

New Approaches on Responsibility as a Part of Identity

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“The self-concept is not a scientific theory, at least not a positivistic one, and shouldn't be like it. It is, rather, an unfinished novel...”

(Alexander M. Sidorkin, *The Pedagogy of The Interhuman*, 1995)

It is a great honor for me to be a part of Europe MCI project and a key speaker at this big conference where I would like to present some theoretical research results on the topic of education for responsibility as an important part of identity development...

Aims of my lecture today are:

- to answer a question, how is responsibility connected with that part of identity development and constructing subjectivity, which depends on social relations
- to answer a question, what is responsibility and to who/what and how are we asked to respond
- to show the inability of classic Enlightenment paradigm of responsibility to answer some key questions about moral agency:
 - Why is even a pre-school child capable of complex pro-social responses although his cognitive capacities are still very weak?
 - Why is adult person capable of brutal immoral action although he is still bearing personal ethical values (the case of holocaust)?
 - to show distinctions between Kant's paradigm of moral responsibility and some contemporary answers to a question, how to transcend problems of Enlightenment concept of moral agency, like:
 - notions on importance of authentic encumbered relations for promoting ethical consciousness
 - Emmanuel Levinas's concept of responsibility to other's face and
 - arguments for a need to combine personal respectful attitude with building up ethical consciousness
- to explain the idea of three stages of the development of responsibility and their influence on mature ethical consciousness:
 - response-ability and normative agency for pro-social activities
 - respect for other's face
 - development of ethical consciousness and human rights
- to stress out the meaning of this model for our project and some examples of project activities

Reaching of responsibility is an important task of identity development:

- Charles Taylor: *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity* (1989): responsibility for selected good is through personal subjective resonance strongly

connected with processes of identity building

- to fulfill developmental needs, a person has to develop response-ability and responsibility for human interrelations, but also for search to his/her own unique identity
- this last warning is a central theoretical point of Zygmunt Bauman's book: *Community. Seeking Safety in an Insecure World (2001)*, where he claims:

“Identity is a result of the interplay between individual and community, and a serious game of seeking a balance between freedom and security. Men and women are always looking for groups to which they can belong, certainly and forever, in a world in which all else is moving and shifting, in which nothing else is certain. But on the other hand, identity also means standing out: being different, and through that difference unique – and so the search for identity cannot but divide and separate. It's possible to recognize certain pathological signs of behavior as a result of the lack of a sense of security, feelings of 'disconnection' of a concrete community, and consecutive inability to develop our own individuality, which confirms the ontological necessity of both – a sense of belonging and freedom of choice.”

(quoted from Kratsborn and Kroflič, *Agora Dispute, 2006*)

The basic principle of identity development is identification as a specific form of “mirroring our own image”:



- let's take a look to this photo and ask ourselves:
 - o Who am I as a result of reflection?
 - o What do I see in this reflection? (Is this just me or me in a context of concrete natural and social environment)?
 - o Who or what is enabling me a mirroring process?
- Alice Miller in her book *Das Drama des begabten Kindes (1991)* describes an important part of identity development in early childhood with concept of "mirror stadium". Through Enlightenment paradigm we look to another person as our *alter ego*, as a subject of the same culture and rationality, or, according to A. Miller, as a subject, that is objectivated in a social role, which is a kind of extension of our deepest unfulfilled desires. The first image of our identity is therefore one that arise from mother's eyes, an image of her desires about her child, and not a realistic picture of child's concrete personal features. So, as I will explain it later, the only way to reach a realistic and authentic self-image, is from respectful mirroring through the other's face view, that look to us as unique persons and therefore different from us.
- similar questions rise from the semantic analysis of the term "responsibility"

What is responsibility and to who/what and how we are asked to respond?
 Term responsibility warns us to a (moral) demand to response to someone/something, so in the field of ethics we can derivate further question:

Who or what is addressing us and demands engaged and authentic answer? Is this God, eros, libidinal tribe, accepted values, social rules, ethical normative standards or principles, a care for a fulfillment of our social needs, existential care for being in the truth of our essence, emphatic experience of needs/expectations of the other being, a peak need to define sense of our life?

If responsibility is connected with so many dimensions (from care for fulfilling our developmental needs to care for defining personal sense of life), than we can argue for a concept of *responsibility as respectful ethical response to an existential call, as personal commitment to respectful being and acting and care for our life mission and consistent identity* (Fred Korthagen).

- From the educational point of this view on responsibility, this means that:
 - we can not solve a pedagogical question of education for responsibility if we expose only technical questions of proper methodical approach as a balance between authoritative and permissive education or as a quantity question of balance between restrictions and stimulations (through assuring proper discipline regime);
 - we can become ethical beings only in and through interrelations and we have to analyse pedagogical relation in Aristotle's notion of *phronesis/wisdom*.

