

AN AGENCY CRISIS IN SCHOOLS AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO AN UNCERTAIN ONTOLOGY

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INTRODUCTION

The past forty years or so have produced a plurality of thought in relation to education and schooling. Nevertheless, the empirical realities in classrooms continue to show considerable inertia, remaining constant through space and time. Some theorists have attributed the lack of theoretical penetration to the notorious difficulty of changing the bureaucratic nature of schooling. Others have emphasised the invasion into the classroom of the objective realities of student's lives (e.g. McLaughlin & Talbert 1990). Perhaps it needs emphasis that the sheer diversity of pedagogic thought tends itself to operate against the development of a consensual pedagogy. The days are long since gone when an easy consensus could be built around notions like John Dewey's localised democracy, Talcott Parson's naive functionalism and R.S.Peter's conviction that education is an activity that is worthwhile in its own right. Modern pedagogues face a theoretical complexity not easily managed by those residing in the halls of academia, let alone those delivered daily into the realities of the modern schooling classroom. For, within classrooms there are commonly found social dysfunctions, counter-productive for learning.

Morrow reminds us that "a concept of learning is central ... to any theory of education... penetrate[ing] how one thinks about every other aspect" (Morrow (1981), p.160). In thinking about this, it is clear that while a comprehensive account of learning would necessarily be constituted by the *how*, *when*, *why* and *what* questions, the *how* is foundational. *How* questions may be focused from at least three perspectives: (1) an ontological perspective (*how* as innate capacity); (2) an agency perspective (*how* as rational-purposive action on the part of learners and teachers); and (3) a pedagogic perspective (*how* as deliberately planned strategies for learning). These perspectives are not independent; rather, in a concept of learning they are seen to be inter-related elements. An account of agency necessarily rests on ontological assumptions; and a pedagogic prescription necessarily references the agency potential of teachers and learners. This being so, a concept of learning may be formulated as: *ontology*>*agency*>*pedagogy*; and this demonstrates that ontological pre-suppositions are

foundational and fundamental.

There are three ontological accounts pre-eminently influencing human thought these days: (1) the persistent primal account¹; (2) the Judaeo-Christian account; and (3) reductive materialist/determinist accounts. The three accounts are sharply contrasted, but equated, in that each is under-girded by a theistic axiom of a dogmatic kind². No account is necessarily more 'scientific' than another is; all three are paradigms. That being so, their utility as a ground for learning must rest on proof of their fitness with regard to the empirical realities they claim to address and regulate, not on bias or prejudice as is often the case. In what follows, I argue that an ubiquitous agency crisis in schools may be traced to the inadequacy of reductive accounts of humanness, which currently have primacy in Western schools.

AN AGENCY CRISIS IN SCHOOLS

According to Morrow, education is conceived as proceeding through a teacher/learner relationship. In defining this relationship, he takes it to be axiomatic that no person can contribute to another's education unless s/he knows or understands something that the other does not, that there is "something unintelligible in the idea that educative relationships are relationships between equals" (Morrow (1989), p.147). Nevertheless, in prescribing this, he adds the important addendum that "while teachers should not treat students as equals ... (they should) treat them as persons", i.e. agents in their own right. Specifically, Morrow argues that a teacher's "critical judgment ... needs to be generously tempered by a robust determination not to destroy the delicate growth of the capacity (of the learner) for independent judgment". And he advances this argument by insisting that "who is teacher and who is learner may fluctuate under certain conditions" (op cit, p.130/133).

That Morrow's requirements for education are not

1. *The primal ontological account has persisted since time in memoriam. It remains popular amongst modern people despite claims that it is 'not scientific'. An excellent introduction to this account is provided by Mönning in his description of the Ba-Pedi, a people located in Northern South Africa. The persistence of the primal account is demonstrated by the fact that the Ba-Pedi account is congruent with the Hellenic account in Homeric times.*

2. *The primal account is under girded by pantheism/animism; Judaeo-Christianity by monotheism and reductive accounts by atheism.*

always provided in Western schools is evident. Some theorists like Trevor Pateman (Pateman 1980) are convinced that schools cannot be educative sites at all. In particular, Pateman is unhappy that schools commonly demand that the teacher/learner relationship be transformed to a bureaucratic power relationship (op cit, p.144). He is also concerned about age grouping, compulsion and the emphasis on individual performance that denies “the irreducibly social nature of human experience” (p.145). For him, the problem confronting teachers is not how to create a desire for learning but how to avoid extinguishing that desire students normally hold when first introduced to schooling (p.146). However, this is easier said than done, because underneath Pateman’s structural concerns lie subtler influences precipitating profounder effects.

