

Defending the Value of Education as a Public Good

Philosophical Dialogues on Education and
the State

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Introduction

Education and the State – Between Past and Future

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Introduction

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To consider education as a public good is controversial; it poses a challenge for scholars, especially those who adhere to the values of freedom, property, and privacy. In this undertaking, we depart from a perception of care for children and youth, around whom the practice of education is developed. We attempt to reconcile this with the world's own need for constant reconstruction, for which participation of new generations is paramount (Arendt 1961).

Although we highly value the principles of democratic society, we remain unconvinced that allowing for education to be entirely provided for by the private sector will guarantee that the care of which children and youth are so deserving will be made universally accessible. It seems therefore that the state remains instrumental in the advocacy of children's interests, as a safe harbour in face of the inequalities prevalent in society (Walzer 1983), a platform through which the opinions of civil society and the public sphere might be voiced. From this follows the central questions around which this monograph revolves: why defend education as a public good? What is to be protected and ensured within it? What ought to be the nature of the state in which education would be able to fulfil its goals?

Before allowing the contributing authors to answer the above, we need to outline the definitions to which frequent reference will be made and the conceptual framework within which they will operate. It would also be beneficial, as part of this foreword, to explore the relationship between education and the state, as well as the appropriate roles of teachers within educational practice. We will explore how teachers and educators ought themselves be educated, whose interests do educational researchers represent, and on whose behalf do those scholars, including philosophers of education, act.

Despite numerous critiques of modern democracy and its educational institutions, voiced by many among us, we believe that quality education may be appropriately ensured within this political model. However this does not relieve us of the necessity to treat the pedagogical mission with all the seriousness for which it calls, perceiving education as a practice in its own right, with its own internal goods. Further, a practice theoretically grounded in the academic discipline of pedagogy or in relevant (e.g. sociological, psychological,

historical, political, economic) interdisciplinary research and stemming from philosophical reflection on its own meaning and justification for treating it as a universal good, a service to all. Hence, a practice which is a public good.

We therefore accept democracy as the appropriate model for managing this esteemed good while simultaneously demanding that its universal accessibility be ensured at the highest level, thus fulfilling the criterion for good education. In doing so, we trust that it will benefit the individual and contribute to collective development and universal prosperity, maintaining the hope for a better tomorrow through service to the ideal of humanity.

The authors of individual chapters hail from various European countries as well as the USA and represent diverse approaches to education. While countries such as Poland experienced a time when, under communist rule, education was entirely state-owned and centrally managed, others, such as the United States, have since their foundation emphasised not only equality but also adhered to free-market principles, individual freedom, and respect for property legitimately acquired in competition with others. This variety of experience engenders various approaches to education, often based on a difference in philosophical opinion, but also predicated on the heritage of two distinct intellectual traditions, the so-called Continental and Anglo-American schools of thought. These differences will be manifest in our monograph, resulting in polyphonic, but also pluralistic positions. This was made possible through an attempt, in this monograph, at composing rather than opposing both traditions, bringing them into conversation. By the first tradition we mean the separate discipline of *Pädagogik* with its attempts at *Erziehung* and *Bildung*, the other denotes education explored interdisciplinarily and not as a separate discipline. By means of this monograph, both readers and contributors can familiarise themselves with traditions to which they do not belong, while also becoming acquainted with new perspectives on their own tradition (Biesta 2011, Saeverot and Biesta 2013, Leś 2021, 2022).

We see *education* as a distinct social practice, with goods that are proper to it and distinguish it, rather than a form of work experience preparing for practices in later adult life (Peters 1966, Dunne 2003, Higgins 2003, 2011, Hogan 2003, 2010, Noddings 2003, Smith 2004, Wright 2005). Such an outlook on education is well established in both Continental and Anglo-American traditions (Biesta 2011, 2016, Miri 2014, Stern 2018, Wrońska 2019, Siegel and Biesta 2022). While our scope encompasses not only formal, but also informal, home and family education as well as lifelong learning, given the task of defending education as a public good we will necessarily focus mainly on schooling and university study. In doing so one must however avoid examining education selectively, thereby running the risk of obscuring its sense. Education begins in the family, where nurture and formation take place under the curation of parents and/or carers, with the best interests of the child and the world in mind (Arendt identifies this as education, 1961, pp 185–6, 195–6). We are of the opinion that the practice of humanity, which one must learn and share, is cultivated in education from its onset. This process is performed by

adults (parents, teachers, and professors) and rightfully so, in relation to children, pupils, and students, who are thereby supported in growth, learning, and study.

