

Moral Education in Germany*

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1. The present situation makes educators feel insecure

Moral education is an old theme, but till nowadays a task not yet solved. The enlightenment movement since the eighteenth century and the accelerating dynamics of change in modern societies has made the task of moral education not easier, but even more difficult. The complex situation is characterized by overt contradictions and dilemmas, which in many cases find no political resolution and even less moral response.

Modern world has crossed the borders of the traditional type of a 'closed society' and shows the heterogeneous traits of an 'open society'. Multi-cultural societies have a lack of religious homogeneity, social conformity and cultural authority. The conditions to bring up children within so called closed societies are without any doubt more suitable than within the complex and opaque environments created by modern societies. The danger is that moral values lose their liability and are no longer internalized in the fundamentals of behavior.

In fact, there is some kind of moral education implicit in all educational endeavors. Nevertheless, moral education in an explicit manner has nearly come to its end. The deep uncertainty of adults results more often in non-education than in reinforced efforts to resolve the educational task. Nietzsche has prophesied the coming of nihilism, which now enters the door of western-type

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civilizations. This implies that political decisions, legal restrictions and disciplinary steps replace genuine ethical and pedagogical answers. Professionals tend to confine themselves to sociological frames of reference and prefer to give a psychological explanation instead of giving pedagogical advice. So, even professional educators miss guiding the child efficiently. On the one side formal pedagogical authority is missed, and on the other side this omission has not been caught up by genuine cooperation and partnership with the child. Between both types of education, there is a gap not yet bridged.

2. Childhood has got its own space, but children find no place in the modern world

Indeed, the opacity and difficulty of the situation is not only due to the dynamics and shortcomings of the world of adults. Children need a different type of social environment, which modern societies can no longer provide. They need exactly what modern societies fail to give them.¹ Concerning moral standards children like to sort all things in good or bad, i. e. they like clearcut alternatives and definite orientations. But nowadays they live in a jungle and see no logic in the course of things, which in their eyes cannot come to a good end. In fact, behavior has moral implications for them too, but they can not reach the appropriate level of thinking about the moral aspects of doing. As Piaget shows, moral reasoning and judgement have high-ranged preconditions, to which children [353/354] cannot reach because of a lack of awareness and their not yet fully developed mode of thinking. The modern way of living and the overt or hidden helplessness of parents and teachers encourages an atmosphere of anxiety and violence, yet lacking a power strong enough to impose peace to the jarring elements within their borders.

3. To live with contradictions is the central task of moral education

In this situation there is no possibility to claim for law and order and to restore the obsolete virtues of duty and obedience. The question is how to socialize and moralize without dogmatism. Exercising force against a child is a taboo now, since being under coercion is a moot point for both sides.

The main thesis of this paper is, that one has to live with contradictions and that the central task of moral education today is to handle contradictions without any hope to resolve them at all.

4. Moral education in Germany since World War II

In Germany, the subjects of moral education were theoretical but of little practical impact and use. Many efforts were made to ask for the pedagogical implications of the various ethical theories, but not to install moral educational programs in the sphere of praxis. In the practical area there is an increasing tendency to reconstruct the issues of moral education in terms of psychological, sociological and political language, and points of view. In this respect, the central point of view is how mankind, societies and individuals respond to the challenge of modern world. This has to be specified relating to Germany after World War II.

¹Cf. Jan Hendrik van den Berg, *Metabletica. Grundlinien einer historischen Psychologie*. Göttingen 1960, p. 164 ff.

1945 - 1968

For the educated German after World-War II the question was: If at all, what kind of ethical substance exists after the break-down of fascism and the corresponding damage of the ethos of humanism and the ideals of high culture? In this zero-point situation, Otto Friedrich Bollnow developed his concept of „Einfache Sittlichkeit“². But the first-hand trends in after-war-Germany took another direction. The struggle of survival was focused on building-up the devastated cities and destroyed industries. The first priorities required the concentration on materialistic values, assisted by the quick re-establishment of old political groups and economical structures.

The primarily materialistic orientation superimposed schooling with the strong desire of the parents, that their children may pass through secondary schools to gain higher social positions. In the sixties, education („Bildung“) and not capital or technology was considered to be the number one factor of production and social welfare. The following expansion of the school-system led to the fact that all endeavors to reform schools were swallowed up by increasing quantities of pupils, schools and costs.