Wexler provides evidence of a “crisis of society” (Wexler, 1990) in some schools in the USA. In particular, he identifies three schooling social syndromes that he sees as dysfunctional for the educative relationship: (1) a mutual perception on the part of teachers and students that the ‘others’ are non-caring; (2) an instrumental focus on credentials and future occupation; and (3) an unintended assault on the student’s “... self and moral value ... (deriving from) the therapeutic and legal bureaucratic apparatus” associated with schools (op cit, p.30). As presented, Wexler’s account lacks experimental rigor; nevertheless, those experienced in Western schooling will find his account persuasive; and it might be expected that a more disciplined survey would simply confirm his observations and conclusions.

Wexler is provocative in arguing that social dysfunctions in schools are the result of a penetration from the public sphere of “an erosion of the institutional mechanisms and processes that build social commitment” (op cit, p.31); not, as is often suggested, inadequate teaching practices and/or breakdowns in school/work place relations. Support for this conclusion is found in a distinct parallelism between Wexler’s three schooling social dysfunctions and Charles Taylor’s account of three general malaises within modern industrial societies (Taylor 1991). In what follows, it is argued that this parallelism is not coincidental but evidence of a significant *reproduction* of macro-societal ills within schools. This being so, it is argued that Taylor’s general diagnostic account illuminates Wexler’s account in that the three elements of Wexler’s social crisis in schools may be refocused as a ‘crisis of individualism’, a ‘crisis of instrumentalism’ and a ‘crisis of classification’.

THE REPRODUCTION OF SOCIETAL MALAISES IN SCHOOLS

A crisis of individualism

A first malaise for Taylor derives from an extreme form of individualism (Taylor 1991, p.2). It requires no special emphasis that in modern times there has developed a considerable moral force behind the emancipatory possibilities of a potentially free will, the “noblest thing exhibited in great souls” (Taylor 1989, p.147/150). However, an account of freedom demanding that humans break the hold of all external impositions and decide for themselves alone, necessarily precipitates a “degraded, absurd and trivialised form” of authenticity (Taylor 1991, p.29). Nevertheless, Taylor finds that Herder’s notion that “each of us has an original way of being human ... has penetrated deep into the modern consciousness” (op cit, p.28), precipitating the powerful moral idea that:

“There is a certain way of being human that is my way. I am called to live my life in this way, and not in imitation of anyone else’s ... If I am not (true to myself) I miss the point of life, I miss what being human is for me” (Taylor 1991, p.28/29).

The insistence that each must ‘do it their way’ has implications for the classroom. On one hand, teachers reeling under bureaucratic pressures to impose state curricula are likely to become ambivalent in the face of a moral force that insists they are invading sites of privilege. Students, on the other hand, may find grounds in Herder’s proposition for mentally resisting an uncertain pedagogy, and may not engage with teachers on grounds that it would deny them a unique self-fulfillment. That all of this has power to degenerate Morrow’s educative relationship and, beyond that, precipitate Wexler’s non-caring syndrome is evident. For the educative relationship being denied, teachers and students find themselves incommunicado, participating in an “inarticulate debate” (Taylor 1991, p.13). In this state of isolation it is likely that those not measuring up to the mark will develop a sense of inadequacy and, beyond that, a sense of hopelessness when they perceive that there is no social support, that ‘nobody cares’. Once initiated, such a perception maintains a “feedback loop in a failed pedagogic relation[ship] ... a reinforcing relation of failure and withdrawal” (Wexler, 1990, p.10)