Education has both private and public significance. The individual is concerned chiefly with their own education, striving for one's own knowledge and personal development, but also those of their family. Education can therefore be said to primarily serve the good of the individual receiving it as well as those in their environment who have been involved in the process. This in turn contributes to the wealth of the nation, benefiting everyone (Smith 1776); this entire domain of education therefore ought to be administered by the state, since it is a public good. A public good signifies something that serves the entire community, benefits all, and ought to be universally accessible, since progress is hindered by someone's exclusion (Pareto 2014). Therefore the state should ensure that every child has access to quality education. We believe that, because education is not a commodity to be purchased, this crucial domain cannot be left to the free market or organised according to market principles.

Our choice to defend the status of education as a public good however is not motivated by a desire to see complete state control of education. On the contrary, we seek to defend the individual character of education, which we believe endangered without the state's appropriate support and curation, without which education would find itself among commodities to be acquired or become an ideological instrument serving those in power. As academics, we cannot allow this to happen. The solution is to emphasise the merits of education as a good in its own right, an autonomous or 'intrinsic' good (a good in itself) – a phenomenon worthy of appreciation by all its participants, simply because it is good for them. Simultaneously, education contributes to the flourishing of society (advancing common good), unavoidably leading any democratic state to establish and enact education policy in pursuit of the quality of education (a public good). The two 'goods' mentioned above are complementary, even though they at times find themselves in tension with each other.

Theoretical support and supervision over this undertaking is supplied by the science of education, together with the philosophy of education, both of which reflect on the justification, criteria, and goals of this practice. It is within the academic community of educational researchers that guidelines and recommendations for the state are formulated regarding the actions it should undertake or subsidise as part of educational policy. Pedagogy, being both the craft of education and a field of academic study, does not train for other practices but rather educates specifically on and within education. Each participant of this practice has, through philosophical reflection on education itself, the opportunity to improve both the practice of education and themselves. This is an interconnected process since education as a practice cannot be improved without personal growth and self-improvement of its participants. Education is an encounter with another human being; therefore to want to improve education is to want ever better participation of educators in education (Hogan 2003, Higgins 2003, 2011).

When teaching education, we ought to constantly reconstruct it through our own research and/or philosophical inquiry, inviting our students to likewise critique and reflect.

As was mentioned, in this monograph we willingly embrace our tendency to present *education* as a distinctive practice and not merely a workshop preparing for the praxis of adult life. This is where we are at variance with MacIntyre (and Dunne 2002), though we draw on some of his theoretical proposals, including his concept of practice with its internal goods (2007[1981]), which serve as our point of departure for understanding education. MacIntyre's critique of modernity, and, as a consequence, liberal democracy which evidently lies at its forefront (1999), mobilises us to its defence. This applies particularly to his remarks on education in the USA, expressed from the position of an observer, which indicate underappreciation of and doubt regarding the value of teaching, schools, and contemporary universities (MacIntyre 2006, 2013). These cannot be disregarded. In place of public good, MacIntyre introduces intriguing notions concerning educated public, common mind, and common good. These insights are highly valuable to philosophers of education.

Our dispute with MacIntyre ultimately takes the form of a dialogue where we exchange arguments. It is assumed that concern for the value of education is a common ground. We argue that in order to secure it, we ought to actualise it in school practice, ensuring that the quality of education becomes a shared endeavour, perpetuated through public effort and concern. For MacIntyre, education remains elusive, obscured by the mundanity and imperfection of schools. While these aspects are manifest and subject to valid reproach, by depriving the school of the status it deserves and viewing it merely as a preparatory workshop it becomes inevitable that, stripped of its virtues, it becomes an easy target for criticism. In order to rise above mere critique of schooling, one must first endow it with the attributes of an inherently respectable practice, within which the teacher enables the student to become their own teacher; and what could be nobler?

