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In this article, we argue that it is necessary to think of co-operation not simply as a skill, but as a virtue, and consequently that what distinguishes a genuine co-operative pedagogy is that it is about forming habits that are virtues. We begin by examining Richard Sennett's account of co-operation in Together. We find in Sennett's assessment of the predicament afflicting co-operation in contemporary capitalist economies an invitation to reflect on the formation of the co-operative character. In the subsequent two parts of the article we look critically at the dominant value of post-Enlightenment education — the aspiration to create autonomous learners, using the work of Michel Foucault on education. Foucault offers a critique of the manner in which the Enlightenment values of transparency, instrumentalism and autonomy create students that are isolated rather than co-operators. However, while isolating the problem of autonomy, Foucault does not provide any overt alternative reframing of the pedagogical experience. Thus, we attempt to reposition the question of autonomy in line with an argument for the benefits of co-operative character: autonomy emerges from co-operation not from isolation. Finally, we offer a brief genealogy of Robert Owen's early views about educational reform, with the aim of highlighting the ambiguity of his proposals and the legacy they left. We conclude by arguing that it is critical to maintain that co-operation is a phronetic virtue because co-operation goes all the way down through our being: being a co-operator is not a skill but who we are.

Introduction

In this article, we propose to argue for the virtues of co-operation. Simply understood, co-operation is doing things together. There would seem to be little to object to in such a definition, it being tautologically true that that is what co-operation is. Yet, for all that it is correct, it tempts us into something of a trap, inviting us to see co-operation as a skill. By contrast, we want to insist that co-operation is a question of character. It is because co-operation is a matter of character that education has always been at the heart of the co-operative movement. Certainly, the early co-operatives sought to up-skill their members, and many of the educational initiatives undertaken in co-operative societies were designed to do just that, but for Robert Owen what was truly at issue in education was the formation of character. His legacy, we will argue, in this respect is not unambiguous, but what we can take from it is a useful corrective to the contemporary tendency to reduce co-operative pedagogy to a method that "combine[s] and promote[s] academic and social skills" (Sharan, 2010: 301). As straightforward as such a definition is, it is not helpful for understanding the virtues of co-operative education, which, as virtues, go all the way down. Our point, put polemically, could be said to be the following: being good at working together is not the same as being a genuine co-operator. The virtues of co-operation inform the genuine co-operator's deepest sense of themselves, and they are what tie them to their community with enduring bonds of support and mutuality. They are fundamentally different from the mere 'social *skills*' that serve the short-term interests at issue in the temporary contracts that hold sway in what is nowadays known as 'team-working'. For this reason, we want to argue that what makes a genuine co-operative pedagogy distinctive is that it is about forming habits that are virtues. To show this we argue at the intersection of an Aristotelian and Foucauldian framework, which, within the literature on co-operative education, are untapped critical resources.

In what follows, we begin by examining Richard Sennett's account of co-operation in his recent book, *Together: The Rituals and Pleasures of Cooperation* (2012). Sennett is particularly valuable in clarifying the historicity of co-operation. While we argue that Sennett is pessimistic in his outlook on the impoverishment of co-operation at this particular historical juncture, we also argue that our ability to co-operate is ever present and can be revitalised at

any time. In the subsequent two parts of this article our focus is on co-operative education. Our intent is critical in the sense that we want to redress what we think are two powerful impediments to the formulation of a radical co-operative pedagogy that strengthens effectively the ethos of co-operation amongst students. First, we look critically at the dominant value of post-Enlightenment education — the aspiration to create autonomous learners. To do this we examine the work of Michel Foucault on education (Foucault, 1971; 1977). Foucault offers a critique of the manner in which the Enlightenment values of transparency, instrumentalism and autonomy create students that are isolated rather than co-operators. Ultimately for Foucault, autonomous character is impossible to achieve, as those who are engaged in the learning process are not immune to historical processes, nor is a learner immune from social or power relations. However, while isolating the problem of autonomy, Foucault does not provide any overt alternative reframing of the pedagogical experience within such power relations. Thus, we will attempt to reposition the question of autonomy in line with an argument for the benefits of co-operative character: autonomy emerges from co-operation not from isolation. Finally, we offer a brief genealogy of Robert Owen's early views about educational reform, with the aim of highlighting the ambiguity of his proposals and the legacy they left. We again draw on Foucault to do this, inasmuch as Foucault's genealogies of power are valuable for separating the undeniable mechanistic and industrial conception of education within the history of the co-operative movement from a broader conception of pedagogical and civic virtue.