1968 - 1978

With the rebellious student-movement in the year 1968, the outbreak of youth from the establishment created a new intellectual and political climate, which took place in universities, partly in secondary schools and influenced deeply the impacts and aims of education. Education was now seen in the context of society, politics and economy and analyzed in terms of social structure and behavior. The student-movement undermined the old loyalties and swept away the traditional, [354/355] deep-layered dependency from authorities. From now on, the claim for moral integrity was connected with a higher state of consciousness which has a clear awareness of social structures and public affairs.

In the seventies, experimental types of living together followed, connected with deepened forms of individual self-realization. One experienced and realized soon that radical turn-about never take place without social confrontation and biographical clear off. From now on the generations were definitely separated and the younger generations started to look for themselves. Youth cultures took over the task of socialization. This separation contributed to reconstructing the Theory of Education as a special Theory of Conflict-Managing („Konfliktpädagogik“).

1978 - 1995

In fact, the left-wing political movement was of short duration due to a strong right-wing reaction against it. Nevertheless, the decisive step in consciousness-evolution could not be canceled. The politically activated young generation of the seventies was followed by the accommodated smooth youth of the eighties („Yuppies“), but the mere outlook is deceiving: They are too disassociated with and non-loyal to the political and social system they live within. Their anxieties and intellectual as well as moral efforts relate increasingly to the future of mankind in a situation in which politics can no longer promise a way out of the hitherto existing shortcomings and increasing difficulties. The main theme now is to overcome the ecological crisis of the globe.

The restrictive politics during the seventies and eighties tried to reinforce a consensus-oriented and politically affirmative mental attitude in the fields of education. Although there was no

²Otto Friedrich Bollnow, Einfache Sittlichkeit. 3. Auflage Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Göttingen 1962.

possibility of returning to the ideal of a 'closed society' with homogenous religious faith, moral conformity and basic political consensus, strong efforts were made to appeal to the old values and virtues of citizenship and subservience. The slogan was „we all sit in one boat“ - and if there is danger, all the more one has to conjure unity beyond all differences.

Accordingly, there were endeavors to relieve conflict-oriented education („Konfliktpädagogik“) by consensus- and value-oriented education („Werterziehung“). The proclaimed values were to affirm and reactivate the old virtues of diligence, discipline and subordination in the sense of „doing the right“. In other words, values were reclaimed as binding agents in a situation of loss of commitments and political loyalty. One tried to install ideological barriers against the borderline transgression of the 1968's. Now the tendency is against emancipation, the declared principle of the epoch of enlightenment and democratization. In this sense it was postulated: „Children need ideals and true authority; the virtues of diligence and order are not out of date.“³ This is indeed a true sentence, true at any time; yet decisive is the political background and the intention, in which it was spoken. The question is, what is worth being identified with totally. And if there are values worth to be engaged with, they cannot be ordered by decree. Without any doubt, there are deep-going deficits in the environmental and internal equipment of men. There are social diseases of poverty and destitution as well as orgies of luxuriant wishes and consumption. There are demands not related to and balanced by a corresponding productivity. The individual has become disjointed from a decaying society, and yet cannot take a stand against this wasting downward spiral. The question is how to cure these diseases. [355/356]

To summarize, education nowadays is confronted with problems which to solve render the customary modes of moral education futile:

- Closed living spaces and clear orientations are lost in confrontation with an unfamiliar multi-ethnic and multi-cultural situation.
- There is a deep gap between the generations, so that education on the whole is questioned. Traditional role-identifications are in flow and practicable alternatives are not yet in sight. The fact of being an adult and getting older confronts many people with severe life-crises, dead-lines and burn-out-syndromes.
- The calculable social career is followed by an uncalculable adventure of finding out the inner way of one's own life.
- The outer scene is shaken by violence.
- The disorientation of youth is not primarily due to missing values, but caused by unemployment, realization of the destructibility of the natural environment and feelings of 'no future'.