We have established that teachers' participation in educational practice does not necessitate conducting their own research in a subject-specific discipline. This is because teaching has its own distinct, scientific discipline, namely pedagogy/educational science. It is therefore the task of a teacher to draw upon research from the field of pedagogy at every level of education, to evaluate their own classes, improve their teaching skills, and, finally, to share these insights with researchers exploring this domain. Engagement in education means building relationships with students while participation in the education implies the teacher's own learning. While we share MacIntyre's criticism of the fragmentation of academic knowledge (2006), this does not occur in education as a practice. The teacher attempts to explain the world in its entirety, not just a fragment of it, while demonstrating that they take responsibility for what they introduce (Arendt 1961). The resulting worldview cannot be a mosaic of isolated detail unrelated to each other, but must describe a holistic world. It is also worth noting MacIntyre's demand for higher

education to be accessible to everyone as that would provide students with the chance to have a significant voice in society (2013, p 214) – this enhances our argument in favour of education as a public good.

Other communitarian philosophers also come to our aid. Michael Walzer (1983) describes the principle of egalitarianism, which, in order to be enacted in education, requires prudent involvement of the state. On the other hand, he also cautions against the tyranny of politics, a concern which we share. Michael Sandel (2012, 2021) calls for an end to the narrative of success and social ascent employed as advertisements for higher education. He reminds us of its mission to shape students' character and promote civic and political virtues in order to foster truly free individuals who will, with understanding, act to secure their own good as well as the common good. He also advocates for expanding the offering of higher education to attract more eager individuals, beyond the narrow confines of current specialisation. This is a stance which we share and express through this monograph as we believe it applies to education as a whole.

Throughout the work education is considered both in its individual and communal aspect in a complimentary way; this is precisely what enables us to attribute to education the status of a public good. While it is evident that education requires investment of resources, we attempt to challenge the narrative within which it this becomes solely the responsibility of the individual, whose lack of success is then attributed to their failure to commit adequate resources. If education is to be a public matter, it calls for suitable subsidisation by the state in order to ensure accessibility of the best possible education to every student (Biesta 2015). Therefore, we believe that we must not only undermine the narrative of success but also the assumption that the quality of education stems from private funding – unless we accept that education is to become a commodity, its accessibility depends on its affordability.

In schools and other educational institutions, a significant portion of the student's day is spent among a cohort defined by their age range. Furthermore, some schools provide boarding facilities or even incorporate boarding as a part of their educational method. The school therefore becomes a distinct chapter, the stage in the life of a child or youth when they not only study and learn, but also shape their personalities. For Walzer, the school's 'intermediary mission' between state and society is its great asset (1983). Oakeshott on the other hand proposes to view the university as this intermediary, contrasted with the enjoyment of *scholē* (2001, pp 115–7). This description of education amongst other practices as an undertaking which is both socially and individually important calls for clarification. It makes reference to the analogue of family bonds which forms at school (at least in the early grades) and comes to define it; schooling warmed by familiarity ceases to be *technē*, or a set of means. This effort to construe the site of learning and teaching eludes similarity to a workshop (the inadequacy of which, as mentioned, is easily criticised) is based on the assumption that pedagogy as the science of education is an instruction in and through ethics rather than technology. Furthermore, teachers are not

mercenaries – not unlike parents, they are granted the right to recognise and follow their calling in accordance with their conscience, independently of any social instance or authority (Filek 2001). To become a parent or a teacher is to submit to a sense of service, to act for the sake of others. This lies at the foundations of social thought, common and public good. And, as mentioned, that which is public necessarily involves the participation of the state.

Our understanding of education having been established we may now proceed to a description of education as a public good. The term ‘public good’ is primarily employed in an economic sense and only secondarily when describing social and political issues. Among the various formulations of public good we will select those that can be reconciled with our understanding of education.

The concept of common sense (*sensus communis*) proves a useful point of departure since it provides a basis on which public good may be formulated and understood. For Arendt, the term denotes a sixth human sense which coordinates the other five or that mental power which grants access to the shared world (1978, p 50). For Gadamer, *sensus communis* is (next to *Bildung*) one of the leading concepts of humanism; in one definition, given by Shaftesbury, it rises to the rank of ‘a virtue of social intercourse’ (2004, p 22). Those formulations will prove useful in our considerations.