A crisis of instrumentalism

A second malaise for Taylor is that which derives from the “primacy of instrumental reason ... the

kind of rationality (that calculates) the most economical application of means to given ends” (Taylor, 1991, p.4). This is so “massively important ... (in) the modern age” (op cit, p.5) that it seems difficult, if not impossible, for moderns to think differently, even though it be widely understood that instrumentalism precipitates a number of serious dilemmas. For example, as Taylor notes, in industrialised nations the demands of economic growth are commonly used to justify such things as: (1) the unequal distribution of wealth and income; (2) inattention to a deteriorating environment; (3) the designation of some humans as raw material (labour); and (4) in-built obsolescence in manufactured goods. To these may be added ethical dilemmas like euthanasia and the abortion of human fetuses, and moral dilemmas like that instrumental reasoning that argues that food cannot be relocated from places of plenty to starving and impoverished populations on grounds that the needy cannot pay the transport costs or import duty. That all of this may contribute to a “narrowing and flattening of our lives” (op cit, p.6) is evident; the common experience of citizens living in instrumentally orientated societies being that “powerful mechanisms ... press them in (certain) directions ... against (their) humanity and better sense” (op cit, p.7).

The reproduction of societal instrumentalism into schools is easily demonstrated. Firstly, education itself is commonly conceived as human capital (see Blaug 1966 and Archer & Moll 1993) and a large part of what schools do is focused on the creation of that capital. Credentialism is also a main schooling *telos*, and this prioritises the introduction of performance standards and testing. Peters recognised some time back that the “majority of men are geared to consumption ... see[ing] the value of anything ... as related instrumentally to the satisfaction of their wants as consumers” (Peters 1966, p.145). Thirty years later, his idea that education is a worthwhile activity in its *own* right is powerfully under siege. Many schools in industrialised societies have already succumbed to state, business and populace pressure to provide an education more fitting to the requirements of the economy.

However, by Wexler’s account, instrumentalism has deeper implications for schools. In particular, he sees it as the cause of a fragmentation within staff and students as separate groups (and, critically, between them) in such a way that the education relationship is denied. In the ‘professional’ school he studied, Wexler found little or no “identification with the school as a whole ... [rather, a] ritualistic participation and an ethos of communicative competence

substitute[ed] for society” (Wexler (1990), p.14). Students and staff alike were under pressure to perform; “the worst sin [was] under-achievement” (op cit, p.16). Schedules were packed, free-time non-existent, and rational planning left everyday life empty of meaning; an “excessive orientation towards the future ... evaporate[ing] the present” (Taylor 1991, p.9). The end-point in such schools, Wexler found, was a sense of failure and inadequacy. “Life at the top [was declared to be] not satisfying ... [an] obsession with the future leading to a level of depression ... [in which everyone was] apathetic to the idea of school” (Wexler 1990, p.9).

A crisis of classification

Taylor defines a third malaise in modern societies as an entrapment constructed from political atomism and an “immense tutelary power” (Taylor, 1991, p.9). In particular, he sees institutions in industrial societies so structured as necessarily to severely restrict individual choice. For example, he finds within a city that it is hard to function without a car; and this, along with other similar requirements, places economic demands on urban dwellers, which result in an economic pre-occupation focusing on, not only survival needs, but also the moral obligation to strive after and maintain a rising standard of living. However, the latter is not easily achieved, because powerful economic forces operate that substantially preclude individuals from moving up the economic ladder operate. In the face of this ‘class hostility’, many become dispirited and withdraw from societal affairs. “Enclosed in their own hearts” (Wexler 1990, p.25), they tend to move, at best, only within the society of their economic peers. Few take up the option of political participation. Most vote occasionally without feeling that their vote counts for anything. Between elections, everyone feels powerless, both as groups and as individuals, in the face of the vast, impersonal bureaucratic state apparatus. Respite is sought in excursions to the wilderness, cinemas and other entertainments, but these bring short respite from the “soft despotism” (Wexler, op cit, p.23) to which all of us, albeit unintentionally, contribute.

The crucial dimension of this malaise is the individual’s sense of powerlessness to change their ‘classification’, a powerlessness Wexler finds shared by personnel in schools. At a general level, teachers often feel helpless in the face of the combined assault of bureaucratic requirements and classroom hostilities, while students tend to be overwhelmed by the compulsory nature of education and their disadvantaged position in the teacher/student power relationship. But the situation in schools goes even deeper than this.