1. Co-operation and Character

Richard Sennett's *Together: The Rituals, Pleasures and Politics of Cooperation* (2012) is the second volume in a trilogy of books about the skills required for getting on in everyday life. The first volume, *The Craftsman* (2009), was about the skills of making, and the delight of doing something well for its own sake. The third book, Sennett says in the preface to *Together*, will be about urban design, and it will address his worry that today's cities are poorly made places, rigid and homogenous in form, unaccommodating of personal and shared experiences. *Together* is a pivotal work in the architecture of the trilogy; co-operation, Sennett argues, is a social asset in successful practical activity: it oils the mechanics of getting things done and allows us to supplement our own abilities with other skills.

The parameters of Sennett's project are classical, Aristotelian even — and this, as we will show later in this essay, is not without some bearing on the account of co-operation Sennett provides. Sennett moves from a work that deals with making, or what Aristotle called *tekhne*, to a book about politics, in the sense of the making of the *polis*, via a reflection on co-operation. All three, Sennett tells us, make up what he calls the *homo faber* project: man, he claims, following an ancient argument, is a maker; but in making things he also shapes himself.

Sennett's motivation in recalling these traditional claims and arguments is critical, making possible an assessment of the deficiencies of contemporary existence. Modern society, he says, is "de-skilling people in the conduct of everyday life", and as a result humanity exerts less mastery over the processes that "shape personal effort, social relations and the natural environment" (Sennett, 2012: x). In contrast to the usual view that we make more and better use of resources than earlier generations, that design has grown more sophisticated, more adept at catering not only to more needs but is now more suited to individual needs, Sennett argues that as the world clogs up with stuff we increasingly lack the know-how to use objects and machines well. Since we have lost the capacity to use things well, we have also lost the capacity to make things well. Moreover, since the skills of the hand are linked to the skills of the mind, this amounts to a deterioration of character. The problem though does not just lie in our loss of those skills, it lies in a loss of awareness of what we have lost. 'Blessed' though we might be with an abundance of material goods and technologies unknown to earlier ages (at least in the most advanced global economies), webbed-up and totally networked, we are less able to live a goodlife, less able to achieve what Aristotle called *eudaimonia*, because we do not see ourselves as failing to do so.

Of course, this failing is not simply a personal one. Recalling Aristotle, Sennett argues that man is by nature a political animal. The *polis* — the city — is, according to Aristotle, made up of diverse family groups, diverse demes, with different loyalties; a homogeneous group, Aristotle says, would not make-up a city. To live together politically it is necessary to negotiate these loyalties. However, if by nature we are political animals, disposed towards society, it is still necessary to learn to live with others. Learning to live with others, working with them to mutually beneficial ends, is a skill according to Sennett — the skill of co-operation, which involves

> joining people who have separate or conflicting interests, who do not feel good about each other, who are unequal, or who simply don't understand each other" (Sennett, 2012: 6).

It is a skill which, like other skills, is being lost to the contemporary world. Most obviously, it is eroded by the renascence of tribalism in modern societies, the 'us' vs 'them' attitude, found in nationalism, racism, religious intolerance, misogyny, homophobia, that "couples solidarity with those like yourself to aggression against those who differ" (Sennett, 2012: 6). Contemporary life, with its broadening of the gap between rich and poor, feeds such tribalism insofar as such economic inequalities translate into social distance. But co-operation is also eroded in other ways by flexible capitalism; it is eroded by the prevalence of the temporary contract, which discourages people from getting involved with one another, or with problems that are not their immediate business, and through the birth of a new character-type, the person who responds to the anxieties occasioned by the fragmentation of experience in modern polities, by withdrawing into themselves. This character, which Sennett labels the "unco-operative self", withdraws into self-absorption, and achieves equilibrium of spirit — an historical degeneration of the Ancient *apatheia* (Festugiere, 1956) or the Epicurean *ataraxia* (Epicurus, 2012) — by withdrawing from all effective contact with others and the world, or at least those others and that world that threaten to put into question its own self-assurances.

