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# Authority in Educational Relationships

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**ABSTRACT** *The authority of educators in general, and the authority of the moral educator in particular, are central and pervasive themes in John Wilson's writings. This paper summarises his account of authority in educational relationships, not simply by describing the results of his analysis, but by reconstructing his views in terms of some basic distinctions between different types of authority, in particular the distinction between practical and theoretical authority, and the one between de jure and de facto authority. Next, the paper explores the rather neglected topic of parental authority, applying the same distinctions between basic types of authority. It is argued that the authority of the parent is in important respects different from the authority standardly ascribed to the teacher. Finally, some comments are made on the complex question of whether or not authoritative parental supervision is essential to the upbringing of children and their growth into adult people.*

John Wilson's writings are, without doubt, a paragon of many academic skills and intellectual virtues, but perhaps his most remarkable and admirable quality is his vigorous critical attitude towards fashionable doctrines, dominant ideologies and various forms of "political correctness" in both the theory and the practice of education. Indeed, Wilson is a genuine example of an independent thinker, which implies not only being critical and original in one's field of expertise but also, and in a way more demandingly, having the courage to defend one's views publicly, especially if those views are not very popular or are even received with hostility.

Take, for example, his account of the nature and function of conceptual analysis. Nowadays conceptual analysis, if given a place at all, is standardly regarded as a possibly useful but rather subordinated part of philosophical inquiry. However, on the basis of penetrating meta-philosophical reflections, Wilson claims that conceptual analysis, if interpreted properly, should be regarded as the Alpha and the Omega of the philosophy of education. Moreover, quite contrary to the *communis opinio* in recent philosophical thinking, he argues that conceptual analysis is best conceived as a kind of objective examination of concepts that relate to inalienable elements or necessary features of human existence. Conceptual analysis, he claims, is not an inescapably value-infected activity but rather a non-ideological rational enterprise. The things examined in this undertaking should not be conceived as contingent or historical conceptual frameworks, but are to be taken as concepts and

principles that are logically inevitable parts of the furniture of any conceivable world with people in it (Wilson, 1986, pp. 60–80).

Not only is his metaphilosophical account of conceptual analysis indicative of his critical and non-conformist attitude, but the same goes for his philosophical analyses of particular concepts. A major example is his exploration of the concept of authority. During the heydays of liberal and anti-authoritarian doctrines in the field of education, Wilson repeatedly and persistently pointed out that certain forms of authority and discipline are preconditions of effective education and serious learning. With reference to this relationship between authority and education, he even argues that unquestioning obedience to the legitimate authority of the teacher should be considered a virtue in a pupil—a view that was not received with approval in educational circles, to put it mildly (Wilson, 1977, pp. 43–44).

Our first objective is to give a brief reconstruction of Wilson's analysis of the authority of educators, in particular by introducing and applying some basic distinctions between different sense or type of authority. In line with his metaphilosophical views, our global explanation of these fundamental distinctions is intended to be completely neutral, which means, roughly, that the results of our analysis are presented as being acceptable to all rational human beings, whatever their values or ideological stance.

In the English-speaking world, philosophical accounts of the role of authority in education almost naturally focus on the relation between the teacher and the pupil. However, it is quite conceivable that the nature and function of authority in other educational relationships, especially the one between the parent and the child, are somewhat different. Our second objective is to give an outline of the authority of parents, in particular by explaining its nature in terms of the aforemade distinctions between different senses or types of authority. The basis of parental authority, we shall claim, should be located in some fairly unsophisticated form of practical wisdom regarding matters of prudence and morality.

At the end of our paper, we shall go briefly into the question of whether or not parental authority is somehow or other an inevitable or indispensable feature of human existence. We believe that parental authority is indeed inevitable in particular respects, although perhaps not in Wilson's logical sense of the term. However, because of the many complexities of the question concerned, we shall not elaborate and defend such a view in the present context. We shall restrict ourselves to some preliminary work, in particular by pointing out that the question might be taken in different ways, as well as by reframing the question in terms of a basic paradox of upbringing.

## **Types of Authority**

In discussing the topic of authority, in particular the supreme authority of the state, political philosophers often distinguish between different senses or types of authority. Being clear about some of these distinctions, especially the relatively basic ones, is not only important for discussing the authority of the state, but also essential for getting a good grasp of the role and nature of authority in education, including

moral education. Our aim is to give an outline of the basic types of authority and to reconstruct Wilson's views in terms of these.

