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TEZĂ DE ABILITARE

**Problema autorității în educație**

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# **Abstract**

## **I. Introduction**

The premise of this study is that vertical relationships between people are inherent; as such, authority is a perennial problem, with major consequences in education. Our research in education took into account the same paradox that underlies it: how is it possible to transform the original existential (cognitive, affective, etc.) dependency relationship of the child with the adult into one of independence? In other words, can one get independence of thinking, emotional maturity, etc. on the basis of the initial dependence? Concerned by this issue, we came to authority and its role in education. At this point in the beginning I found it necessary to use knowledge acquired during university studies, focused mainly on the history of philosophy (predominantly the ancient Greek philosophers) and on deontic logic; therefore, my PhD thesis (*Vocation of Paideia in Romanian philosophy*, published by Paideia Publishing in 1999), but also my volume *Teacher between authority and power* (published by Teora Publishing during same year, 1999) helped me circumscribe the relationship between authority and education. As the thread we followed in structuring this approach is not only historic, but also, inevitably, logical, we should remind that our effort continued in the documentation and publishing of other books that deepen the issue: the analysis of the paideia scenario and the relationship between master and disciple were refined further in my book *Public space and education in Ancient Greece*, published by Institutul European Publishing House, in 2003, and in a chapter of *Education in Post-modernism* (Institutul European Publishing, 2007) called *Responsibility of masters*.

## **II. Ancient Greeks and magister – disciple relationship**

In this chapter we intend to deepen the specificity of the magister – disciple relationship, as a way to materialize the relationship between bearer of authority – subject of authority – authority area; thus, we analyzed those traits of masters that

qualify them as bearers of authority (their way of being, centered on the need to approach the perfection of gods as much as possible); in other words, the master uses philosophy as an instrument to help him live a fulfilling life, in agreement with his art's precepts, art that can be passed on through the relationship with a disciple; we then analyzed the traits that qualify a person for the role of magister (the vague need for a model to allow access to the perfection of gods, by means of the platonic concept of *participation*); our analysis then attempted to detect the foundation of the paideic scenario (found in the prestige of the philosophical way of life of the magister, who *participates*, by means of philosophy, to the model embodied by gods: only gods are wise, claim both Pitagora and Socrates); finally, we analyzed the educational consequences of the sophists, since sophists wanted to substantiate the art of education (philosophy) on knowledge and not on the prestige of the model's age (hence the reference to gods and the aristocratic blood of those involved in political life and beyond).

### **III. Enlightenment and teacher – student relationship**

In this chapter we intended to reveal the way in which Enlightenment has reconstructed the authority relationship (let's not forget that Enlightenment has stepped on the path that sophists carved, bringing knowledge to the fore and promoting its liberating power); since Enlightenment was primarily a *revolution of the mind*, the bearer of authority identifies for once with the Knowing one, the Kantian *tutor* (the philosopher or, rather the scientist, the one preoccupied with the rational and positive research of the world, thus fighting implicitly and explicitly with ignorance and superstitions); the subject of authority can only be the *minor* Kant spoke about (i.e. the one that cannot use his own intelligence without help from another, as Kant claims); this time the bearer of authority's way of being matters less, Enlightenment bringing to the fore reason, truth, positive knowledge, verification of claims both scientifically and empirically, etc (actually, we can speak of a way of life as well, one lived in agreement with the precepts of reason, i.e. science, fighting declaredly against obscurantism and one's own emotional side perturbing the reasonable approach); the tutor (i.e. bearer of authority) is legitimized in his efforts to enlighten the minor (subject of authority) by

the “Holy Trinity” (Biesta) on whose behalf he works (in fact, substantiating the Kantian categorical imperative, which requires each step to be accepted by any other person).

#### **IV. The crisis of the relationship of authority and the postmodern paradigm in education**

In the chapter on postmodernism we analyzed the way in which authority is deconstructed, as an element in the conceptual constellation built around reason; thus, if reason and access to truth legitimate the authority of a bearer (author, modern subject) by the deconstruction of reason and its replacement with other ways of understanding and reporting to the world (imagination, myth, emotion, etc.) the position of the bearer of authority is undermined as well; also, by eliminating hierarchies and valorizations, the points of view of groups of individuals (irrespective of age, studies, gender, race, etc.) become equivalent, i.e. equally valid; from this perspective an individual’s need for authority (any individual) is denied too, since one’s own point of view has the same value (truth value, for example) as any other point of view; as such, the premises of the authority relationship (having something to offer, as a bearer of authority and feeling the need to receive from a trusted person, as potential subject) are relativized; in the best case confrontations of ideas are accepted, which are not really confrontations, since the starting premise is the equivalence of the value of the respective ideas (it goes as far as to accept incommunicability of different conceptions, which represents an extreme reading of the theory of Kuhnian paradigms); under these conditions, we re-built – we believe – the relationship of authority as *weak authority* (by analogy with the weak thinking, theorized by Vattimo and Rovatti); finally, we wanted to point out how these ideas influenced educational theories and practices.

## **V. Research directions of the problem of authority in cyberspace**

Regarding future directions in research, they were imposed by our previous steps: thus, a major problem was (and still is) detecting the specificity of the authority relationship in cyberspace (in this respect we offered the phrase *network authority* and we traced its first lines of force); secondly, we attempted to analyze the educational consequences of the lifestyle of digital natives, considering that real life and cyberspace are not congruent in terms of the behaviours, attitudes, and skills they call for; third, we focused (and we will be considering this research direction in the future) on the way in which the incongruence between the two educational environments (real and virtual) influence the functioning of the rewards/ punishments binomial; finally, we intend to examine how we can operate useful transfers of elements (infrastructure, methods, educational resources in general) from the virtual space to the real world, in order to optimize the functioning of school (which we, consciously more conservative, consider a perennial institution).

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