Wexler defines “an unintended assault on the fragile self” (op cit, p.25) brought about by therapeutic classification systems; the fact that these systems are projected as helping students makes them the more insidious.

Students in schools are classified in various ways. In the first place, apart from a ubiquitous grouping of students by age, intelligence testing and formal examinations (all of which precipitate their own problems), teachers practice informal classifications of students according to their perception of their academic and behavioural performance. Regrettably, class, race, sex and economic prejudice also constitute discrimination in some schools. Additionally and more recently, it has become popular in schools to classify students based on psychological tests designed to diagnose a student’s ‘learning difficulty’. As Wexler reports, “students see past [the] language of education ... [seeing] classification into a therapeutic grouping ... as a moral judgment ... saying something about one’s whole being” (Wexler 1990, p.25). Once classified, students feel stigmatised as they suffer the on-going social hostility of being constantly watched by well-meaning teachers and fellows students, as they go off to their ‘special classes’.

An important aspect of this kind of grading is that, once classified, a student finds it difficult, if not impossible, to escape from it. This has the potential to create intense frustration. If students are not emotionally handicapped prior to their assessment, they are likely to be so thereafter. Teachers, they say, “define an emotional handicap as ‘easy to get mad’ ... but the real problem is that [teachers] don’t listen to you” (Wexler op cit, p.23). In a case known to the author, a mentally bright but physically handicapped student was located in a special school in South Africa where it was obligatory to study Lower Grade material, dictate replies to exam questions and undergo regular psychological testing. When an opportunity came for this student to attend a private school a group of psychologists had to meet to decide whether she could be released or not (!). Fortunately, she was released, and in the first eight weeks at her new school, she learned to touch-type 25 w.p.m. with 98% accuracy and entered Higher Grade studies with little difficulty. What was appalling was the reality that, on the whim of a group of psychologists, this girl might have remained institutionalised for life, thanks to the well intentioned but intensely dehumanising efforts of the ‘immense tutelary power’.

An added dimension in the case of this crisis is that schools are not just passive reproducers of societal ills but primary sites for their

development. For school classification preconditions human agents to accept those classifications imposed upon them in adult life.

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIETAL MALAISES

Taylor’s choice of ‘malaises’ to focus general ills in modern industrialised societies seems well chosen; for such conditions commonly cause ‘body pain’ without fructifying to ‘discernible ‘disease’. This being so, their diagnosis often remains uncertain, exacerbating their capacity to chronically “narrow and flatten our lives” (Taylor 1991, p.4). The value of Taylor’s account of such dissatisfactions is that it is both coherent and diagnostic; all three, in his view, derive from unfortunate side-effects of moral shifts developed over the past several centuries.

In tracing these developments, Taylor sees three significant schemes of thought arising in the 17th Century: (1) Descartes’s insistence on a disengaged rationality, (2) the Puritan “affirmation of the ordinary life” (Taylor 1989, p 211), and (3) the Abbe de Simon’s support for a positivist science based on Francis Bacon’s inductivism. He sees these three paradigms co-opted by the Enlightenment (albeit with substantial modification) to undergird the development of moral forces supporting liberation in opposition to those ethical forces that drew on divine affirmation in support of the dominance of the many by the few. So successful were these developments that by the end of the nineteenth century men were able, with a clear conscience, to declare God dead (see e.g. Stern 1978) and “exempt themselves from being His (or anybody else’s) subjects” (Taylor 1989, 147). The denial of deity created some philosophical vacuums but these were filled pragmatically by notions drawn from a newly affirmed positivist scientism invoking reductive-materialist accounts of human ontology (see e.g. Eccles, 1981). That this scientism and, in particular, these accounts of human ontology powerfully penetrated the twentieth century is evident. In what follows, it is contended that the assumption of reductive accounts of humanness constitutes a confusion in modern thought; a puzzlement playing a significant role in the precipitation of both Taylor’s societal ‘malaises’ and Wexler’s schooling dysfunctions. In particular, Taylor’s diagnosis refocuses Wexler’s schooling crises for the individual agent as a ‘crisis of ontology’, a ‘crisis of identity’ and a ‘crisis of self-affirmation’, these three together constituting a significant agency crisis for school personnel.