### *Practical and Theoretical Authority*

It is often noticed that a person may be said to have authority in two distinct senses: we can speak of a person being *in* authority (paradigmatic examples are judges, policemen and referees) and of a person being *an* authority (major examples are prophets, experts and scholars). Following Joseph Raz (1986, pp. 29, 52–53, 64), we shall call these types of authority *practical* and *theoretical* authority henceforth. Although these expressions could cause some confusion, in a sense to be explained presently, they have the advantage of giving some indication of the subject-matter that is characteristic of the respective type of authority. A person who is said to be a practical authority is supposed to have authority over *conduct*, whereas a person who is considered a theoretical authority is expected to have authority over *beliefs*. This distinction between conduct and belief is also reflected in the way R.S. Peters defines the corresponding types of authority, namely, as authorities in the sphere of social control and authorities in the sphere of knowledge (Peters, 1966, p. 239). However, using the adjectives “practical” and “theoretical” could also be somewhat misleading, in particular because the subject-matter of theoretical authority is not confined to theoretical beliefs only, but may also include *practical* beliefs; that is, roughly, beliefs about which conduct is right or wrong, good or bad, desirable or undesirable. We have to keep this in mind especially when, in the next section, the notion of practical wisdom will be introduced.

Although Wilson uses the terms very rarely, it is beyond doubt that he considers the educator to be both *in* authority and *an* authority. Usually he introduces and discusses the concept of practical authority as an element of a whole set of interconnecting concepts, including “discipline”, “punishment”, “rule” and “contract” (Wilson & Cowell, 1990, pp. 7–73). Education, he argues, has to do with the planning of serious and sustained learning, and exercising practical authority is necessary to ensure that such learning can in fact take place. Practical authority is needed to maintain a sufficiently high degree of order and obedience, in particular by enforcing a framework of rules which should guarantee that pupils do their homework, pay attention to the teacher, do not bully each other, do not play truant, or whatever disciplined behaviour is required for the purpose of serious learning.

The way in which Wilson approaches the theoretical authority of the educator is by locating the corresponding notion in quite a different set of interrelated concepts, in particular “reason”, “truth”, “forms of knowledge” and “disciplines” (Wilson, 1990, pp. 17–43; 1993, pp. 55–61; Wilson & Cowell, 1990, pp. 76–77). An aim all educators must aspire to, says Wilson, is to educate pupils out of prejudice and into reason, especially by initiating them into disciplines or fields of enquiry constituted by particular rational procedures. Such an enterprise is hardly conceivable without the guidance of educators who present themselves as experts in the relevant disciplines or branches of enquiry. In the end, serious learning should lead to the understanding of rational procedures inherent in the disciplines and the

recognition of their authority. Educators can and must have theoretical authority in so far as they are supposed to act as mediators between such procedures and the pupils.

The general distinction between practical and theoretical authority can be explained more fully by introducing the notion of having a right. Considering someone a practical authority implies ascribing to the person a *right to rule*. In relevant publications this right is explained in different but related ways, for example, as the right to issue commands, to make decisions and to give orders, or the right to lay down what the rules are, to apply those rules to particular cases, as well as to enforce them.

According to D.D. Raphael (1990, pp. 166–167), the right to rule is not simply a right of action or a liberty-right, but primarily a right of recipience or a claim-right. Having a right of action simply means not having any legal or moral obligation to refrain from doing so. A right of recipience, however, is a right to receive something, a claim that someone else has an obligation to provide what the right-holder is entitled to receive. Having such a claim-right is, we think, the essence of being in authority. The right to rule implies a right to receive *obedience*, a claim towards other people that they are obliged to obey one's commands or to follow one's prescriptions. "If one has authority", Wilson rightly observes, "the implication is that one is and ought to be, at least characteristically, obeyed" (1977, p. 54).

This account of practical authority is the common view in political philosophy, although there have been some rather unsuccessful attempts to challenge it (Raz, 1986, pp. 23–37). Could we explain the concept of theoretical authority in a structurally similar way? Does being an authority in the sphere of knowledge also imply having some right of recipience? We are inclined to answer these questions in the affirmative. Having authority over beliefs also implies having a right—not, of course, a right to rule but, as some authors have suggested, a *right to be believed* (Peters, 1959, p. 18; Friedman, 1990, p. 57). Our guess is that this right, just like the right to rule, should be taken as a right of recipience—not, of course, as a right to receive obedience, but as a right to receive something that may be called *assent*, that is, the acceptance or endorsement of one's views or beliefs by others. To put it differently, claiming to be a theoretical authority implies the claim towards some others that they should believe what one says.