There is something important in Sennett's claim about the historicity of character — a claim that in part goes back to his echoing of Marx's argument that in making things man makes himself. It is important because it allows us to see that what we are — or better, "*who* we are", since we are talking about character, talking about the desires, dispositions, preferences, aversions, choices, inclinations and habits, our ways of acting and being, that make up ourselves — is not an immutable given, or a fixed genetic inheritance. Instead, character, as Sennett shows (at times despite himself, or despite his claim that co-operation is hard-wired into our genes), is an invention; although it is not voluntary, in the sense that we cannot consciously create our own character, it is nonetheless historical. This is nowhere better exemplified than in the chapter devoted to the character of the "unco-operative self" in which Sennett shows how

> a distinctive character type is emerging in modern society, the person who can't manage demanding, complex, forms of social engagement, and so withdraws"

and who consequently "loses the desire to co-operate" (Sennett, 2012: 179).

Sennett's *Together* could be seen as a profoundly pessimistic work, in that it charts the weakening of co-operation in the contemporary world; it could also be argued that this particular thesis concerning the decline of co-operation, of being-co-operative, is belied by the vitality of co-operatives across the globe.[1] But just as Sennett's work is not as one-sided as our account of it so far may seem to imply — for as he says in the conclusion to *Together*, for all that impedes our ability to co-operate in the contemporary world, we nonetheless "want to get something done together" (Sennett, 2012: 274) — nor does it go without saying that for all that there is a well-documented growth in co-operatives and co-operative endeavours, the movement has not suffered its own equally well-documented set-backs and failures. What is really important about Sennett's work is that it shows that the fate of co-operation is inseparable from the shaping of character: the weakening of co-operation as a form of exchange that is mutually beneficially to those party to it, or as a mutually beneficial and supportive form of behaviour, is inextricable from a change — or perhaps to use a less neutral term, from a "corrosion" of character. The historical forces that invite and impede co-operation are complex and cannot be compassed in so short an article as this. However, if it is true that the fate of

co-operation is linked to the fate of character — then a study of those historical forces would be a study of the history of the co-operative character. We are currently researching just such a study. What follows here is a preliminary examination of two related issues that have arisen from our research for that study, and that will, in amplified form, be key to it. However, in order to introduce them we need to conclude the first part of our essay with a few words about the idea of character itself.

When we speak of character — when we give witness to the good character of an acquaintance, or when we say that someone is of a generous character — we are speaking about someone's disposition to act or behave in a certain way. Moreover, if character is tied to ethical values, it nonetheless does not denote a purely interior attitude or set of principles; character is expressed in action and behaviour (and by extension the co-operative character is a collective activity). It is also manifest through our reactions to events and situations, and by virtue of our feelings, as much as it is by what we do: someone may do no more than smile or smirk at the misfortune of another, but catching a glimpse of that reaction may make us suspect that, despite their overt claims to the contrary, they are cruel in character. But we may only suspect this since character is not something momentary; it is sustained. If the smile or the smirk were but a one-off, not repeated or not echoed in other behaviour or responses, we would dismiss it as either being accidental or out-of-character. Finally, and as Aristotle knew, character is not a natural endowment. That is not to say that our characters are unnatural, but they are not present by nature. Character, Aristotle says, is acquired by habit (Aristotle, 2002, Bk II). We develop our character by virtue of what we do, or by repetition of doing — and for this reason, from Antiquity the creation or formation of character was closely connected with schooling — that is, with training and education. Or to put this the other way round, and in order to bring out a more recent, profound but perhaps invisible transformation, until recently the function of education was held to be the formation of character rather than training in transferable skills.

We will take up this idea of education as the formation of character in the third part of our essay, when we sketch out a theory of co-operative character. However, before doing so, we want next to examine Foucault's problematising of the question of autonomy.