³Cf. the theses „Mut zur Erziehung“, published in several daily papers in summer 1978. In 1978 there was launched a conservative political offensive named „Mut zur Erziehung“, which stimulated an even strong reaction and decidedly critical discussion of the propagated theses. Nevertheless, the impact of the initiative was of broad climatological influence. Cf. to it Georg Auernheim et. al., Die Wertfrage in der Erziehung. Argument Verlag Berlin 1981 (Argument Sonderband AS 58) und Friedrich Kümmel, Wertwandel und Wertediskussion und ihre Auswirkung auf die Werterziehung. In: BAG-Informationen der Bundesgemeinschaft Evangelischer Familien-Bildungsstätten e. V., D-90547 Stein/Mittelfranken, Deutenbacherstr. 1, Heft Juli 1992/2, pp. 2-28.

5. *Moral education in the space of family*

Empirical studies show that the family has the principal influence over value orientations and moral attitudes of their children. Of course, schools are also inevitably involved in moral education. In both spaces the child is constantly evaluated and controlled and takes over the corresponding moral attitudes. Both institutions transmit values by means of orders and prohibitions. Another medium of immediate value-transmission is given in symbolic forms of experience and behavior („symbolische Erlebnis- und Handlungsgestalten“). But above all, values are mediated through the atmosphere of the milieu in which they are incorporated.

As I have mentioned above, parents and teachers are constantly and unavoidably moralizing the child, but they do so in different manners. The modes and rules of living together differ in both institutions, and according to that the forms of value-transmission are different, too. The private space of family is suitable to transmit values in a way which is not given in formal organisations as in school. The informal mode of family-life is more conciliate and elastic than the formal and more rigid space of school. Dieter Claessens states in his book „Family and Value-system“⁴ the paradoxical thesis that the „elastic“ transmission of values in families allows the child on the one hand regression as well as transgression of boundaries without fear of sanctions, and that on the other hand exactly this freeing of movement simultaneously deepens the grade of obligation to the values incorporated in them. Indeed, the child has no alternative to the place given to him, and therefore it has to risk something, knowing that it burdens the relation to the elders, but knowing too that its behavior does not break up and call in question the stable situation at all. In other words, the child needs a ‘buffered’ situation, in which the paradox can be lived that by going around and behind norms and values, their authority is not weakened but on the contrary quite strengthened and elevated. Expressed in a paradoxical manner: The more it is allowed to infringe rules, the more they are respected and esteemed in the long run. [356/357]

6. *Moral education in schools*

In contrast, moral education in public schools has stricter conditions and higher-leveled criteria. Of course, in one sense the situation is the same as in families: „All schools necessarily are involved in moral education. The teacher is constantly and unavoidably moralizing the children, about school rules and values and about his student’s behavior toward one another.“⁵ In another sense, the situation in school and in the family is very different. This is on the one side due to the formal character of school rules and regulations of behavior, which do not meet the elastic requirements for standards of family-behavior. On the other side, moral education in school takes necessarily the form of instruction and reflection about the imposed or pre-arranged norms resp. rules.

Through instruction a new level is reached, which is crucial to the immediate forms of behavior, speech and value-transmission. Now, one has to consider the basic ideas of moral conduct and to reflect upon the validity as well as the field of application of reclaimed norms and values. But if

⁴Dieter Claessens, Familie und Wertsystem. Eine Studie zur ‘zweiten, sozio-kulturellen Geburt’ des Menschen. Verlag Duncker & Humblot 2. Auflage Berlin 1967.

⁵Lawrence Kohlberg, Moral and Religious Education and the Public Schools: A Developmental View. In: T.Sizer (Ed.), Religion and Public Education, Boston 1967, pp. 166-67.

one takes into consideration that lessons are defined by heterogenous frameworks of time order, social order and objective contents, the conclusion is near at hand that covered discrepancies and open contradictions between intentions and effects, propagated aims and incorporated means, good will sayings and final achievements will take place and rule over the whole field. This is no wonder, because the objectives of school education are dominated by social and political aims, institutional adjustments and didactical frames of reference, which do not only differ in their respective goals, but also in their underlying deep-structure of interests and incorporated values. The schedule of lessons, the social order of the class and the curricular and didactical order of objectives are in no way suitable to promote a refined moral consciousness. They give room to overt and underlying contradictions which disturb the face-to-face contacts by means of which teachers and pupils have to realize their given tasks and entangle the forms of moral instruction and regulation.