### *De Jure and de Facto Authority*

Another well-known distinction between two senses or types of authority is the one between *de jure* and *de facto* authority. It criss-crosses the distinction explained above in such a manner that both practical and theoretical authority can be *de jure* and *de facto*. In the preceding section we focused on the former sense of "practical" and "theoretical authority". Now we shall briefly compare the *de jure* sense with the *de facto* sense.

Using the word "authority" in the *de jure* sense is making the *normative* claim that some individual has a right to rule or a right to be believed. Asserting that someone has authority in this particular sense is, roughly, making the twofold claim

(i) that the individual claims to have a certain right, and (ii) that the person's claim is legitimate or well-justified. The study of *de jure* authority is the province of philosophy, in particular the fields of ethics, political philosophy and the philosophy of education. The central task of this enterprise is to articulate and justify the conditions of having legitimate practical or theoretical authority.

Using the word "authority" in the *de facto* sense, however, is making the *descriptive* claim that some individual actually exerts a peculiar type of influence over other people's conduct or beliefs. Maintaining that someone has authority in this particular sense usually involves making the double claim (i) that the individual claims to have a certain right, and (ii) that the person's claim is in fact accepted or acknowledged by those at whom it is directed (Wolff, 1990, p. 21). Research into *de facto* authority is part of the empirical sciences, especially of the disciplines of sociology, social psychology and developmental psychology. The main aim of this type of research is to describe and explain the conditions of effectively exercising practical or theoretical authority.

Wilson uses the terms *de jure* and *de facto* authority sporadically, only when he discusses the relationship between authority and power (Wilson, 1981, pp. 45–46; Wilson & Cowell, 1990, pp. 30–31). Moreover, although the role and nature of authority are central themes in his work, any systematic account of the distinction between the indicated types of authority is, to our knowledge, absent. Nevertheless, Wilson has many interesting things to say about both the *de jure* and the *de facto* authority of educators.

As already stated, he claims that educators should have *de jure* practical authority and he justifies this claim by arguing that without having the right to rule over children the effective and serious practice of education is well-nigh impossible. However, he also offers a non-instrumental justification of the educator's right to determine how pupils should behave (Wilson, 1997, pp. 58–60; 1992, pp. 121–122). In his opinion, traditional arguments advanced to justify this right, such as the paternalistic argument that pupils are too young and too inexperienced to know what their best interests are, cannot stand the test of criticism. The fatal flaw of these arguments, he says, is that any appeal to the *consent* of the pupils is lacking. In his view, practical authority is only legitimate if pupils can be construed as voluntarily or contractually putting themselves in the hands of the educator. The educator's right to rule should be justified in terms of a deal: the educator promises the pupils to educate them in a proper way, and in return for this the pupils have to do what they are told, at least in specified areas. Only if pupils can be conceived as more or less explicitly consenting to this deal or contract will the practical authority of the educator be legitimate and therefore different from mere power or brute force.

Wilson also considers the educator to be a *de jure* theoretical authority. As we have indicated above, educators should be seen as theoretical authorities because it may be expected that they have, in comparison with the pupils, superior skills, knowledge and understanding, associated with particular disciplines or intellectual practices. By virtue of these qualities, so it could be said, they have the right to be believed, especially concerning the proper ways of thinking, the standards of judg-

ments, the intrinsic goods, as well as the excellences and virtues that are internal to the disciplines or branches of enquiry. It should be noted, however, that Wilson regards the theoretical authority of educators as derivative of the authority of reason. Finally, their right to be believed is justified in terms of the authority of the rational procedures that are constitutive of the different intellectual enterprises. Educators have *de jure* theoretical authority only in so far as their personal qualities properly represent the impersonal procedures of reason. This justification, Wilson claims, also holds true for theoretical authorities in the domain of moral education. Here, too, a distinction can be made between content and form, in this case between first-order moral beliefs and second-order rules of procedure which we must use to assess the merits of those beliefs. Any theoretical authority of moral educators can only be legitimate if it is based not on the alleged unquestionable authority of some set of moral beliefs but on the authority of the formal standards of rational moral thinking (Wilson, 1990, pp. 31–33; 1996, pp. 86–87).

