



**DISCUSSANT RESPONSE**

by

**Willy Wielemans**  
Department of Psychology and Education  
Catholic University of Louvain  
Louvain, BELGIUM

to Papers by **C. Davies** and **K. Schleicher**

The Eighteenth International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences  
Seoul, Korea August 23-26, 1991

©1991, International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences



**NATIONALISM AND WORLD UNITY  
EDUCATION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY**

Chapter 5.

**BEYOND EDUCATIONAL NATIONALISM**

Comments on the foregoing papers: **C. DAVIES**  
**K. SCHLEICHER**

**Introduction**

The papers presented in this chapter/section are both trying to go 'beyond educational nationalism'.

Davies tries to provide educators with a model of how nationalism can be discussed referring to the complexities of the relationships between the different layers of belonging and loyalties as experienced by the individuals.

Schleicher is searching for transnational and perhaps for international standards for cooperation in the face of growing nationalism and increasing need for global understanding. Because the 'human rights' are intended to be universal, his paper tries to point out to what extent these 'human rights' can be regarded as an important element for value clarification with regard to international peace and cooperation, and in which way a 'human rights education' may help to counterbalance a narrow nationalism in education.

**C. DAVIES: CONCENTRIC OVERLAPPING AND COMPETING LOYALTIES AND IDENTITIES: THE IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION**

**Summary**

The main thesis of Davies is that the links between the individual and the nation state, such as nationalism and the implications for education, cannot be studied in isolation but should be analysed in relation to the more complex total set of concentric loyalties and affiliations held by the individuals. These are schematically depicted including: the individual, the nuclear family, the local community/kin, the sub-nation/ethnic group/tribe, the nation state, regional or Pan-Ethnic blocks, and finally humankind.

Davies tried to provide educators with a model of how nationalism can be discussed. Not only he provided a model, but he also developed a discussion which proves that this model is applicable and effectual. In doing so he made extensive use of concrete examples. Most of these examples are taken from the societies and history of Europe simply because the author is more familiar with them than with similar cases in other continents.

By using these examples, Davies tries to demonstrate a method which is based on two principles, viz.

- the placing of nationalism and the nation within a complex hierarchical system rather than making it one half of such dichotomies as nationalism versus internationalism, or nation state versus ethnic minority;
- the development of a searching but balanced scepticism both investigating the many claims made by collectivities at all levels and aiming at reasonableness, consistency, and flexibility.

Especially this sceptical analysis can be brought to bear against a unit at any level in Davies' scheme, in particular if (corruption of) power is involved. Consequently, the sceptical educator should draw attention to not only the possible corruptions of the powerful but also of the often unrecognized corruptions of those who lack power. Setting the example the author tried to discuss issues such as 'good minorityship', 'underdoggerly' and 'the politics of humiliation'.

### Comments

#### 1. The model of concentric loyalties and affiliations (Tab. 1).

Reading this model (sceptically!) and haunting it throughout the paper, the following questions arise:

- 1.1. The author tries to depict a "more complex total set of concentric loyalties and affiliations held by individuals" (p. 1)
  - Is the individual one of the levels, or is it the basis or the ultimate source experiencing the relationship between the different layers of belonging and

loyalties? If the latter is preferential, why is Table 1 producing a contradictory impression since no distinction is made between the individual and other levels?

- If the author aims to depict a 'total set' of levels, why is a planetary level not mentioned? Is 'human-kind' the ultimate thinkable level?
- Moreover, Davies does not provide us with a kind of legitimation which has been (implicitly or explicitly) used for the construction of his set of levels.

1.2. Davies calls his set of loyalties and affiliations 'concentric'. The different levels overlap and merge ... (p.1). "It would be unwise", he said, "to assign a preponderant weight to any one of these layers (such as the nation state) nor can they be arranged in some kind of a *a priori* order of ethical preference" (p. 2).

However, on p. 46, he explicitly talks about "the placing of nationalism and nation within a complex hierarchical system ...". Does Davies' scheme implies a hierarchy of levels or not? If it includes a hierarchy, is it an ethical one, or is it a hierarchy on the basis of social/political status and power, or does it assumes evolutionary stages in loyalties and affiliations? The key point "that the focussing of an excessive or deficient amount of loyalty at any one level is undesirable" (p.3) does not necessarily exclude the development of a dynamic/changeable hierarchy in which each level has a relative place and function.

