He/she has to work with the educational and aesthetical modification of the environment. He/she has to be a role model of the desired behavior to the educated. All this in no way means the reduction of the teacher's role. Quite the opposite, it is more demanding than that which has traditionally been seen as the role of the "preacher" and discipliner. This concept opens up a wide field of applications for social education which is conceptually focused on the environment and its influence on upbringing. Let us add that it can't be a value-neutral science, but a social education that is personally oriented, thus humanistic in the true sense of the word (compare e.g. Helus & Pavelková, 1992, p. 197). Only a truly free school will create the conditions for healthy discipline.

5 Sit Venia Verbo

The topic of self-discipline brings up many theoretical and practical questions; some of which are so vital that they should be repeated over and over in future discussions about education and school. It is a paradox that even though the European family has moved much of the responsibility for a child's education to schools, the parental public is strongly against schools raising children too. However, since education is inseparable from upbringing, one possible solution could be to remove the school's responsibility for both the upbringing of the child and his/her education. Can we imagine a school, that would focus "only" on creating the ideal conditions which would enable a child to work on himself/herself and realize his/her potential? Can we imagine a school that would stop controlling and forming people (as is inherent to management) and instead start to cultivate and protect them (as a personally-oriented education assumes)?

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