The *de facto* practical authority of educators, too, is an important subject of philosophical analysis in Wilson's work. Of course, his justification of the *de jure* authority of educators is at the same time a justification of why they should have *de facto* authority. The claim that educators are to be assigned the right to rule and the right to be believed implies logically the claim that pupils should actually obey their prescriptions and believe what they say. However, Wilson also gives an account of what it means to have *de facto* practical authority, in particular by analysing the concept of discipline (Wilson, 1981, 37–46). Typical of people who are well-disciplined, he argues, is their obedience to established and legitimate authorities as such. They have the tendency not just to observe the rules laid down by authorities but also, and more importantly, to comply with those rules for the simple reason that they take them as authoritative. Consequently, in order to be able to exert the distinctive type of influence involved in having *de facto* practical authority, educators need pupils who are well-disciplined.

With reference to Wilson's analysis of the concept of discipline, we can deepen our grasp of the nature of *de facto* authority by differentiating it from rational persuasion, on one hand, and coercive power on the other hand. If we exert an influence on other people by means of rational persuasion we offer them reasons for acting in a certain way or believing certain things, and those others actually follow our prescriptions or assent to our propositions because they grasp and acknowledge the justifying force of the reasons given. This is definitely not the kind of influence that is typical of having *de facto* authority, whether practical or theoretical. On the contrary, in cases of *de facto* authority people do not make their obedience or assent dependent on their own assessment of the merits of the things prescribed or the validity of the beliefs advanced. Rather they abdicate their own judgement and follow a prescription or accept a belief merely because of the fact that it is prescribed or uttered by someone acknowledged by them to have authority (cf. Raz, 1986, pp. 38–40; Friedman, 1990, pp. 63–68). Wilson's warning not to confuse an authority with an adviser or consultant is therefore to the point. In giving advice, one is trying to persuade someone else to do certain things by means of rational argument (cf. Bollnow, 1959, pp. 78–86). But in acting as an authority, one expects someone else

to obey “*whether or not one’s particular commands are thought by the individual to be wise, or pleasant, or on other grounds acceptable*” (Wilson, 1995, p. 74).

On the other hand, exerting *de facto* authority should also be distinguished from influencing people by threatening them with sanctions. To be sure, there are complicated connections between having practical authority and having the power to enforce obedience. For example, characteristically people who are in authority are also entitled to use force or to apply sanctions to secure compliance. It may be true that without having the coercive power to bring about conformity a person will cease to be seen as someone being in authority. Nevertheless, in cases of *de facto* practical authority people are obeying an individual not because they fear the unpleasant consequences if they do not, but because they recognise the person’s right to receive obedience (cf. Peters, 1959, pp. 20–21; 1966, p. 239; Wilson, 1981, pp. 45–46).

## Parental Authority

So far we have explained, as neutrally as possible, some basic distinctions between senses or types of authority. We have also presented a brief account of Wilson’s view on the authority of educators, in particular by reconstructing it in terms of the types of authority discerned. From now on we shall fix our attention on *parental* authority, in so far as it is maintained and expressed in bringing up children. Our intention is to give a rough draft of the nature of parental authority by applying the distinctions between the various types of authority, as well as by making a rather sketchy comparison with the authority standardly ascribed to the teacher.

### *Parental Practical and Theoretical Authority*

At schools and related institutes it is common practice to arrange and combine the content of teaching activities according to different subjects or disciplines, such as mathematics, science, biology, French or computer studies. Of course, there are important and widely practised alternatives to traditional subject teaching. A major example is so-called project learning, in which teaching activities are thematically arranged, but wherever such alternatives are introduced, the common practice is to make sure that the subject-transcending themes and tasks are approached from the perspectives of the relevant subjects, for example, from a historical, linguistic or geographical point of view. This, of course, presupposes some classification of the contents of teaching according to subjects.

Given this central role of subjects and disciplines in teaching activities at schools, it is quite natural to explain the theoretical authority of teachers primarily in terms of these. In comparison with their pupils, teachers are expected to be authorities on the content and form of different subjects or disciplines. They are supposed to know what is the right or wrong way of doing things in a particular field, to be capable of explaining the views and approaches defended in a certain domain, or to function as a model of the virtues and ways of thinking internal to a particular discipline. Empirical research shows that both parents and teachers are of the opinion that introducing pupils into particular subjects is the most important task of



teachers, and, consequently, that their theoretical authority primarily consists in having the corresponding types of skills, knowledge and understanding (Klaassen & Leeferink, 1998). This common-sense conception of the dominant role and associated authority of the teacher is reflected in many publications of philosophers of education, including the writings of Wilson.