How was ethical responsibility defined in Enlightenment theory?

- the rationale of the educational process is founded on the humanistic idea of a certain kind of subject who has the inherent potential to become self-motivated and self-directing, a rational subject capable of exercising individual agency. (Usher, R. and Edwards, R. (1994) *Postmodernism and Education*)

- the only object of our duty has to be the duty toward rational principle of morality (Kant's categorical imperative)
- categorical imperative is a combination of:
 - basic principle of justice (known as the *golden rule*: "Treat others only as you consent to being treated in the same situation."), and
 - principle of human respect toward every individual ("Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end.")
- simply said, to act responsibly means to follow only universal ethical principle, regardless to concrete social expectations or needs of fellow person

This ethical agency can be achieved by education which:

- succeeds to end with a child's 'wild freedom' as a form of spontaneous acting according biological principle of comfort, and
- motivates a child for a rational humanity, according to which he/she first
 - follows society rules and regulations, and finally
 - recognizes rationality as only criteria and motive of ethical behavior

Educational methodic is based on:

- a consistent and just (autonomous) teacher as an *object of symbolic identification*
- motivating for ethical rational reasoning according to society norms and ethical principles through educational subject areas like *civic education*
- restoration of *clear and just normative order* and sanctioning of problematic behavior, because punishment means that we look to the child as dutiful and responsible subject (otherwise it is not justly to punish him for bad behavior), so a child can internalise our view to him and strengthen his/her moral responsibility (when we are object of his identification)

Critics of Enlightenment morality today come from narrative analysis of extreme moral situations:

- in philosophical investigations on ethical behavior we can find this kind of narrative analysis on rescuers of Jewish people during Nazi occupation
analysis of selfless aid given to Jews during World War II convincingly shows that many simple people were rescuing Jews from the Nazi genocide by means of non-reflected goodwill without thinking about the rational value of their own altruism. Eamonn Callan calls such a type of moral stand a spontaneous saviour
- other possibility of investigation is evident pro-social behavior of a young child who obviously has not yet developed a necessary cognitive apparatus for conscious moral decision
acting according pretentious cognitive principles (like Rawls's "veil of ignorance" or Kohlberg's "post-conventional morality") is too ambitious goal for a pre-school child! So if we want to understand the possibility of even pre-school child to act evidently pro-social, we have to find other theoretical arguments.
- And last, but most persuasive possibility: possibility of the split between ethical consciousness and respectful dialog, that was characteristic for Enlightenment

concept of morality, was according to Zygmunt Bauman one of the main causes that enabled Nazi technology of *holocaust*

Enlightenment concept of morality and technology of *holocaust*:

- Nazi crimes against Jews were not done by “human monsters”, but by ordinary people who hadn’t need to change their personal values and ethical standards – in private life they remained loving husbands, wives and loyal friends;
- condition to cause split between ethical consciousness and respectful human relation toward victim in the minds of ordinary people, was for engineers of Nazi propaganda a task to separate German citizens from concrete Jewish neighbors. During the crystal night when SS detachments started with violence under Jewish people who lived next-door to Germans, ordinary Germans didn’t approve this action. After accepting national laws that treated Jews as an abstract category, deportations to ghetto’s, and “dehumanization processes” in concentration camps, Germans started to support Nazi politics in fearfully big number;
- Bauman claims even more: after Stanley Milgram’s experiments in seventies in USA (and similar Zimbardo’s experiments, well known from the German movie *Das Experiment*) with human readiness to accept social roles even when they are obviously in contradiction with our moral standards, we know that human catastrophe like holocaust can happen again regardless of principled acceptance of human rights orders!

Z. Bauman, *Modernity and Holocaust* (1989).

How to explain this thesis with conceptual tools for analysis of responsibility?

- Characteristics of Kantian moral subject are lack of authenticity of autonomous subject (Cooper),
- problems of unencumbered self (Taylor and Sandel);
- relation to the other as object of moral action as our alter-ego, who deserves my respect because of his or her rationality, his or her capability of being an autonomous person like myself, and not because of respect we are responsible to show to any person, regardless to a fact, that he is different from us and our desires (Levinas and Chaliel)
- *When we prevent people from “authentic encumbered” human relations, the other’s suffering doesn’t evoke anymore their responsibility to respectful and caring attitude!*

Basic catch of Kantian paradigm of moral education are further paradoxes:

- How to expect development of free will of autonomous subject when early upbringing is necessary standing on consistent discipline?
- How to reach ethical objectivity of autonomous subject if education is based on necessary emotional closeness which provide a possibility of child’s identification with an important other?