1.3. - Davies does not like to assign a preponderant weight to any one of his layers (such as the nation state). If the individual is perceived as one of the levels (which is both theoretically and practically possible: a Western society has as its foundations an aggregate of individuals; the group or society is not basic, but a plurality of competing individuals; the group does not decide -by consensus-, but -a majority or plurality of like-minded- individuals within the group make decisions) then the author seems to give a very important weight to that level... and, following

his advice, that might be unwise?! (I come back to that question in one of the following comments, see 3).

- Davies' table of levels did not stand an antropological test. It is common knowledge that both the experience and the conceptualization of the mentioned levels will have a considerably different meaning according to the many existing (sub)cultures in the world.

2. Why is the author so sure that his layers could not be arranged in some kind of *a priori* order of ethical preference? What are the reasons to exclude this preference or this (ethical/evolutionary) hierarchy? (See Kohlberg's levels of morality in Schleicher's paper p. 31-32).

Or is it up to the free individual to "make rational ethical choices"? (p. 2) This option seems to be related to the perception the author has concerning the role of education, viz. "education can and should instill in pupils such basic precepts of personal morality ... but on more complex social issues it would be presumptuous to try to tell them what their moral choices should be" (p. 2). Of course everybody would agree that educators should not to set themselves up as preachers or phanatics. However, are 'basic precepts' only possible at the level of personal morality, and thus not at the level of social, political, ecological morality? Is it so easy to make an explicit distinction between these two levels of morality? And, consequently, is it so easy to distinctively stake out the role of moral education?

3. Very crucial in the argument of Davies is the presupposition of the concept of 'the individual'. The author seems not to feel any necessity at all to make it an object of critical/sceptical analysis, notwithstanding the fact that this notion is the corner-stone of his paper (see expressions such as: "It should also help us to remember the central significance of the individual in many of the contentious issues that arise from group conflicts" p. 5; "A lack of respect for the rights and autonomy of the individual..." p. 6; "... to treat an individual on his or her personal

merits..." p. 7). Do 'individuals' really exist? Is this notion empirically based, or does it belong to the category of ideologies (meaning an interest/benefit oriented definition of one or another dimension of reality)? Is it more than only an antropological illusion? (See Lévi-Strauss, Foucault...) Theories on socialization, on cosmic and human evolution, on micro-physical phenomena, re-interpretations of Freudian theories etc. are increasingly emphasizing that human existence is a 'being-in-relation': to be is to be related. On the basis of both the age-old evolution and the genesis of individual life, man has to recognize himself as a being who is essentially and originally characterized by 'relatedness'. This relational thinking contains the idea that the human individual has no intrinsic properties which are independent from his environment. Autonomous individuals are abstractions because their properties can be observed and defined only by means of their interactions with other individuals who in their turn also exist in interrelation. Thus, human beings can never be conceived of as complete autonomous individuals. On the contrary, they should be seen as 'nodal points of mutual relationships', as an accumulation of relations, which in their turn point to other relations. Human subjects, thus, are determined by their connections with the whole. They cannot be conceived as the ultimate, fundamental and no further divisible building-stones of society. They cannot be described in terms of what they are on themselves, but in terms of their relatedness to nature, to other people, to socio-economic events and institutions, and to the socialized sediment of all this in their own psyche.

This alternative 'image of man' invites to deduce both the logical and empirical consequences concerning 'individual freedom', 'individual rights and duties', 'individual autonomy' etc. E.g. another image of autonomy is emerging from this alternative thinking: Unless as a condition of true relatedness, live is apparently eschewing autonomy. Autonomy, as a core concept in human development, seems to be more of an obstacle for development than as an honourable objective. Autonomy, as a target and as an ultimate aim of

education and schooling, is increasingly experienced as an incapability both to a full life participation and to an enriching interaction. It is only one of the necessary conditions to interrelatedness. Autonomy and independence are increasingly interpreted as obsessional concepts, characteristic to the western culture. Autonomy thus becomes a devalued western worth. The fundamental code of cosmic life is putting vital relatedness at the very centre. To this, autonomy is only a subordinated condition and, therefore, no ultimate aim at all.