However, it would be strange to maintain that the parent, just like the teacher, should have well-developed capacities of teaching some subject or the competence of initiating children into some discipline. After all, schools and other artificial institutions are created because the theoretical authority that is linked with the professional role of the teacher cannot be expected of parents. How, then, should their theoretical authority be conceived?

The central task associated with the non-professional role of parents consists in raising or bringing up their children. Our claim is that the theoretical authority required for performing such a task should be located in a certain type and level of *practical wisdom*. The kind of practical wisdom associated with parenthood predominantly relates to matters of prudence and morality. Being practically wise, in this particular sense, implies having some intrinsic commitment to prudential and moral values, being capable to some extent of specifying and ordering these values in variable circumstances through attention to the details of the case, being able to make proper decisions on the basis of such practical deliberations, as well as having some power to control the inclinations and temptations that are potentially threatening to the realisation of the decisions made.

Although such a complex of commitments and capacities may seem at first sight rather demanding, it is important not to overestimate the level or degree of sophistication of parental practical wisdom. It would be wrong, for example, to explain the theoretical authority of parents in terms of Kohlbergian postconventional thinking or the Aristotelian ideal of the fully virtuous person. Most of the parents who are performing their task of upbringing well do not meet the standards of the sophisticated forms of practical wisdom implied in such views. For the same reason, Wilson's account of practical wisdom is hardly acceptable as an interpretation of parental theoretical authority. In our view, parents need to have deliberative capacities for specifying moral values by reference to the relevant aspects of variable circumstances. Requiring of parents that they also should have the capacity for assessing the merits of such first-order values on the basis of second-order formal principles, like the principle of universalisability, would be an example of setting the standards too high.

In order to gain a better grasp of the capacities that are part of parental practical wisdom, we should notice that the concept of upbringing is logically connected with the concept of *adulthood* in two different but closely related ways. On one hand, the growth of the child into an adult person is the intrinsic aim of upbringing. We cannot bring up our children without having the more or less implicit intention of promoting their growth into adult persons. On the other hand, bringing up children is hardly conceivable without the concern and engagement of adult people. One cannot help and support the child all along its way to adulthood without being an adult oneself. Consequently, in order to be able to perform their task of bringing up

children, parents need to have the mental equipment implied in having the status of an adult. Typical of adult people is that they do not need the moral supervision and paternalistic guidance that is generally seen as appropriate with regard to children. They are supposed to be generally capable of determining for themselves which kind of conduct should be regarded as virtuous in the light of prudential and moral values, as well as to arrange their lives accordingly. The capacities for leading such a relatively independent life are central components of parental practical wisdom. Hence, it is only towards the child that the parent *qua parent* has the right to be believed in prudential and moral affairs.

In publications on education, the practical authority of the teacher is almost standardly explained in terms of the right to preserve the conditions of order in the classroom or, more broadly, the right to enforce rules and regulations deemed to be necessary for creating stability, peace and safety in the school at large. Thus conceived, exercising practical authority is not an intrinsic part but an extrinsic aid of teaching. The teacher's commands and prescriptions should be obeyed in order to create the conditions which facilitate or enable the performance of the task of introducing the pupil to subjects or disciplines. According to Wilson teachers are in a peculiar position, for they have the dual role of keeping order and teaching (Wilson, 1981, p. 64). In line with the classical Herbartian distinction between *Regierung* and *Unterricht*, the establishment of their practical authority is conceived as separated from, and usually as prior to, exercising their theoretical authority. In educational institutions, Wilson says, "we require a framework of legitimate order in which to educate" (1990, p. 72).

The practical authority of parents is predominantly and most clearly expressed in disciplining their children. In discipline encounters the parent stimulates the child to do or to refrain from doing certain things by performing all kinds of activities, such as prescribing and forbidding, warning and reprimanding, urging and exhorting, making demands and giving orders. However, unlike the indicated relation between keeping order and teaching at schools, such disciplinary activities are not extrinsic aids but intrinsic parts of upbringing. Characteristically, they are not performed with the intention of establishing the necessary conditions of effective upbringing, but meant to produce or strengthen the habits and commitments that are seen as important for prudential or moral reasons.