New theoretical answers to a question of development of authentic pro-social motives and ethical responsibility:

- search for *new concept of human authentic subjectivity*: Sidorkin, Haji and Cuypers claim that we can not speak about a 'genuine authentic self', 'true self', or 'authenticity per se', but only about relational authenticity, relative to ensuring normative responsibility where we should avoid extreme paternalism and offensive indoctrination
- positive role of authentic *normative agency of encumbered relations, like friendship and love*: if authentic normative agency is first step to moral responsibility, we have to stress out, that it originates in encumbered relations (Taylor and Sandel), amongst which friendship and love have most important educational influence (Carr, Haji and Cuypers);
- when we are searching for *dialogical paradigm of education and development of personal identity*, we are looking for a mutual causality rather than atomistic individualistic view to responsibility: vast, non-linear, complex, profound, and ultimately non-accountable: "When we think the self is alone, responsibility becomes a burden, a liability, a cost to the self. It takes the sacrifice to the self... And responsibility of a person of mutual causality? His responsibility is not so much discharging a duty or paying for one's existence but fulfilling his potential in being a particular part of a whole. He would thus speak of fulfillment when talking about responsibility." (Hesson Bai 2002)
- disadvantages of authentic normative agency, encumbered relations, empathy (Strike, Hoffman etc.), and arguments for developing a combination of respectful and ethical mind (Gardner):
 - normative agency of encumbered relations, motivated by compassion, empathy and caring attitude, can lead us to several ethical problems, like *empathic over-arousal, empathic bias, pity and paternalism*, so caring or empathic orientation need a kind of counterweight in principles of justice (Strike, Hoffman), or as Howard Gardner expresses it in his thesis about *Five Minds for the Future*, encumbered *respectful mind* has to be balanced with *ethical mind*.
- responsibility as respectful relation to the other's face – case of Levinas

Emmanuel Levinas's ethics of other's face – a counterweight to Enlightenment model of responsibility:

- *authentic subjectivity is evoked by the face of the other*: we come into presence through responding, through taking up – or not denying – the undeniable responsibility which precedes our subjectivity. (Biesta)
- *responsibility as respect for the other and the whole world* is not the result (of accepting ethical standards), but the condition of ethics (Levinas, *Philosophy, Justice, and Love* 1982)
- the other as absolute difference: The other as Other is what I myself am not. He is "infinitely unknowable", but anyway susceptibility to absolute difference defines how we relate to each other, so learning from the unknowable Other tells us who we really are! (Todd)

Impact of Levinas's anthropological ideas to education:

- Levinas opens up a dialogical space where pedagogy becomes an event rather than being a preprogrammed process. Or, as Ann Chinnery (2001) has stressed out: "A pedagogy of the other is a pedagogy of responsibility that, like great improvisational jazz, demands a response that cannot be prepared beforehand but which can only be spoken with one's whole being."
- if we can never reach an ultimate knowledge about the Other, and also about us, pedagogy and specially moral education becomes a practice of asking questions more than producing knowledge (Biesta 2003), or, as Sharon Todd (2001) says, a place of ignorance in teaching:

"When I think I know, when I think I understand the Other, I am exercising my knowledge over the Other, shrouding the Other in my own totality. The Other becomes an object of my comprehension, my world, my narrative, reducing the Other to me. What is at stake is my ego. But if I am exposed to the Other, I can listen, attend, and be surprised; the Other can affect me, she 'brings me more than I contain' (Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* 1961)."

(Sharon Todd, *On Not Knowing the Other or Learning from Levinas* 2001

Last important topic of Levinas philosophy is a question of respectful relation to the Other's face and responsibility to the whole society as Third:

- although Levinas defines responsibility as our answer to Other's face and acting according principles of justice as necessary objectivation of other person, he is also aware of our responsibility for the whole society and urgency to define status of Third (role of society principles and norms that defend justice and fairness)
- from many of his works, where Levinas explains status of the Third, we can stress out only his warning, that we should never forget respectful and merciful answer to concrete other's call:

"...reciprocity of respect is not an indifferent relationship, ...and is not the result, but the condition of ethics. It is language, that is, responsibility. Respect attaches the just man to his associates in justice *before* attaching him to the man who demands justice."

(Levinas, *The I and the totality*, 1954)
- Or, as Levinas expressed the same problem in an interview *Philosophy, Justice, and Love* (1982):

"...the executioner of evil calls for violence and no longer has a Face... There is a certain measure of violence necessary in terms of justice (that must be regulated by a state). But, on the other hand, it is in terms of the relation to Face ... that we can speak of the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the state."