This alternative 'image of man' undoubtedly creates some difficulties both in Davies' scheme of levels and in the interactions between the different levels. Unless the author is fully aware of what he says on p. 1: "Even this concentric scheme is an over-simplified model of a social reality in which different levels of loyalty impinge, overlap and merge like the orbits of comets and asteroids..."; and unless the author could agree on the following addition to one of his sentences: "What is needed in education is... sceptical thinking in which all actual and projected political arrangements and ideals (including the notion of the individual) are subjected to similar degrees of doubt" (p. 13).

4. The author gives the impression that there is a causal correlation between the centralization of state welfare and education on the one hand, and rapid growth in crime rates and in the incidence of illegitimacy on the other (p. 8). Are these problems going to be resolved if state welfare does not exclude the existence of local institutions of kin and community? Or is a (centralized) state welfare by its own nature excluding this kind of local institutions (which consequently results in higher rates of crime etc.)?
5. I expect that many sceptical readers may throw doubt upon Davies' choice for recent procedures based on compromise, concession, and conciliation which he estimates being (in certain respects) superior to the old-style search for justice (p. 33-34). To what extent and in what kind of cases is this market place-model desirable to be applied to the expected contradictions and conflicts between the pairs



- of Davies' levels?
6. In his 'Above and below the Nation State' (p. 39-42) Davies relativizes the present situation of nation states on the basis of examples of the past. However, this kind of reasoning does not take into account factors such as time, evolution, progress and the like...
  7. Davies enumerates three categories of values, viz. absolute, universal, and particular (p. 46-47). It seems he has no difficulty to accept that e.g. absolute values do exist (absolute values meaning that they exist regardless time and space, regardless historical, cultural and geographical causal sources and embedment). Do such values really exist? If so, what kind of concrete examples do we have in mind?

#### K. SCHLEICHER: THE GLOBAL DIMENSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

##### Summary

Schleicher has reasons for not beginning his paper immediately with explaining curricular aims or teaching concepts. He first needs to compare the fundamental demands of different international agreements and then to contrast them with manifold injuries. After it has been summarized how difficult it is to offer a somehow integrative overview of the most fundamental 'human rights' and why the 'human rights education' is urgently needed (chap. 1), he pointed out, first, to what extent the interpretations of 'human rights' are culture- and ideology-specific, and second, how national self-concepts and politics influence the 'human rights education' (chap. 2).

In chap. 3, the author is conscious of the fact that successful teaching depends as much on acquaintance with the 'human rights' as on awareness of the students' perceptions. Therefore, he sketched to what extent young people are concerned about 'human rights' and in which way teaching may consider their psychological and moral development. Indeed, psychological and school research offer some hints, such as:

- which age-related aspects have to be considered in the teaching of 'human rights';

- why information does not necessarily lead to reflective behaviour and
- why considerable attention has to be given to the students' interest, experience and knowledge.

On the basis of Schleicher's argument it appears to be reasonable that a 'human rights education' starts in primary school years in a preparatory way. But not until late puberty, culture- and ideology-specific implications can be touched upon.

Finally, in his chap. 4, Schleicher tries to illustrate that a 'human rights education' depends as much on in-formal as on formal teaching and that exemplifying insights need a structural framework. In particular, he highlighted why a 'human rights education' demands a matching of school atmosphere, active methods, and clearly structured information.

Concluding, the author draws attention to the fact that, originally and historically, the universal 'human rights' were rooted in very specific antropological and metaphysical value-orientations. However, today these orientations are largely disavowed resulting in a narrow legal positivism which is unable to bring about a new minimal ethical consensus. Schleicher's choice for such a new consensus is inspired by what he calls 'an ethic for survival', based on widely accepted rules and providing the necessary conditions by which the human species and its environment can be maintained. This 'ethic for survival' thus becomes a certain substitute for the fundamental metaphysical and antropological legitimation of the 'human rights'.