The claim that in exercising their practical authority parents are trying to raise their children can be exemplified by briefly introducing Aristotle's view on early emotional habituation (*ethismos*) (cf. Spiecker, 1999). At the beginning of the second book of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle argues that virtuous character is acquired through habituation of the non-rational part of the soul. Such disciplinary activities, he says, essentially involve practice and repetition. Much the same as learning a craft, such as acquiring the skills for playing the harp, the affective capacities that are part of the virtues are acquired by "repeatedly doing the virtuous actions: "We become just by doing just actions, temperate by doing temperate actions, brave by doing brave actions" (Aristotle, 1985, 1103a34–b1). Young children, however, do not have the practical wisdom required for identifying those acts which are virtuous

or good. Consequently, in order to become virtuous persons they need the supervision of someone who is already practically wise.

Whatever one may think of this view, it is reasonable to assume that parents who are habituating the child in the way indicated are exerting their practical authority. The parent is prescribing or ordering the child to perform the actions that are virtuous and to refrain from those that are vicious, and the child is supposed to obey the parental precepts and injunctions. It goes without saying that such activities are intrinsic parts of upbringing, for in performing them, parents have the intention of cultivating prudential or moral virtues. Moreover, in habituating their children, parents are at the same time exercising their theoretical authority. By indicating or explaining to the child which actions are just, kind, prudent or sensible under the circumstances, they are making practical judgements and thus showing their practical wisdom. In other words, conceiving the expression of parental practical authority as some kind of preparatory move for the exertion of parental theoretical authority, would be mistaken. Generally speaking, parental discipline is tantamount to displaying both types of authority in one and the same movement of upbringing.

#### *Parental de Jure and de Facto Authority*

Claiming *de jure* authority is making the normative claim that one has a right to rule or a right to be believed. Claiming parental *de jure* authority is making the twofold claim that one has the right to tell one's children what to do and the right to be believed by them in matters of prudence and morality. How could such a claim be justified, if at all?

Any plausible justification of parental *de jure* authority should be composed of at least two major steps. First, it should be demonstrated that bringing up children is well-nigh impossible or could hardly be successful without the lead of persons who have and exercise the rights at issue. This step can be elucidated by drawing a comparison with justifying the *de jure* authority of the teacher. Such a justification would need to show that introducing pupils into subjects requires having and exercising both the right to rule in the classroom and the right to be believed by them in matters concerning those subjects. In a similar way, a justification of parental *de jure* authority needs to show that bringing up children requires having and exercising both the right to discipline them and the right to be believed by them in prudential and moral affairs. Secondly, a reasonable case should be made for assigning these particular rights to *parents*. Even if it could be demonstrated that the task of bringing up children cannot be accomplished without having and exercising those rights, it still needs to be shown that parents are suitable candidates for performing such a task. This means that justifying reasons must be given for the assumption that parents generally have the mental qualities or are in the right position for exercising the indicated rights in a proper way. Given our account of parental theoretical authority, at least some of those reasons should refer to the kind of practical wisdom explained above. Just as properly exercising the rights involved in the *de jure* authority of the teacher presupposes having certain mental qualities, among other things the skills, virtues and forms of knowledge associated with

particular subjects or disciplines, so properly exercising the rights inherent in parental *de jure* authority presupposes having certain mental qualities, in this case especially the commitments and capacities that are constitutive of a certain kind of practical wisdom.

We shall return to the first step of the justification in the final section, when the question will be addressed as to whether or not parental authority is an inevitable aspect of the practice of bringing up children. Here we shall confine ourselves to making some observations concerning the second step of the justification. As already stated, teachers need to possess particular mental qualities for exercising their *de jure* authority in a proper way. Typical of our society is that all kinds of measures are taken in order to make sure that teachers do indeed have the required qualities. Before being allowed to perform the professional role of a teacher, one has to attend a teacher training college, obtain the relevant certificates and submit oneself to selection procedures. Meeting such requirements is a precondition of gaining the rights involved in the *de jure* authority of the teacher. Parents, too, need to have particular mental qualities in order to be able to perform their task of upbringing properly. However, comparable arrangements to ensure that they actually have such qualities are completely absent in our society. Parents are not obliged to follow courses or to submit themselves to particular tests before gaining the rights included in parental *de jure* authority. On the contrary, standardly they have the right to exercise authority over their children simply because they are their parents.