7. The differentiation between social norms and moral claims

But another essential point is of equal importance referring to. Defined widely, „social education is moral education and moral education is preparation for citizenship.“⁶ This requires including moral education in social studies curricula and vice versa. Nevertheless, Piaget and Kohlberg also point to the other side of the coin, that to argue in this way is only half of the truth. There are constitutive differences for moral consciousness and moral development, which are not marked in the process of socialization underlying them. The difference is found in the very premises as well as in the level of achieving the respective goal. That socializing and moralizing interferes in every human conduct and even more in education, indicates, that moral culture in the sense of a conscious, reflected and critical handling of social and moral matters has not yet taken place in common human consciousness. With regard to the main difference between heteronomy and autonomy one can say that these sharply distinguished modes are mixed indeed in the real processes and become nearby indiscernible. In premature phases, moral claims are indoctrinated instead of being developed out of the moral feeling of the growing-up child. From the outside [357/358] education aims at the inner man, whereas morality takes the inverse direction from the very beginning.

Bearing this in mind, Rousseau states that there is no place at all for moral education in childhood. Discriminating sharply between disciplinizing and moralizing, Kant argues, that there is no trust in what is named moral education, but only hope for a revolution in mind resp. heart. Finally, Piaget and Kohlberg prove, that the evolution of moral consciousness is linked with the development of reciprocity in the cognitive structures, which is reached for the first time in the last (i. e. the sixth) stage of mature postconventional reasoning. In other words: in the end of moral education is its very begin. And there is no possibility to accelerate the required developmental processes.

⁶L. Kohlberg, This Special Section in Perspective. *Social Education*, vol. 40 (1976), n°. 4, p. 213.

8. *Moral education is challenged by the multi-dimensional and multi-valued situation of the modern world*

In trying to overcome the sharp dichotomy stated by Kant, one can better understand the question of Dieter Claessens: „How is it possible to socialize *without dogmatizing*?“⁷ What can education do *not to fixate* the child at stages of development, inadequate to mature moral consciousness?

I stated that values are incorporated in the atmosphere of a social milieu and tasted there, long before one speaks about them and forms an explicit judgement. Norms have to be observed and get their order of precedence corresponding to the grade of attention payed to them. But this ranking is multi-dimensional and full of tensions and contradictions. So, from the very beginning the child has to learn a double lesson: „to be loyal and to bear situations which remain contradictory.“⁸

To equate socialization with moral education one has to presuppose an intact social community or to formulate an ideal of it, as conservatism and optimistic liberalism do equally, but in different manners. However as things are, there is a growing difference between social norms and moral claims. To attempt to reduce this difference down to one level is the very step back into corruption of genuine moral consciousness.

If one takes a look at the families in modern society, they do not match the ideal made of them as an intimate and high-minded core-community of life. Bringing up children confronts the parents again with their own pasts, their buried needs or wants and all their intrinsic boundaries. So, they indeed impose themselves on the child in all respects and not only with their better part and moral integrity.

In the same intention one can state that schools and their climate of instruction are not beneficial to moral sensitivity and advance. Schooling has explicit standards and implicit norms, and the ones are not in accordance with the other. Concerning the official set of aims resp. tasks, there are differences between them which characterize the school-system as a multi-functional organisation. Depending on political and private interests, it has to qualify for vocations and to attribute social positions as well as to emancipate personalities and put them into their own midst. On the one hand, schools prepare their members for incorporation into the society and for identification with the political system. On the other hand, they are obliged to support the emancipation of the individual child and to strengthen its self-responsibility. Both perspectives are in conflict with each [358/359] other and are in no way harmonizing. To reach one goal implies in fact to lose the other.

As Kierkegaard states, the ethical domain is defined by an ultimate Either/Or: one has to choose the priority of the social or the priority of the self. Consequently, the value-cluster of education is modeled out of two sets of values which do not fit together and remain inconsistent. The discrepancies entangle the teacher's role as well as the role of pupils and robs their integrity. Seen from its final end Kierkegaard is aware that morality is apt to bridge the gap and to reunite the two spheres. But first the decisive step out of the social frame (Kierkegaard spoke of „das

⁷Cf. note 4.