#### Comments

1. Schleicher states that historically the development of universal 'human rights' resulted from specific antropological and metaphysical perceptions (p. 1; 45-46). On p. 6 and 16, he states that the 'human rights' are strongly linked to liberal European traditions. Related to this statement the following questions arise:

- What kind of underlying assumptions and perceptions has the author in mind? There is a need for more detailed explanation on this issue!

- The author gives the impression that he has to find a more fundamental reason for the fact that 'human rights education' has not been very successful yet. The disavowal of the original value-orientations underlying the 'human rights' is seen as the main reason. The world in which the 'human rights' originated must have been better since today we live in a "materialistic, egoistic and hedonistic world" (p. 46) disavowing the implicit value-orientations which were inspiring to the 'human rights'.

Why does the author need this kind of contrast-thinking in order to argue that an agreement on a new minimal ethical consensus is needed?

- Do we need an 'ethic of survival' because of the fact that the original metaphysical value-orientations are not recognized any more? Do we need only a *substitute* for the traditional metaphysical legitimation of the 'human rights', or is the new ethical consensus an ethic sufficiently valuable on itself? If this would be the case, then it may lead not only to the realization of the 'human rights' but even more to the all-embracing 'rights of the planet'!
2. Is the liberal European tradition, which was a source of inspiration for the formulation of the 'human rights', not antropocentric in essence? Is at the same time this antropocentrism not the very weak point of the whole conception of the 'human rights'?

Many contemporary scholars critically argue that in western culture up to now the solitary individual existence has been strongly emphasized. Both Greek tradition and Christianity, supporting each other, contributed to this development. Man, being imbued with God's breath, was standing above nature. As crowned head of the creation he had been elevated to lord and master of everything. During the post-feudal period a liberal interpretation of existence has been added. This interpretation was supported and cautiously kept by the then ruling class, viz. the enterprising citizenry. In view of these historically far and near roots one can understand that, during the last centuries in

Europe, individualistic and personalistic thinking was highly dominant. This is expressed e.g. in Descartes' philosophy where the verb 'cogitare' is narrowed to merely 'cogito', or to an individual, solitary act of thinking. In recent history the existentialistic idea that the essence of man is to be freed from his connection and to exalt himself above relatedness, has been strongly tempted by authors such as Lévi-Strauss. This latter has always drawn the attention on human partiality and on the fact that we are only an aspect of an all-embracing totality and structure.

Foucault too is critically and relativizingly looking at human subject as it appears in western history of thoughts. In his "Les mots et les choses" he concludes that the affirmation of the subject is quite recent, that the subject is only an historical idea, and that it is predestinated to be speedily wiped out "as a face of sand at the edge of the sea".

In general, it could be argued that particularly structuralism breaks with the idea of an independent subject; it might only be an antropological illusion. Inspired by advanced human sciences, structuralists discovered the subject being a kind of ideology, an illusory evidence which has to be overcome in order to make it possible for man to really know himself. This subject illusion masks the fact that western man lives 'to a large extent' in anonymous structures that are secretly determining him.

Moreover, this ego-cult is expressed in a positioned and fragmented cultivation of science, in a technical-economic control over nature, in educational systems highly promoting individual achievement and hard competition and selection, in concepts of education whereby youngsters are trained to be strategists in utilitarianism.

This criticism cannot be waved away as mere 'doomwatching'. There is a growing group of remarkable thinkers arguing that this ego-cult is threatening and destructive both for man and for the planet he is living on.

Also I am much in favour of a de-centralisation of the

individual and of the 'ego', both in our culture in general and particularly in education. Even more, I am inclined to situate this disenchantment of the 'ego' in the long evolution of man as well as in the row of the great 'emancipating criticisms' concerning man in his relation to the world and to himself. So, due to the Copernican revolution man gained the insight that not the earth is the centre of the cosmos. From geo-centric thinking man was moved towards helio-centric interpretation. As a second relativizing figure I look at Darwin who pricked the uniqueness of man by integrating him in an age-old process of evolution. The third figure is Freud who made man's traditional conception of freedom waver and who proved how reasoning and decision making is highly rooted in a vital and energetic subconsciousness.