One may wonder whether the current practice of ascribing *de jure* authority to parents is as it should be. Would it not be better to introduce some limited but mandatory test for parents? To be sure, the mental qualities required for properly exercising parental *de jure* authority are fairly moderate. As noticed above, the capacities of deliberation and self-control involved in parental practical wisdom may be expected of every adult person. This is probably one of the background reasons for the common practice of giving parents authority over their children without any prior checking. On the other hand, assuming that all parents do indeed have the required qualities would obviously be far too optimistic. The fact that parents may not be practically wise, or not wise enough, is recognised fully by the legislature. In the first book of the Dutch Civil Code, different reasons are mentioned for restricting or even nullifying the right of parents to exercise authority over their under-age children (cf. Steutel & Spiecker, 1999). Most of those reasons relate to certain deficiencies in parental practical wisdom, for example severe mental disturbances, abuse of parental power, serious neglect of the child's interests, criminal behaviour, as well as the general incapacity to fulfil one's duty to raise and care for the child. However, the problem is that judicial interventions on the basis of such considerations usually take place after much damage has been done. Part of this misery and suffering could perhaps be prevented by checking the practical wisdom of parents before giving them the *de jure* authority over their children.

Is it also possible to point out interesting differences between the *de facto* authority of parents and teachers? Having *de facto* authority implies that one's *de jure* authority is acknowledged by those at whom it is directed, however implicitly. So if the *de jure* authority of parents and teachers is different, their *de facto* authority will

be different too. We might, however, delve somewhat deeper, by trying to locate some differences in the kinds of things that motivate children and pupils to accept the authority of the parent or the teacher. Perhaps not only are the justifying reasons for ascribing *de jure* authority to parents and teachers different, but the motivating reasons for recognising their right to rule and their right to be believed may be different too.

According to R.T. Allen (1987, p. 21), an important condition of the pupil's general willingness to do what the teacher says is the personal authority or authoritativeness of the teacher. Weak teachers, he says, resort to the use of threats and sanctions precisely because they lack this personal element of authority. This observation, we think, is quite right, as it may be assumed that without having some degree of "presence" teachers will have difficulties with keeping order in the classroom. However, another, more pervasive condition of the teacher's *de facto* practical authority could be pointed out. It is a condition that is also essential to the child's acceptance of parental authority. What we have in mind here is a particular attitude of the pupil or the child towards the teacher or the parent, namely, some form and degree of *trust*.

As explained above, typical of having *de facto* theoretical authority is that others accept one's beliefs without making their assent dependent on their own assessment of those beliefs. Such a form of influence is hardly conceivable without trust, for if those others mistrusted one's knowledge, insight or expertise, they would surely not surrender their judgement. In a comparable way, parents and teachers can only have *de facto* theoretical authority if the child or the pupil puts some confidence in their skills, wisdom, or powers of judgement. If this form of trust were entirely absent, how, then, could they be willing to endorse or accept the beliefs and views of their parents or teachers? Moreover, and to complete Allen's observation, the kind of trust that motivates children and pupils to recognise the theoretical authority of their parents or teachers, will also be an important incentive for accepting their practical authority. Indeed, given the close connection of the theoretical and practical authority of parents, the same form of trust will motivate children both to believe what they say and to do what they command. However, it may also be assumed that the faith of pupils in the capacities and qualities of their teachers will influence deeply their willingness to obey their prescriptions.

How exactly the object of the child's or the pupil's trust should be conceived, could be disputed (cf. Spiecker, 1990), but it will be clear that the kind of trust lying at the root of the acknowledgement of the authority of parents or teachers does not relate merely to their cognitive skills and intellectual competences. If children and pupils do recognise the authority of their parents or teachers, they will normally also take it on trust that their intentions are basically good, as well as that the things they have to learn are generally worthwhile and contributing to their own long-term welfare. Children will be strongly disinclined to obey their parents or to endorse their beliefs if they have doubts about the parents' willingness to promote their interests. Pupils will be hesitant about acknowledging the authority of the teacher if they are mistrustful of the teacher's claim that the things they have to learn are valuable or contributing to a flourishing life.

Given the fact that trust is a basic condition of the *de facto* authority of both the parent and the teacher, the next question is how the establishment of this complex attitude could be explained. Which factors do stimulate or motivate children or pupils to trust their parents or teachers in the indicated way? In order to give a well-founded answer to this question, we would need to perform detailed empirical research. All we can do here is to present some rather global speculations that have an aura of plausibility.