An ontological crisis: “What am I?”

In tracing the development of the crisis of individualism, Taylor begins with Descartes’s re-establishment and intensification of the notion of the inner source. He found that, whereas Descartes did not exclude the possibility of a relationship with God or the Idea, he rather considered his propositions the “proper way to them” (Taylor 1991, p.26). But this proposition was drastically modified over the next two centuries. One important shift came with Rousseau’s emphasis that God may be found in ‘following the voice of nature’, that ‘I am free when I decide for myself’. Another came with Herder who articulated the notion of a unique individuality (above). However, these ideas in themselves were insufficient to constitute a new moral force. It required the affirmation of a strengthening atheistic nineteenth century scientism before the necessary moral foundations for delivering humanity into an enhanced negative freedom (Berlin 1969) were in place. The cost of this was great; for the simultaneous denial of theistic and social support left twentieth century human agents with scanty resources to enforce an enhanced positive freedom. It was a century or so later that nineteenth century optimism (which saw humans by their own power and light marching on to perfection, Darwin 1873, p.428) began to dissipate (e.g. Tolman (1991), p.iii and Eccles, 1981).

These days numerous researchers are finding that the minimal resources prescribed by reductive, materialist accounts of human ontology are inadequate for a successful agency. And that being so, in reshaping the education relationship it seems imperative that it be redefined both in terms of better social relations and, if possible, in terms of a more encouraging ontology. In this regard, Taylor has been hinting for a long time that we ought to “cut off the nonsense ... by declaring all self-realisation views to be metaphysical hogwash” and, in particular, “slough off as untenable, a reductive-materialist metaphysics” (Taylor 1979, p.186). Unfortunately, as he regrets, the spirit that undergirded the “anti-metaphysical, materialist, natural science oriented temper of thought” (op cit, p.179) at its inception, goes marching on in our time, reinforced daily in the media by ‘Jurassic Park symbolism’.

An identity crisis: “Who am I?”

Taylor sees instrumentalism rising from the seventeenth century affirmation of the ‘ordinary life’ (Taylor 1989, pp.211-233). Prior to the Reformation, the ‘good life’ was located in two compartments: (1) the secular world that gave

promise of honour and glory; and (2) the sanctified life that opened doors for the grasping of the order of the cosmos through contemplation. The Puritan notion of the sanctification of the ordinary life (family, reproduction and artisan labour) was in opposition to both of these traditional goals of agency. Rooted in Judaeo-Christian spirituality, this movement saw all men as God’s stewards, called to do those good works that God intended. In particular, it saw spiritual men called to correct and admonish each other and to control the actions of the damned. The development of empirical science provided major support for all of this. Francis Bacon himself was a Puritan and dedicated his science to the service of God and man.

Important in all of this, for the instrumental debate, was a principle of moderation, especially with regard to rewards for services and affections. Work was not practiced for ‘filthy lucre’ but offered as a contribution towards the common good - as it was corporately discerned. What requires investigation is *why* and *how* the Enlightenment moved from a discipline of moderation to a hedonism involving rampant self-gratification.

Taylor sees the fusion of the ethic of the ordinary life with Descartes’s notion of disengaged reason as crucial in the transformation of the Puritan ethic to the instrumental dilemma of these times (Taylor 1989, p.234). In his view, this marriage produced the naturalist variant that allowed John Locke to argue that humans should read God’s commands from nature, seeing self-love as part of this nature, living rationally rather than worshipfully. This and the Cambridge neo-Platonist teleological doctrine of nature tending towards the good, Taylor sees as opening doors for a steady slip from an ordinary life of service to an ordinary life of self-seeking - all of which was reinforced in the late nineteenth century by the emancipatory possibilities of technology and the development of the work ethic.