2. The Skills Trap: Foucault and Enlightenment Autonomy

Foucault's writings do not overtly offer a theory of pedagogy. In fact, Foucault does not ever address the question of pedagogy overtly. However, in two 1971 interviews — one in *Partisan Review* and one in *Actuel* — Foucault responds briefly to questions of education (Foucault, 1971; 1977). Here Foucault, in light of May 1968, speculates on the aims and purposes of education, and briefly sketches an alternative in opposition to some educational paradoxes which he discerns in the production and transmission of higher education. Basically, university education is paradoxically a site of exclusion and integration simultaneously. On the one hand, the student is removed from society, on a quasi-Ludic campus space. This means individual students implicitly are at once both independent and radically constrained. This paradox is maintained to the extent that the University space has both elements of play and gravitas. On the one hand there is the theatrical performance of hierarchic relationships, and at the same time courts of academic evaluation, which are for Foucault essentially fictive distractions (Foucault, 1971:193). This social structure mirrors an initiation of separation — in this context, the student has nothing to do with 'real life,' existing in an 'artificial' and 'theatrical' society (Foucault, 1971: 194). On the other hand, student life is all about integration and absorption where the student is reproduced along

> socially desirable models of behaviour, types of ambition, outlines of political behaviour, so that this ritual of exclusions will finally take on the value of inclusion and recuperation or reabsorption (Foucault, 1971: 194).

The purpose of a university education is on a contradictory footing, since university education, at least superficially, is reactive, backward looking, and inherently conservative in its desire to

produce students with a limited set of skills or dispositions, disciplined in appropriate ways for the reproduction of society.

For Foucault, pedagogy at its best should be a form of unmasking,[2] a form of theatrical play, undermining the piety and faux-gravitas of bourgeois social reproduction. Authentic pedagogy requires a type of courage, where received skills have to be exposed to risk and contestation. For Foucault, pedagogy needs to exercise 'real theatre', transcending the iniquities of existing social reproductions. The purpose of this plea is for a renewal of teaching with a pedagogy of transgression, one which unsettles comfortable bourgeois autonomy, broadening teaching to incorporate wider power relations. Basically, Foucault offers a plea for co-operation, a plea for a teaching that expands beyond the narrow confines of an institution — in this case higher education institutions — towards buttressing the productive capacities of society in general.

Foucault's idea of pedagogy, while simply stated, is designed to be shocking. However, it has more gravitas than its frivolous presentation might first allow. For Foucault, in teaching something has to *happen*. Teaching has to be transformative; the pedagogical moment must be an event beyond the mere reproduction of existing skills sets. Foucault advocates more than just a 'ruffling of the feathers' of bourgeois respectability. The task is precisely to disappoint the student, to unwork them, to destabilise received dispositions, and their sense that the world as is works efficiently and well. Unfortunately, however, modern education, for Foucault, is immune to understanding itself in terms of power relations. For example, Foucault's discussions argue that university education, in all of its contradictions, is fundamentally motivated by Enlightenment Humanism. Going back to the work of Immanuel Kant, enlightened humanism presupposes an ahistorical individual, a self-generating self. As we will see with our analysis of Robert Owen, the tension between the individual and social is decisive when coming to understand the virtues of co-operation in the Enlightenment period. In Enlightenment pedagogy, the 'individual' is the sole arbiter of what is good, and consequently we see at the core of education a desire for

> quick and efficient mastery of a certain number of techniques … Humanism reinforces social organisation and these techniques allow society to progress, but along its own lines (Foucault, 1977: 219).

University teaching, for example, is replete with mechanisms which ensure nothing happens, universities and higher programmes of learning, exist to ensure the uneventful reproduction of social roles and inequities. Conversely, for Foucault, teaching needs to exist alongside resistance to wider forms of political repression (Foucault, 1977: 224).

For Foucault, pedagogy requires

> … the suppression of taboos and the limitations and divisions imposed upon the sexes; the setting up of communes; the loosening of inhibitions with regard to drugs; the breaking of all prohibitions that form and guide the development of a normal individual (Foucault, 1977: 224).

Stated as such, can we say that Foucault is guilty of replacing the individual of humanism, with a cheaply transgressive individual? A reading of Foucault as a naïve purveyor of counter-culture self-fashioning is too simplistic. However, we are forced to ask the question of what type of 'autonomy' Foucault is referring to specifically. Negatively defined, Foucault repudiates Enlightenment forms of autonomy. In crudely Kantian terms, this is the autonomy of the self-legislating, self-sufficient, and sovereign individual. For Kant, Enlightenment was essentially a case of developing maturity, and independence that elevated human dignity above reliance on instincts (Kant, 2009: 258-259). In pedagogical terms, an enlightened education is a form of renunciation, a forsaking of parental and cultural instruction where the human develops into an independent rather than a dependent being, as such education is a process of self-inclined maturation (*Bildung*).