⁸Dieter Claessens, *Familie und Wertsystem*, loc. cit., p. 151. See also my paper *Probleme der Gewissenserziehung in der Spannung zwischen Wertorientierung und Wirklichkeitsbezug*. In: *Rundbrief der Lehrgilde*, 30. Jahrgang Stuttgart 1980, Heft 1, S. 10-23.

Bestehende“ in the sense of the establishment) has to be done, and to do this is not the matter of a child.

Meanwhile, the situation of education and school teaching is full of cracks and practical contradictions between social claims and individual needs, curricular themes and spiritual outlooks, bureaucratic forms and personal relations. Being in this situation (which is the very *condition humaine*), mental sanity consists in solving contradictions, or better, one has to live with remaining contradictions without being wrecked on them.

9. Instruction in Ethics as a substitute for Religious Instruction

Now, we have to look at the special situation given in Germany. As you know, religious instruction of the catholic and protestant church is an obligatory subject in all public schools in Germany. But the situation is that many pupils are non-christians. So the government is forced to institutionalize a substitute for religious instruction, which officially is named ethics. Lessons in ethics have to be undenominational and ideologically neutral. They make allowances for a multicultural and multi-confessional clearing up of questions concerning the meaning of life and human destination as well as the place of the individual in society.

If ethical themes are subjects of instruction already in the first classes of primary school and not only as traditional part of philosophical studies in the latest classes of secondary school, the didactical provocation is enormous. There are controversies concerning the given basis, the suited subjects and the final aims of such an undertaking. Different types of ethics (for example social morals resp. Aristotelian ethos, ethics of Kantian reason and Humean tolerance, ethics of emotion and psychodynamic growth resp. integration) compete for maintaining their advantages. The quarrel is about, what importance should be given to the western Christian and humanistic traditions and how much attention should be payed to other non-european religions. Finally, the national constitution and democratic principles of living together have to be considered. But from wherever the sources flow: in now way can one rise above the situation of modern times which is characterized by a deep crisis and loss of meaning and value-experience. Pluralistic approaches and polyvalent view-points not yet developed are needed to encounter affairs of public and private interest.

10. Approaches to moral education

To create an appropriate curriculum, the question aims at the basic abilities and demands of moral competence.⁹ In the German and American discussion there are brought in several approaches. [359/360]

As to relate to the discussion in Germany, moral competence consists of

(1) reasoning about the grounds of moral validity and obligation (O. Höffe¹⁰),

⁹Cf. to the following considerations Heinz Schmid, *Didaktik des Ethikunterrichts* Bd. I: Grundlagen und Bd. II: Der Unterricht in Klasse 1-13. Verlag W. Kohlhammer Stuttgart Berlin Köln Mainz 1983 und 1984.

Schmidt labeled the main approaches to moral education and discussed them in vol. I. pp. 30-40 (German approaches) and pp. 40-65 (American approaches).

¹⁰ O. Höffe, *Ethikunterricht in pluralistischer Gesellschaft* (1974). In: O. Höffe, *Ethik und Politik. Grundmodelle und -probleme der Praktischen Philosophie*, Frankfurt a. M. 1979, S. 453-484.

- (2) opening up horizons of meaning and conduct (H. J. Türk¹¹),
- (3) striving for social engagement and responsibility (G. M. Teutsch¹²),
- (4) free insight in what is good (F. Kümmel¹³) and
- (5) critical reflection of the given political and social practise (J. Fellsches¹⁴).

Obviously, these competences differ not only in their respective frames of reference, but also corresponding to the age of young people and the type of school they attend.

As the American discussion shows, the task of moral education can be centered in

- (1) clearing up of value-decisions (L. E. Raths, M. Harmin, S. Simon¹⁵),
- (2) differentiation of social and personal awareness by confrontation and interaction (cf. the Lifeline-Project¹⁶),
- (3) stimulation of moral development by means of cognitive conflict-management (J. Piaget, L. Kohlberg, R. F. Galbraith, T. M. Jones et al.¹⁷) or
- (4) promotion of the emotional and whole psychodynamic evolution (C. Gilligan, M. L. Hoffman¹⁸), which is not reducible to isolated social, cognitive or emotional aspects of development.