As for the general use of the adjective ‘public’ the Dictionary of Foreign Words asserts that it may be employed to mean: ‘universal; open, accessible, intended for the general public, for everyone, social, official’ (Kopaliński 1989, p 421); with another dictionary adding ‘non-private’ (ed. Szymczak 1992, p 1074). When ‘public’ is combined with ‘good’ to form ‘public good’, the resulting meaning varies depending on perspective. One such context would be that of the *res publica* (commonwealth) or public sphere (in contrast to ‘private’ in a negative sense, denoting lack of reference to or concern for the commonwealth). This stance was widely endorsed by Poles during the Enlightenment and was in fact characteristic of them, as attested primarily through the works of contemporary political writers and reformers of public life, reacting to times of the state’s crisis and loss of independence (Gorecki 1980, Wrońska 2013). Grzegorz Piramowicz, co-author and editor of the Acts of the National Education Commission, wrote:

National education is a matter of public interest (...) Instruction is part of education, as enlightenment of the mind through necessary knowledge, together with the training of young people in good manners, virtue, and decency, constitutes the entirety of education (...) What goal should be aimed at by public instruction? It is to enable the youth to acquire the necessary knowledge for their future years, which would guide them in private and public life towards complete fulfilment; what should a person, a Christian and a citizen, do to become useful to oneself and others.

(ed. Mrozowska 1973, pp 301–02)

This perspective is still present and cultivated in modern Poland (see e.g. Zamojski 2022).

This tradition is continued through our monograph as we consider public good to be an inherently public affair, or even synonymous with the public sphere (*res publica*). We situate education as a public good within democracy, in the belief that it is through this form of government that the state is best capable of recognising the interests of every citizen without demeaning or excluding anyone. This is done through the provision of a space for self-realisation while also upholding freedom of enterprise and entrepreneurship, in accordance with the principles of liberty and equality. For this, we turn to classical liberals such as Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill, who, although advocating for economic freedom, recognised the need for state intervention, including in the field of education as its quality cannot be guaranteed by the market alone (Mill 2006, Smith 1776). Mill is particularly convincing when he writes that ‘there are (...) things, of the worth of which the demand of market is by no means a test (...) and the want of which is least felt where the need is greatest’; ‘this is peculiarly true of those things which are chiefly useful as tending to raise a character of human beings’ (2006, p 947); so ‘(i)n the matter of education, the intervention of government is justifiable, because the case is not one in which the interest and judgement of the consumer are sufficient security for the goodness of the commodity’ (2006, p 950). We consider this the fundamental purpose of public education – to surpass private interest, to transcend it without obstruction or elimination.

We disagree with the current neoliberal approach to education management. Public education should be supported financially regardless of economic calculations, since it is an expense in the service of individuals rather than the state. It should be regarded as a good governed by its own principles, rather than those of the state. We are of course aware that actions taken by individuals serving their own interests are more effective than collective or public action. Public tasks are weighed down with the free-rider problem – there is an incentive to delay one’s commitment to responsibilities and wait for others to act. On the other hand however individual competitiveness lends itself to viewing others as rivals, which does not foster joint participation or a sense of community. The golden mean appears to be the following principle – to invest and get involved in that which one cares about while ensuring that this does not exclude anyone. This principle is fundamental to education; no child left behind!

David Labaree has formulated an approach which we find convincing and complementary to ours (2007). Although primarily referring to its American context, his framework can also be applied to the broad field of educational policy in democratic countries, including those with a communist past. Taking into account the attachment of Americans to liberal and individualist rules, Labaree proclaims public education to be an inevitably public good but advocates for preserving the right to change schools. He argues that public schools fulfil their role even for those who do not frequent them, because they

organise education for those who need it most; without them, American society would face more social problems. Therefore, even though education is viewed by most Americans as a private good, it remains in their common interest to support it for the benefit of all. It is also necessary to tax everyone to support public education; otherwise ‘there would be a large number of people enjoying a free ride at the expense of others’ (Labaree 2007, p 178). This interpretation of education as a public good greatly supplements the approach presented in our monograph. The author’s conclusions are worth quoting extensively:

it is reasonable for citizens to contribute voluntarily to the public education of other people’s children (that is, to agree to tax themselves for that purpose), because the indirect benefits they enjoy from this enterprise are real and compelling, and the indirect costs they would experience as a result of the failure of public education would equally real and compelling. (...) They cannot afford to live in a society in which large number of fellow citizens are unable to make intelligent decisions as voters or jurors, unable to contribute to the economic productivity as workers, and unable to follow the laws or share the values of the rest of society.