Such independence cannot, for Foucault, be immune from social and power relations; the idea of an autonomous self as author of its own destiny is untenable from its inception. This

is particularly evident in *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1991). While *Discipline and Punish* is more famous for its accounts of other institutions such as the penal system, Foucault does remark on questions of schools, teaching and training (Foucault, 1991: 157). In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in tandem with the rise of Enlightenment transparency, progress and accountability, we see pedagogy synthesised with rationalisation, organisation, and punishment. In the context of the management of time, teaching time became quantitative, chronological and numerical. The adage attributed to the great Enlightenment figure Benjamin Franklin, that "time is money", becomes especially relevant to enlightenment education. Pupils engaging in tasks at regular intervals, comparative metrics, progress calculation, all meant a radical reformation of individual existence. Rational and enlightened education is not actually devoted to autonomy and independence, it is for Foucault interminably entangled with the management of time, body and forces. Thus educational production is synonymous with the production of localised techniques, skills and practices, whose only outcome is the production of capital. Educational time itself becomes calculative; any sense of duration is indexed to the possibility of capital accumulation. Every hour can be subdivided into further subdivisions of capital opportunities. The temporal duration of classes becomes mechanised and pedagogical experience rendered homogenous (Foucault, 1991: 157). Students, with enlightened education remain useful, instrumental subjects where an intensification in specialisation of skills leads to an attendant deficit in mastery (Foucault, 1991: 158). The term 'exercise,' for instance, with the inflection on both the physical and scholarly, becomes a technique of repetition, one that limits the educational habituation of students to the production of particular skills. This is precisely the mechanism that produces the disciplined and autonomous student. Education in this sense is limited to the "perpetual characterisation of the individual" (Foucault, 1991: 161) and this type of characterisation is itself very limited. It is, as Foucault suggests, marked by a 'gradualism' and a heightened focus on the 'increasing complexity' of tasks. (Foucault, 1991: 161).

In educational terms, for Foucault the specialisation of pedagogical exercise, leads to a diminution of the intellectual virtues. Education moves away from co-operation towards hierarchy. For example, the hyper-rationalisation of the individual leads to an entrenchment of status, with capacities being developed according to rank and grade. The specialisation of time into a multiplicity of different skills and aptitudes, combined with assessment and grading reformed the subject into constituent elements and micro-tasks (Foucault, 1991: 159). The time of teaching is decisive for the increasing atomisation of the student. Students, within enlightened education remain useful, instrumental subjects. For Foucault, education is at the core of the production of human capital. The serialisation of time, produces only individuals and cellular segmentation, distributed according to a slow evolution of progress (Foucault, 1991: 161). Thus educational transformation, the achievement of mastery, is undermined in favour of a quantitative form of achievement. The role of autonomy is, for Foucault, a problematic form of autonomy, the independence of the student directly correlates to atomisation, and the negation of pupils' capacities and power. Enlightenment autonomy is, therefore, a problem, the autonomy of the student directly correlates to atomisation, and the negation of student capacity or power. This is a subtle point. For Foucault, the opposite of autonomy is achieved, as atomisation leads to an independence that is inhuman rather than human; atomisation leads to separation, isolation and susceptibility to discipline and manipulation. Foucault's critique of Enlightenment pedagogy is a critique of the possibility of education in the first place. If pedagogy is devoted only to efficiency, performativity and instrumental outcomes, then education is devoted to easiness rather than difficulty, simplicity rather than complexity, and barbarism rather than civility.

The description of educational time as atomising, which we get in *Discipline and Punish*, has to be understood within the broader context of how Foucault conceives of biopower, and Foucault's recalibration of power within twentieth century economics. For Foucault, autonomy under biopower is a key function of neo-liberal economics. In brief, neo-liberalism requires the extension of laissez-faire economics, that is the drive to privatisation, the free market as the arbiter of all forms of life, and the reduction of the role of the state as a public good. For Foucault, neo-liberalism is a set of mass practices that

> …extend the rationalities of the market, the schemas of analysis it offers and the decision making criteria it suggest, to domains which are not exclusively or not primarily economic (Foucault, 2008: 323).