If one tries to systematize the given approaches, moral education in school have at least four frames of reference resp. fields of tasks („Aufgabenfelder“):

- (1) The Self in Relation to the Others (the Interactional Approach),
- (2) Social Structures and Processes (the Structural Approach),
- (3) Meaning of Life and Orientation within Life (the Interpretational Approach) and
- (4) Theories of Ethics (the Philosophical Approach).¹⁹

To evaluate the given approaches, they have to relate themselves to the respective stages of development of children and to the life-task („Lebensaufgabe“) with which they are confronted at a special age.

These ages can be roughly divided in the early childhood dominated by the family (till 6 to 8 years), the mature childhood formed primarily by schooling (8 to 12 years) and the age of adolescence (13 years and upward).

¹¹H. J. Türk, Ethisches Wissen und moralisches Verhalten in moralpädagogischer Sicht. In: Religionsunterricht an höheren Schulen, Jg. 1981, H. 2, S. 98-107.

¹² Gotthard M. Teutsch, Die Vermittlung sozialverantwortlicher Einstellungen im Schulgeschehen (1974). In: L. Mauermann/E. Weber (Eds.), Der Erziehungsauftrag der Schule. Beiträge zur Theorie und Praxis moralischer Erziehung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Wertorientierung im Unterricht. Donauwörth 1978, S. 137-163.

¹³Friedrich Kümmel, Die Einsicht in das Gute als Aufgabe einer sittlichen Erziehung. Neue Deutsche Schule Verlagsges. mbH Essen 1968.

¹⁴J. Fellsches, Moralische Erziehung als politische Bildung. Heidelberg 1977.

¹⁵L. E. Raths/M. Harmin/S. Simon, Werte und Ziele. Methoden zur Sinnfindung im Unterricht. München 1976.

¹⁶P. McPhail/R. Ungood-Thomas/H. Chapman, Moral education in secondary school. 2. edition London 1973; G. Stachel, Lifeline - ein englisches Programm zum Unterricht über Lebensfragen. In: Katechetische Blätter 99/1974, pp. 571-587; reprinted in L. Mauermann/E. Weber (Hrsg.), loc. cit. (s. note 12), pp. 164-182.

¹⁷Cf. the publications of the „Center for Moral Education“ at Harvard University, Cambridge/Mass.; G. Portele (Ed.), Sozialisation und Moral: Neue Ansätze zur moralischen Entwicklung und Erziehung. Beltz Verlag Weinheim 1978; F. Oser, Moralische Urteil in Gruppen. Soziales Handeln. Verteilungsgerechtigkeit. Stufen der interaktiven Erziehung und ihre erzieherische Stimulation. Frankfurt a. M. 1981.

¹⁸C. Gilligan/J. Murphy, Development from adolescence to adulthood: The philosopher and the dilemma of the fact. In: D. Kuhn (Ed.), Intellectual development beyond childhood. San Francisco 1981; C. Gilligan, Justice and responsibility: Thinking about real dilemmas of moral conflict and choice. In: Chr. Brusselmans (Ed.), Toward moral and religions maturity. Morristown 1980; M. L. Hoffman, Eine Theorie der Moralentwicklung im Jugendalter. In: L. Montada (Hrsg.), Brennpunkte der Entwicklungspsychologie. Stuttgart 1979.

¹⁹To found a curriculum, Heinz Schmid choose four task-fields of moral instruction and discussed them in Heinz Schmid, Didaktik des Ethikunterrichts, vol. II, pp. 30-72.

Correlating these ages with the stages of moral development, the categorization of Piaget and Kohlberg is of high empirical evidence. In general it shows that the readiness for adaptation and the desire for orientation do outweigh the tendencies of refusal and protest. However, looking at the correspondence of the cognitive and moral development, it is important to realize that formal respectively structural thinking, which is presupposed for an adequate comprehension of moral contents and concepts, is available in adolescence for the first time. This fact limits decisively the repertory of moral instruction. Essential points of attention are that children experience meaning within their life, but do not ask for the meaning of life. Further, they are lacking of awareness of structures as such. Finally, the question is about what moral education has to do with ethics in the philosophical sense. [360/361]

11. Some discussion of the above listed task-fields resp. frames of reference

It is obvious, that in the American approaches social interaction and welfare is seen as the primary basis resp. frame of reference of moral education, whereas in Germany social and political structures, philosophical ethics and interpretational aspects are in the foreground of the discussion.