By the late 1930’s, an increasing self-centredness had so exempted humans from a life of service that Freud would pronounce the idea of ‘loving one’s neighbour as oneself’, incomprehensible’ (Freud 1991, p.300). This was deplored by Heidegger who found the essence of technology to be “that disclosure to man of all beings whatsoever [including humans] as objective, calculable, quantifiable, disposable raw materials ... of value only insofar as [they] contribute to the enhancement of human power” (see Zimmerman 1989, p.220) and sense of well being. For him, the technological crisis was not so much physical (a

polluted environment, et al.) but a crisis of identity. His fear was that “man might continue to live in his instrumental world without any genuine insight into *who* he was” (op cit, p.220). For, in the instrumental world, both at school and in the work place, the search for identity is strongly focused.

Heidigger saw humans needing some kind of a conversion, one granting a vision of a new reality that would free them from the drive to power and the tendency to look at things (including other humans) as commodities. He looked for one that opened to them “the most authentic possibility ... [i.e.] to allow beings in the world [including themselves] to manifest their own intrinsic worth” (op cit, p.226). While his own attempts at this conversion might seem unconvincing, it can be agreed with Heidigger that a better ontological affirmation of humanity as a whole might help individuals reaffirm traits like moderation, dignity and service to others.

A crisis of human value: "Am I worthwhile?"

It is clear enough from Wexler's report (above) that individuals subjected to modern psychological testing in schools remain with a crisis of self-affirmation. This is predictable, for such tests diagnose deficiencies rather than abilities and prescribe a pedagogy addressing weaknesses rather than strengths. Such tests derive from the all-pervading scientism of our time, that scientism that affirms persons as objects rather than subjects in the social science equation. In common with the first two 'malaises', a diagnosis of the third also throws into question the utility of reductive materialist human ontological accounts.

TOWARDS THE HEALING OF SOCIAL DYSFUNCTIONS IN SCHOOLS

While there remains some diagnostic utility in maintaining the separate identity of the three crises outlined above, for the individual in society they constitute a single crisis of personal agency. For the problem of the individual striving to maintain a Herderian account of personal authenticity is not essentially different to the problem of the individual trying to establish an identity that will provide accreditation in the work place. And both of these are not different in kind from the problem of the individual trying to escape from a negative classification provided by a 'soft-despotic power'. In each case, individual agents find themselves battling with a perception of inadequacy in relation to meeting performance standards demanded of them by the communities in which they live.

For some individuals, a sense of inadequacy can be traumatic, being experienced by them as a rejection of their person. The perception of rejection commonly precipitates two forms of anti-social behaviour: (1) a violent lashing out towards the perceived external source of the rejection; and (2) an anti-social withdrawal. A violent response may be criminal or that legal kind of aggression whereby individuals use the system to advance their personal welfare without regard for others. Both types are commonly found in schools; e.g. in addition to an instrumental attitude in his 'professional school' Wexler noted "a new and high wave of vandalism" (Wexler 1990, p.18). Both types of violence had a high profile in South Africa prior to 1994, where legal apartheid and illegally organised resistance demonstrated how the two types of violence may feed on and sustain each other. Against any account of morality, both kinds of violence are unacceptable as a prescription for the good life, although old ideas of power and glory linger. Sadly, such problems remain unsolved by the diffusion of organised conflict, e.g. re-imposed discipline in schools (Wexler op cit, p.9), for the perception of rejection remains. Violence is driven underground; crime continues and, in the work place, schools and other places where humans gather - a subtle, and a not so subtle bigotry and intimidation are sustained.

However, a violent response is not the only, nor necessarily the worst response to rejection. More subtle, and more difficult to deal with, is a widely practiced internalisation of rejection leading to self-rejection and a deepening, sometimes pathological, sense of inadequacy. Once rejection is admitted to the "place where we are present with ourselves" (Taylor 1989, p.139) it contributes to the constitution of an ever-present super-ego operating to reinforce the sense of inadequacy. The causality is circular (Taylor op cit, p.138), each reinforcement initiating a spiraling downwards into self-pity and even self-hatred. For those committed to reductive/materialist accounts of human ontology, Freud is right; from such a state there is "no consolation" (Freud 1991, p.339). The best help available is some form of psychoanalysis; but such analysis has its own problems. For, following even the best analysis, there remains the necessity for the individual to generate a spring of personal agency. How this may be achieved we cannot say, because it was this lack that precipitated the problem in the first place.