Autonomy is identical to consumer selectionism. In practice, the autonomous agent can only be:

> … *homo oeconomicus* as a partner of exchange … as entrepreneur of himself, being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of [his] earnings (Foucault, 2008: 226).

What are the consequences of this economic logic for teaching generally? The reality of this is best reflected in some remarkable data from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program at UCLA which has taken longitudinal data from 1966-1996 which researches changing trends in American college students. Alexander Astin (1998) describes some decisive trends. The most obvious is the shift from those who responded on what they saw as the main aims of university education. In 1966 to be well off financially only 45% of respondents said yes, with 80% wanting a meaningful philosophy of life. Now, this trend has practically reversed, with "being well off financially" at 74%. Furthermore, 74% see that the most obvious function of higher education is an increase in the capacity to earn.

But what type of student does this economic logic produce? Here we can see why Foucault was so prescient. It is not difficult to work out: the student becomes more consumer-driven, instrumentalist, rationalist, and oriented towards increasing their 'human capital'. In Foucauldian terms, such an economic nihilism in higher education specifically, and education more broadly, put metaphorically, produces a form of 'cultural sickness', for which we are scrambling for an appropriate 'therapy'. Heightened rationalisation, specialisation and instrumentalism at all costs, mean students are atomised, and therefore excluded from the desire to form meaningful relations of belonging. In short, the ability to co-operate is stymied if not irretrievably diminished. In addition, these shifts in attitude combine consistently with a decrease in psychological well-being. Students are suffering more from anxiety disorders, narcissism, depression, personality disorders (Grove, 2013; Gil, 2015). Foucault's analysis shows how the radical pursuit of autonomy is unfruitful, and allows us to begin to think how co-operative models of education are becoming more and more vital. Students reach a stage where, the type of autonomy that is promulgated in Universities, in terms of discourses on autonomous learning, critical thinking, learning outcomes is not a form of autonomy. It is in fact the opposite of autonomy, with students facing an erosion of their capacities and becoming ever more dependent rather than self-reliant.

While Foucault was often criticised for relativism, and moral nihilism, he is at pains to refute this through what he labels the "care of the self" in the *History of Sexuality*. Foucault is often cast as an aesthete, a dandy transgressor, where ethics is merely a practice of style, and self-fashioning. We should be clear, Foucault's idea of the care of the self is not motivated by aesthetics — that is to say, it is not motivated by taking delight in one's own senses (Foucault, 1990: 45). For Foucault, the care of the self is a form of mitigated narcissism, where the care of others is paramount in taking care of one's self, as such "care of oneself" can only emerge through co-operation with others. The care of the self requires an amplification of social aptitude, and *a fortiori* a lessening of the self as sole arbiter of educational transmission. There does, however, remain a philosophical problem: Foucault's critique of biopower and surveillance, and its potential application to questions of education, does not resolve a form of character development outside of the situation where on the one hand the choosing consumer agent is free, but on the other hand pupils may be manipulable and pliable. As we will see in our analysis of Owen, such pliability stems from the elasticity of the student. The central paradox, is on the one hand students are pliable and open to all manner of learning opportunities, but on the other, such elasticity means students are susceptible to being taught into very narrow skills sets.

The extent Foucault can resolve this paradox is unclear, especially given Foucault's notorious lack of prescription. In terms of using Foucault to find pedagogical alternatives to the neo-liberal economics that he critiques, it is necessary to exercise some caution, as for Foucault power — or in the more practically educational sense, ability and disposition — must, at least minimally,

be removed from sovereign power. For example, when Foucault spoke on welfare he argued for a "… a 'process of decentralisation' that would lead to closer relations between users of services and 'decision-making centers" (Dean, 2014: 437). It is hard to deny in such rhetoric the paranoid liberal imaginary of the 'big bad state'. In pedagogical terms, with regard to the autonomy of the student, such a political arrangement would, for example, be close enough to what we now have in the UK, where HE institutions are marketised, consumer-oriented, and becoming more and more decentralised, with a concomitant increase in nodes of technocratic administration. Therefore, resistance within pedagogy is removed from sovereign power, the public sphere, or any sense that the state might be a purveyor of public good.[3]