Very briefly I take into consideration the different approaches.

11.1 Interactional approach

Concerning the interactional approach, the aim can be centered in

- (1) the participation in community-life,
- (2) the emergence of an individual-centered consciousness and
- (3) attempts to mediate and balance both sides by competences of interaction and communication.

The polar scheme of finding and maintaining his own identity on the one side and being qualified for participation in the natural and social environment („Lebenswelt“) on the other, is apt to bridge the gap, although there is in fact no possibility of mediating the reciprocal positions and perspectives of single men totally. Americans affirm participation in community-life, whereas Germans lay emphasis on the individual and his self-realization.

11.2 Structural and philosophical approach

Regarding the structural approach in relation to Ethics, to treat moral issues at the level of reflection and conceptualization, structural analysis is a necessary step and the basic requirement of genuine understanding of moral phenomena. But as Piaget and Kohlberg show, the level of structural thinking is not granted and cannot be taken as a starting point of moral education at all. Concerning social and institutional structures, children live in them without being able to perceive them and to think about them in terms of abstraction and conceptualisation. Essential distinctions, for example between action and intention, outlook and inner views, expected resp. wanted and factual behavior cannot be presupposed. One has to bear in mind, that children are engaged participants and as such true spectators, concerning matters of morality but not yet thinkers. Children and uneducated adults who do not have awareness of structures and the

capacity of structural thinking experience structural effects only at the level of actions and are confronted with the difficulties resulting out of them. Difficulties may be connected with prescripts and prohibitions, claims and gratifications, rules and principles of equality, justice, fairness and reciprocity of relations. The didactical consequence is that instead of treating the structures themselves, one has to cope with the problems of action connected with them.

In this respect, the actions and experiences of others are of better use than the own actions. It allows one to look at and think about them from the outside and do not fixate the child in his own position. To confront one's own problems, alienation („Verfremdung“) and mirroring back („Zurückspiegeln“) is of good help. Another task is the understanding of the stranger, which at first sight is unfamiliar and unknown. [361/362]

Nevertheless, in complex modern societies social-structural competence is needed to handle adequately the institutions in which one is living and working.

11.3. Interpretational approach

Instead of structural analysis on the base of abstract conceptualization, the development of a moral consciousness in childhood has to be supported primarily by narrative and iconic resp. symbolic forms which relates themselves to actions and not to social and conceptual structures as such.²⁰ Of course, this has been seen in the tradition of pedagogical thinking since Comenius and Herbart. Stories (in the sense of *documents humaine*) and pictures of life („Lebensbilder“) evoke moral feelings and provide the opportunity to reason about motivations and scopes of the chosen protagonists. Doing so children do not grasp the moral concepts as such, but they are able to put questions and to communicate about moral themes in confrontation with the scenes and cases told to them. The nearer the protagonist is to their own life-situation, the more they can understand his feelings and behavior.

However, the genuine task of structural analysis can not be replaced by narrative and symbolic forms of teaching. If structures remain hidden in everyday life, there is no possibility of freeing oneself from their autonomous dynamics and injuries.

12. To come to an end

The linguistic turn in ethics (cf. Ch. W. Morris, Austin et al.) emphasizes the immediate forms of moralizing by speaking. Speaking with others, one does not describe things in a neutral manner, but praises and blames, recommends and judges, evaluates and criticizes. However, moral discourses in present time are misunderstood, if they are considered to convey the ‘thou ought‘ and the ‘I am obliged to do’. In order to keep pace with the time, moral education demands the step beyond of unreflected and consensual forms of practice. From the very beginning the issues of morality are complex and controversial. Therefore, arguing about moral questions today can in no way be dogmatizing, not with adults and certainly not with the children.

²⁰Cf. Heinz Schmidt, *Didaktik des Ethikunterrichts* vol. II, pp. 22-24; 94-96.