Educational model of three stages of the development of ethical responsibility:

- although we can not completely reject Enlightenment concept of discipline as important step to reach ethical consciousness, responsibility can not be reached only

- through this technical question of proper measure between rewards and punishment
- teacher's position in education for responsibility should be analyzed specially by so called *arreatic virtues*: "Liberal responsibility should be more firmly rooted in virtue ethical dispositions to honesty, justice (fairness, tolerance), temperance, courage, compassion and other positive qualities of character. Such qualities need nurture and training, and such initiation may best succeed in consistent local (family or community) commitment to a specific set ... of cultural values..." (Carr, D. *The Moral Contours of Citizenship: Rights, Character and Education*)
 - or to express the same with terms of F. Korthagen, this virtues have to become core of teacher's believes, identity and professional and personal mission.

Educational model of three stages of the development of ethical responsibility:

- if ethical consciousness demands complex cognitive capacities of moral subject, child is even in first years capable to step to relations of love and friendship, through which he/she develops *relational response-ability* and *normative agency* for pro-social activities in most authentic way
- because personal encumbered relation can be harmful regarding possibility of *empathic over-arousal, empathic bias, pity and paternalism*, next step in promoting moral responsibility is *development of the sense of respect* toward concrete persons (their faces) or activities
- last step of moral education is to become aware of ethical principles and humanistic demands, concerning specially human rights and ecological values, and learn how to use them as basis for democratic negotiation in cases of interpersonal conflicts.

Principles of developing described educational concept according to broadened model of moral responsibility:

- a broader conception of morality extends beyond obligation to, roughly, concerns of how one should live. Morality includes, for example, concerns of love or an ethics of virtue and care. (I. Haji and S. E. Cuypers 2005)
- development of *relational response-ability* and *normative agency, respectful attitude* (where susceptible relation to other as an exposed being deepens recognition of our own vulnerability) and *committed activities* can be realized in early childhood in most authentic way through caring relations with teacher, friendly relations with peers and artistic expressions as central pedagogical concern instead of classic discipline (rewards and punishment)
- *inclusive social environment* is very important element of this model, because it enables safe entrance to a world of other as different (Levinas's Other) and stimulates friendship and love
- *sense opened response-ability, respect and responsibility* has to be upgraded with ethical principles on principles of *Martin Hoffman's inductive approach*, where we use empathic capabilities for personal relations to foster further development of social cognition and ethical consciousness
- model of developing moral responsibility is not classical stage model: reaching last stage of ethical responsibility does not reduce importance of respect and response-ability. If we can objectivate basic moral rules and principles, we can not successfully

objectivate sense-openness and respect (Levinas's critique of Kant's *categorical imperative*)

Some examples of good or reflected bad practice from first two routes of the project (cases from Ljubljana)

- sense-opening of empathic relations by musical games (Bibarije, table-talk)
musical games called "bibarije", which enable teacher to make closer personal relation to a child and later the same relation between children themselves ("bibarija" is a game with rhythmic singing/declamation of a simple child song and fingers, walking through different parts of a child's body).
- knowing your family and feeling of your vulnerability as a source of creating respectful response
- social representations (traditional social roles) as the source of morality lead to surface and stereotypical relations
- reflecting moral and political violence of the other releases my ethical and political consciousness
while researching Latvian relationship to Russian people, Slovenian students begin to reflect Slovenian political attitude toward people from former Yugoslav republics, living in Slovenia
- planned examples of good work – an opportunity to deepen child's and teacher's commitment and respectful behavior
good work is primarily committed (and usually creative) work with strong social dimension and orientation in reaching a product that can be recognized as common good...

Stimulating creation of open, active and responsible citizen identity demands new visions of human subjectivity, but also new vision of moral education and its methodic approaches, that accept some facts of authentic living practices of young generations: positive examples of young cultures, ability of young people to create new communities in a digital way of internet, their multiple intelligent approaches etc.

- Let's close this lecture with the end of Agora dispute – a conversation about theoretical frameworks of our project:
When we speak about promoting identity building processes we cannot but enter the realm of indoctrination. Even theorists of liberal education like A. Guttman admit that it is impossible to educate in the field of moral development without a minimum of enforcement of common goals and moral standards. But what we are doing in a different way as most common projects until now is that we don't begin with necessary strict moral standards that everybody must accept, but with sense opening for every individual position in the interconnected world of differences. We promote opportunities for pro-social behaviour, for growing reflection of conflicts, and possibilities for common living on the basis of active tolerance, where

empowerment of individual position of everyone and commitment to pro-social behaviour are the mill stones of our identity. **We should stay inside the framework of human rights and enforce weaker 'should obligations' to respect human rights to become stronger 'must moral imperatives'.**