The above focuses extreme responses to rejection. The problem for the bulk of humanity, as emphasised by Taylor and Wexler, is that the ever-present subdued experience of rejection

wears down reactions, leaving one with a sense of dullness over time. The on-going low-key rejection of people on grounds of sexuality, race, culture and class is a case in point, as is the subtle rejection experienced by many students in classrooms from both teachers and/or peers. This type of mistreatment exacerbates an individual's inner restlessness without pressing them into extreme responses; although, by their own testimony, Wexler's classified students are sometimes pushed 'over the top'. As part of the mannered life, individuals aim to maintain an even tenor. Freud sees them adopting 'palliative measures' (Freud 1991, p 262) aimed at minimising their encounters with social hostilities; some immerse themselves in work, some develop artistic pursuits, some retire into narcissism and just about everyone drinks alcohol. Where necessity requires social engagement (the work place, schools, et al) humans are careful, by mutual consent, to make pretence of social niceties. Masks are worn to ensure that the imperfections individuals observe within themselves do not manifest to others.

The fact that schools, by Wexler's account, act as primary sites for the learning and development of such compromise and deception seems unacceptable. Most of us would argue that the proper *telos* for schools would be reliable, stable, self-managing individuals enabled to contribute to some account of the common good; not psychological cripples overwhelmed by a sense of their own inadequacy. Thus, the question remains how changes for the better might be instituted in schools.

Some Neo-Marxist and feminist theorists have argued for the dismantling of present institutional structures but Taylor sees the dismantling of the present schooling system requiring the total dismantling of the institutions of the market and the state. This for him is an aspiration that "seems so unrealizable ... that it amounts to declaring us helpless" (Taylor 1991, p.8). It is his recommendation that existing structures be transformed rather than superseded by more radical alternatives.

However, in consideration of the diagnosis offered above, a transformation strategy would require a confrontation with powerful moral forces. In particular, in relation to the breaking of the 'non-caring' deadlock, strong arguments would have to be brought against the Herderian account of a unique identity. Concerning this, Taylor asks that the liberal notion of the individual be not summarily discarded for he sees "healing grace ... [lying] beyond the modern identity, not anterior to it" (Taylor 1989, p.45). His recommendation is

that the liberal notion of the individual be seen as "an ideal that has been degraded" needing retrieval, a retrieval which is neither "root or branch condemnation, uncritical praise, nor a carefully balanced trade-off" (Taylor 1991, p.27). This seems to leave only one alternative; an account which embraces both an enhanced individual agency and that social support which provides for individuals "horizons of significance" (op cit, p.23). Significantly, all of this fits nicely with the notion of a revived educative relation, after Morrow, (above).

If there are difficulties in confronting the Herderian notion of authenticity, they seem minuscule in comparison with the difficulty of persuading people that instrumental reasoning ought to play a lesser role in their lives. For the moral force behind the idea that individuals have the right to meet their economic needs seems irresistible. Heidegger is right, nothing less than some sort of conversion experience leading to a new reality will be required to bring about an adjustment here.

With regard to a rejection of positivist notions leading to the treatment of individuals as objects, there is also opposition from powerful moral forces; in particular, those forces predicated on a denial of theism. In this regard, some encouragement comes from people like Tolman who presents evidence of a growing awareness amongst social scientists, psychologists in particular, that "positivism [and] more specifically neo-positivism, has [proved] an historical dead end for ... [the] social sciences". In his experience, "virtually every theoretically engaged psychologist has openly rejected positivism in both its 19th and 20th Century forms" (Tolman 1991, p.vi). Notwithstanding this, Tolman finds a problem in that "anti-positivist theorising is frequently found reproducing positivist assumptions" (op cit, p.v). This he attributes to the entrenched position of positivist notions in modern language but he might also have attributed it to the reality that reductive accounts of human ontology have survived intact, despite dissatisfaction with the positivist notions that undergird them. For, if positivism be denied, the validity of reductive accounts is necessarily thrown into question. And, if these be denied, the moral forces precipitating Taylor's societal malaises and Wexler's social dysfunctions in schools must be considerably weakened, making the task of an institutional transformation that much the easier; providing, of course, that a better account of human ontology can be found to under-gird a better account of human agency in learning.

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