(pp 178–9)

By placing education among goods that have inherent value, we vehemently reject the possibility that anyone might be excluded from it at any stage. It is worth noting that no one loses in this arrangement. Everyone is better off, something which is mirrored in the economy.

It is time to return to MacIntyre, specifically his disapproval of modernism in general and of liberal democracy managing education as a market enterprise in particular. We do not believe democratic educational policy is doomed to failure, nor do we associate the crisis of education with modernism. We consider the cause of this crisis to be the submission of the entire domain of education to politics and the state, which seek to control education and subjugate it to their own ends. Philosophy of education not only contributes to educational practice, but constitutes education’s justification and defence (Murphy 2013, p 186). Every practice has a philosophical counterpart which represents and cares for its *ratio* – justifying it and either imparting or bolstering the sense of its mission. Every practice is also accompanied by a scientific discipline which develops its theory. For Education, these are the philosophy of education and pedagogy/educational science (Leś 2022). While some disciplines remain strictly theoretical, pedagogy, like medicine, sociology, and political science, develops parallel to practice, supporting it. Teacher and educator find support in pedagogical knowledge, they can conduct research and collaborate with academics. This relationship however highlights a danger – less robust practices which have a weaker grounding in science and philosophy require more support from the state, as a consequence putting their own intrinsic value at

risk, since they come to derive their value from their designation as an institution by the state, granting them extrinsic, instrumental value.

It is in this vein that we engage with MacIntyre's characterisation of teachers as the forlorn hope of modernity. James Bernard Murphy (2013, pp 183–4) provides a summary of it when recounting MacIntyre's critical stance on schooling, teaching, and the university. Murphy sees the teacher as endowed with the noble, moral goal of educating students to pursue true knowledge since knowledge is for him the intrinsic value of schooling (2007). MacIntyre on the other hand sees the teacher as a technician, a specialist hired to prepare individuals for entry into a specific area of practice. And only here can one improve oneself through moral virtues, without which no practice can survive. While we diagnose, with regret, both intellectual and moral virtues as being in crisis in today's schools, this does not condemn teachers to being 'the forlorn hope of modernity' – they can simply be educators in school.

We propose that schools can and ought to implement a theoretical and philosophical model of education, which alongside cultivating knowledge would foster a desire to become a human subject, a decent human being (sensitive, respectable, engaged, rational, responsible...). We call for greater expectations and higher demands to be placed on the schooling system, the main educational practice today, in order to preserve the legacy of Enlightenment modernism. This is a necessary precondition for the school to emerge from its crisis (see Arendt 1961). While MacIntyre also demands such action, he does not envision it as occurring within schooling, the purpose of which is to train, but in educational initiatives undertaken by the local community, which provides comprehensive education (1999). Counter to this, Murphy develops the concept of common schools which would cultivate knowledge (2007). However, if the school is only meant to provide knowledge and cultivate intellectual virtue, it is unsurprising that it falls prey to criticism as without moral virtues it lacks the basis for improving its educational practice. The school, seen as a practice, can cultivate both intellectual and moral virtues, discussed further in the later part of this introduction. While the former enhances understanding, provides knowledge, and imparts the ability to learn, the latter develops the student into a knowing and critically thinking subject; it teaches humanity while deepening all other domains of knowledge. During this process of learning together, the teacher plays a crucial role, ensuring and safeguarding human relationships in accordance with the criteria and intrinsic goods of liberal education (Peters 2008, Wrońska 2023).

In order to defend education as a public good, there need to be safeguards against paternalism and indoctrination from the state. To this end, it is useful to invoke Govert den Hartogh's concept of neutral goods, that is goods in which everyone in society wants to participate, regardless of their beliefs (2000). Education is among them. The author argues that it is unrealistic to expect all citizens of a given country to unanimously recognise and care for a specific good. Such is for instance the case with the environment – even though there is general recognition of nature as having intrinsic value, government

institutions are still needed as a peaceful way of providing arbitration (2000, p 26). By engaging in the production of public goods, including schools, the state can indirectly, through education, promote certain values that are important to society, while doing so directly would be an unacceptable form of paternalism (2000, p 25). We see education as being such an intrinsic good that it would become regulated or instrumentalised even without state arbitration, including perfectionist efforts to ensure accessibility. Analogously to art, that which is most valuable within education also cannot be sustained without state subsidies allocated through arbitration (Maris 2000).