To begin with, one of the factors that will probably enhance the pupil's trust is the teacher's faithful representation of the subject or discipline to which the pupil is introduced. Teachers may inspire the pupil's confidence by acting as a genuine exemplar of the virtues, skills and habits of mind associated with particular subjects or disciplines, as well as by showing in different ways that their intrinsic engagement with those practices enriches their lives (Peters, 1966, pp. 259–260; Strike, 1999). Other qualities of teachers may also be helpful, in particular their care and respect for their pupils. Without being treated kindly and fairly, pupils will feel reluctant to put their trust in the teacher. Moreover, all kinds of background conditions will also affect the pupil's trust; for example, whether or not their parents attach value to being introduced into particular subjects, or the extent in which teachers are respected and schooling is seen as worthwhile among the public at large. As Strike (1999) makes clear, teachers will have difficulties with inspiring trust if their pupils belong to communities that devalue the life of the mind or that are suspicious of secular knowledge.

Similar factors may play a significant role with regard to children's attitude of trust towards their parents. Children's trust will be reinforced if their parents prove to be sincere exemplars of the prudential and moral virtues they are supposed to teach them. Also, being embedded in a community in which respect for parents is pervasive will stimulate children to place confidence in their parents. In one important respect, however, the conditions that generate children's trust in their parents are different from those that may induce pupils to trust their teachers. What seems to us a precondition of children's trust is a loving relationship with their parents. The love of parents for their children, and the love of children for their parents, are *sui generis*. From the very beginning, parents show their love for their children by taking care for them and securing their safety, by fulfilling their needs and supporting their sense of competence, by taking pleasure in their presence and giving them the feeling that they are deeply wanted. Children will experience and recognise the unconditional affection of their parents, which will arouse and stimulate their love for them. This mutual loving relationship is the breeding ground of the child's trust in the parent's intentions and capacities. It is this kind of trust that is a precondition of the child's general willingness to accept parental authority (cf. Langeveld, 1971, pp. 55–56; Rawls, 1971, pp. 462–467).

### Some Final Considerations

When discussing Wilson's account of philosophical analysis in the introductory section, and also in our exploration of the *de jure* authority of parents, we touched

upon the question whether or not parental authority could be regarded as inevitable or indispensable. To conclude our paper, we would like to make some comments on this intricate question.

In order to tackle the question, we should make a careful distinction between two different ways in which parental authority may be considered indispensable or vital. First, we might argue that parental authority is essential to upbringing. Performing the task of bringing up children presupposes having a standing desire that they will behave in a proper way. If we do not generally want our children to do the things that are virtuous from a prudential or moral viewpoint, we can hardly be said to be engaged in the practice of upbringing. However, children, particularly when they are young, do not yet have the practical wisdom needed to determine what is right or wrong, desirable or undesirable, reasonable or unreasonable under the circumstances. As explained above, part of what it means to have the status of an adult person is that one has the capacities of deliberation involved in the kind of practical wisdom that may be expected of parents. Because children are by definition not adult people they will lack such capacities, or will only have them in a significantly underdeveloped form. Consequently, in order to do the things that are right, prudent or virtuous under the circumstances, children need the supervision of their parents or other guardians who are practically wise. They must be generally willing to do the things that we, as adult people, tell them to do. Indeed, what makes parental authority legitimate is that children are likely better to comply with prudential or moral reasons which apply to them if they accept the directives of their parents.

Although this argument is far from watertight, we believe that it can be spelled out more fully in such a manner that it will do all the work it is supposed to do. However, the claim that exercising parental authority is an indispensable part of bringing up children should not be confused with the rather different claim that parental authority is vital to the development of the child into an adult person. In order to justify the latter claim, we should do much more than just offering a justification of the former claim. For even if it could be demonstrated that bringing up children is not possible without authoritative parental supervision, it still needs to be shown that the child's growth into an adult person will be impossible without such upbringing.

This is hardly the place to examine the possibility of justifying the second claim. In order to do that properly, we should enter into a discussion with the German representatives of the so-called *Antipädagogik*, who are not only opposed to particular forms of upbringing, but reject any kind of upbringing whatsoever (Von Braunmühl, 1975). Instead of discussing their arguments, we would like to end our paper by pointing out that the second claim actually implies a kind of paradox, which may be called the *paradox of upbringing*. It can be formulated in different ways: only by supervising our children can they grow into people who no longer need our supervision; or: following the parent's lead is a precondition of leading one's life independently; or: only by treating our children as unequals they will become our equals; or, to put it more catchily: children can only grow into adults by treating them as children. It is this paradox that has to be dealt with.

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