I now have the impression that contemporary ego-criticism could be integrated as a fourth freeing movement in which man is promoted to more realism as well as to a deeper wisdom concerning himself and concerning his true relationship with nature and the world.

If this (liberal) European tradition was the main source of inspiration for the formulation of the 'human rights' than the remaining typical European doubt is now strongly criticizing the underlying value assumptions of this tradition. In other words antropocentrism is questioned, and eco-centrism seems to be a valuable and much desirable alternative. In this alternative the 'human rights' are not excluded at all; on the contrary, they are included, since human individuals (though not being any more the highest and ultimate value!) are integrated and relational entities of the planetary system. However, this living (because self-regulating) planet (called *Gaia*) is the ultimate normative value. The rights of the planet (*Gaian rights*) are supreme and ultimately normative. That means that the 'human rights' are subordinated to the Gaian rights.

Thus, I do chose for an alternative ethical consensus, not only because of the inspiring liberal European tradition is burned out and disavowed, but because the assumptions of

the 'human rights' are not sufficiently guaranteeing that higher values and rights, viz. those related to the living planet, will be realized.

Would an Asian conception of the 'human rights' (which don't deduce them from natural law but relates them to the cosmic integration of man - see Schleicher p. 18) not inspiring for a new ethical consensus?

3. The 'human rights' stimulated the construction of other International Covenants such as the 'Covenant on economic, social and cultural rights' (1966). According to this agreement all nations shall have at their unlimited disposal their national resources - regardless of obligations resulting from international cooperation.

However, this covenant may well contribute to the rights both of individuals and peoples, but it does not guarantee that ecological rights will be respected. Once again, this covenant seems to be antropocentric and not eco-centric!

4. Schleicher rightly observes that the 'human rights' are interpreted according to differing antropological cultural 'images of man and his world'. However, the danger is that these interpretations could easily being abused as a legitimation of the underlying misleading ideologies. Sceptical Europeans should not forget that also the inspiring liberal European tradition, emphasizing the freedom of the individual and his right to self-determination, risks being one of these (misleading) antropocentric ideologies.
5. The author refers to a European public opinion survey of 1982 showing that a large proportion of young people seem to believe in basic 'human rights'. I wonder whether the outcomes would still be the same if today this survey would be repeated. I expect that the percentage indicating those who feel inclined to engage themselves for environmental protection would be higher than ten years ago.
6. I guess that the levels of morality as elaborated by Kohlberg could also be applicable to ecological education.
7. Schleicher constructs a framework (as an exemplary insight in the process of 'human rights education') in which four levels are differentiated, viz. individual rights, multiculturalism, the national context, and global interdepen-



dence. At the same time his objective is to interrelate ethical, cultural and political dimensions.

However, on his agenda I do miss an economic as well as an ecological dimension to critically analyse and interpret his four levels. The reason for adding an economic dimension is that economics not seldom create structures and powers which are both implicitly and explicitly hindering the realization of the 'human rights'. If the economic dimension is excluded from his curriculum then he also excludes the possibility to discover economics as one of the potential breakers (in some cases also facilitators) of 'human rights'. The ecological dimension, on the other hand, is needed to control the excesses of the so-called (individual) 'human rights'. Schleicher is not explicitly referring to the ecological dimension when he explains his 'global dimension' (p. 42).

8. Finally, I would like to suggest not to use a quite negative ethic of survival. Is the main activity of human beings on earth 'to survive'? Do we have to make an ethic to prevent the very end of the world, the crack of doom? Is it not (also educationally) better to present a positive ethic of cum-vivere, i.e. an ethical perception of living together with, and integrated into both the dynamic and organic life of the planet? In other words, we not only have to sur-vive, but to con-vive (if this word may exist in English?); not an antropocentric planned activity and strategy of survival is much needed, but an eco-centric, organically integrated ethic of *con-viva!*

This alternative ethical consensus may well be a new normative pattern both beyond educational nationalism and beyond 'human rights education', and thus could provide us with a solution to the problem of nationalism/internationalism which after all is at the focus of the Seoul-ICUS-conference