However, to rely solely on support from the state falls short of democratic standards. It is impossible to overestimate the importance of educational initiatives of civil society, local and otherwise. These ensure a wide variety of educational offerings, catering to citizen's diverse needs and expectations. In order to democratically address inequalities, every citizen ought to demand, as their right, the inclusion of education into public policy (Wheeler-Bell 2016, p 134). This introduces the issue of the method and desirability of promoting not only intellectual but also civic virtues in schools while avoiding paternalism and indoctrination. This monograph broadly supports the approach to formal education as having this dual dimension (see Gutmann 1999, Beiner 2013, Westheimer 2017). It seems to be particularly justified in relation to post-communist countries which lacked the conditions to put civic virtues into practice after the Second World War up until the political transformations of the 1990s. But this is not only the case for the Eastern Block – simply promoting pursuit of knowledge seems to be a rather restrictive programme for a modern educational institution to fulfil in the era of advanced technology and AI. Furthermore, civic virtues can be regarded as moral virtues (Wrońska 2021). The science of education provides us with a strong theoretical underpinning in the form of the concept of *Bildung*, representing formative education, and also through the works of Dewey, for whom academic or intellectual virtues were moral traits (Dewey 2001, p 364). Naturally, the postulated inclusion of civic virtues in formal education ought not overshadow or take precedence over the propagation of intellectual virtues; however, school is not merely a place of knowledge. It forms a microcosm of society, where one may become an individual capable of entering into relationships with others. For this, moral and civic virtues are necessary, intellectual virtues alone do not suffice. Building upon this, we can clearly see the role of the state, which, through involvement in the democratic aspect of educational management, may support democracy itself (Gutmann 1999, Honneth 2015). Honneth's argumentation supports our position and even calls upon us to speak on behalf of educators and researchers in education. Finally, as a group of scholars of philosophy of education in our quest to find both normative and pragmatic justifications for democratic education and, more broadly, for the accurate role of education in democracy, we draw upon the greatest authorities of this discipline, such as Erasmus, Kant, Mill, Dewey, and many others.

Rather than burning the bridges that the Enlightenment built upon reason – the autonomy of the moral subject, respect for oneself and others as representatives of the human race – we are willing to accept them as a common basis on which to build our modernity; those values suffice for the creation of unity when held in common (Postman 1999). Unity can be built despite diversity and multiculturalism, through a democratic community based on mutual respect, through the acceptance of common rules and the law of the democratic state (Beiner 2013).

If education is the practice of humanity, which in turn is something that needs to be learnt and shared, education cannot occur without moral virtues such as responsibility, honesty, courage, patience, trust, loyalty, magnanimity, and so forth. This is how we interpret education as a public good which ought to be considered by the state. When discussing the public mission of education, we see that this ought to be fulfilled by public education, rather than the market. The power of education lies in the relationship between teachers and students. The school will fulfil its public role of transposing civic, intellectual, and moral stances onto the next generation when teachers cultivate a good life themselves (cf. Higgins 2011, Metro-Roland and Farber 2012). We also feel compelled to participate in this public mission and to this end contribute our thoughts and arguments in favour of education as a universal good which is both valuable and beneficial.

We will now offer a brief summary of each chapter of this monograph, illustrating how its goals were achieved through the contributions of each author. As mentioned, this book contains multiple perspectives about education in modern democratic societies. While these are largely in conformity with regard to the importance of education as an undertaking with its inherent, distinguishing goals, they are by far not uniform. Each voice is informed by a distinct current of thought regarding education and the state. The presence of voices representing established democratic societies such as Great Britain, Ireland, and the USA on one hand and Poland, a country rebuilding democracy after decades of communist rule on the other allows for a wide range of philosophical and educational positions to be made manifest. The result, a distinctly pluralist polyphony, allows for an expression of both Continental and Anglo-American intellectual tradition, enabling their dialogue.

The main body of this book is divided into three parts, each of which contains four chapters. The first section breaks ground by presenting the various philosophical stances regarding the relationship between state, politics, and education. Education is treated in a broader sense, including its implementation in schools and colleges, and identified as one of the most important and long-lasting social practices, with the status of a public good deserving of state support. Education is understood as an undertaking which enables the flourishing (comprehensive development) of individuals and benefits society both on a micro and macro scale. The arguments in favour of a responsible state policy meant to ensure the high quality and accessibility of education from kindergarten to university will be varied. Many different schools of thought

about education and the state are invoked. Their mutual dependence is emphasised, but so is their autonomy and the normative separateness of education from the state. In the first chapter, education is defined as a practice in its own right, possessing its own educational features (Pádraig Hogan, Chapter 1). The second chapter presents education in the contexts of schools' nature as communities, complementing anarchist theories of subsidiarity (Julian Stern, Chapter 2). In the third chapter, education is described as a normatively anchored undertaking, which as such risks becoming dependent on ideology and so must recover and preserve its relative autonomy through the robust ethical framework which it has developed (Tomasz Leś, Chapter 3). Finally, attention is drawn to how the ethics of education, with their focus on the good of learners, can support the state by means of actions (including acts of political forgiveness) undertaken by select, respected public entities which would perform the role of educators in socially and politically challenging situations, such as post-war suffering and trauma (Jarosław Horowski, Chapter 4).

The second, more detailed part focuses on education *sensu stricto*, that is, schooling, which nowadays is often equated with education. It is here that the influence of the state is most perceptible, within the broader phenomenon of instrumentalisation of formal education. The subsequent four chapters invoke various concepts of educational philosophy and politics in order to highlight the specific objective of schooling under scrutiny (from cultivation of humanity, through competition to responsibility and entrepreneurship). Their common denominator is the search for balance between the different aims of education, those that are intrinsic to it versus those that are derivative of it, liberal versus vocational, concern with the needs of individuals and the needs of society at large (Winch and Gingell 2008). The first chapter deliberately departs from the philosophy of Renaissance humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam in search of stimulus which would renew the value of learning both as a public good and a means of individual self-cultivation (Joanna Kostyło, Chapter 5). The second chapter attempts to re-establish the utility of competition in education, identified today with neoliberalism and criticised for limiting cooperation, by proposing it in a new, civilised version in conjunction with cooperation, nobility of goals, freedom, and liberal education (Katarzyna Wrońska, Chapter 6). The next presents social media as a new space in which a sense of responsibility for oneself and others, for the community, the state, and democracy, may be developed in young people (Marcin Rebes, Chapter 7). The final chapter reminds us of the value of entrepreneurship which is a skill that schools ought to equip children and adolescents with, preparing them for future work, independence, and responsibility for themselves and their dependants in adult life, contributing to the prosperity and welfare of society (Stephen Hicks, Chapter 8).

The third part develops on the second, discussing the future of education and outlining the challenges it faces. Pedagogy and educational studies (in the continental and Anglo-American traditions, respectively) will have to adapt for the sake of learners' self-becoming through the learning process. This might

be achieved through an emphasis on teaching tact and hermeneutics of learning, understood as a conversation with the world, with others, and oneself (Godoń, Chapter 9). Second, when illuminated with the philosophy of Hegel and Bergson, the crisis of liberal democracies based on social contract suggests a stronger grounding of education in the demands of life rather than adapting it to the voices of a changing majority (Piotr Kostyło, Chapter 10). Naturally, a discussion of the future of education would be incomplete without treating upon university reform. This is addressed in the penultimate chapter with a proposal of the ‘challenge-university’ founded upon learning (description) and ethics (valuation), to ensure that it optimally prepares students to teach at different levels of the educational system (Katarzyna Guzczalska and Wioleta Gałat, Chapter 11). Finally, doctoral education is considered and the need for its transformation is outlined, with an emphasis on its independence from the state, which would enable it to fulfil its critical role as an instrument of both intellectual autonomy and social debate (Mike Bottery, Chapter 12).

We hope that the reflections on the relationship between education and the state collected in this book will inspire new research as the conversations engendered here shall continue to resonate and inspire.

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