Foucault is valuable up to a point. His work helps us understand educational activity as not necessarily wedded to rationalist or productivist accounts of pedagogy. Foucault illuminates the abstractions of neo-liberal education, and shows the danger of the impoverished idea of education as just mere numerical attainment of skills. Implicit within Foucault's writings on pedagogy is the idea that teaching is a practical and universal art. Teaching must transcend sectional attainments of skills, and the post-modern fragmentation of teaching into localised outcomes. Certainly teaching is practiced in specific contexts, but these domains ought not be reified as separate, or rationally differentiated. As such it would be more accurate, as we will go on to outline, to understand teaching in the classical Aristotelian sense. Teaching is a practical art and not an empty abstract theoretical science. This is not to say that there are local issues and problems that have to be negotiated by a co-operative teacher, or that student's autonomy practically emerges within disciplinary confines. It is to say teaching is a generic virtue; co-operation is critical for overcoming Foucault's observation that teaching as a form of autonomous learning, leads to an over-emphasis on very narrow disciplines, skills and practices. Alternatively, co-operative teaching emerges in general practices and responses to particular events, circumstances and problems, but never remains isolated within specific skills sets, where we see co-operation as an enabling virtue, one which makes all other educational skills possible. As we will now argue, co-operative education is of radical importance for the revitalisation of education practices, at this particular historical juncture, because it offers the resources of co-operation as *both* a skill and a virtue. To understand how co-operative pedagogy has developed we must now turn to the origins of co-operation.

3. Owen on Education

At the very start of his *History of Co-operation*, George Jacob Holyoake observes that the verb to *co-operate*, derived from the Latin *co* and *operari*, means "to work — to labour together, to endeavour for some common purpose" (Holyoake, 1875: 1). After listing various early uses of the term — as well as forms that never made it into common parlance — he fixes on "the social sense of the word" (Holyoake, 1875: 2). Although co-operation is, according to Holyoake, no social novelty, having existed since "the commencement of human society" (Holyoake 1875: 2), the word has come to acquire a novel meaning, signifying "a new power of industry, constituted by the combination of worker, capitalist, and consumer, and a new means of commercial morality, by which honesty is rendered productive" (Holyoake, 1875: 2). Holyoake's intent is clear; his words are as much declaration as definition, heralding rhetorically the economic and moral superiority of contemporary co-operation. As resounding as is Holyoake's declaration of co-operation as a new *power* of industry, by highlighting the moral aspect of co-operation, which has the virtue of turning *honesty* into a productive force, Holyoake signals the historical importance of moral character to the co-operative movement.[4]

It was this concern with character that led Robert Owen — the originator of co-operation in its true form, according to Holyoake — to place education at the heart of his plans to improve the productivity and profitability of his own factories. In order to achieve this improvement, Owen neither sought to decrease the wages nor increase the working hours of his workforce; instead he looked to diffuse amongst them "more skill" and "better conduct" (Holyoake, 1875: 55). To attain such ends, he saw that it was necessary to impart intelligence. However, as Holyoake

points out, Owen understood that his workers, "in ignorance and viciousness", were, "like all ignorant persons" (Holyoake, 1875: 55), not wont to appreciate the benefit of education for themselves. Still, if they could not recognise its benefit to themselves, Owen realised they would nevertheless appreciate that it was good for their children. Thus, acting on the principle that "intelligence would prove a good investment" (Holyoake, 1875: 55) — both by directly bettering the lot of those children who would eventually be employed in the factory, and by creating good will amongst their parents, the weavers and their wives, who knew that he meant well — Owen was led to build at New Lanark

> commodious schoolrooms … for the separate instruction of persons from the time when as infants they were able to walk alone until they were intelligent (Holyoake, 1875: 53).

In doing this, he created "an institution unheard of before his time … an institution for the Formation of Character" (Holyoake, 1875: 54).

Owen was not content, Holyoake tells us, simply to secure his own prosperity, or that of his business partners. His ambition extended even beyond securing the prosperity of those workers whom he employed. Certainly, by his own "patience" and "industry", Owen raised himself to "opulence and eminence" (Holyoake, 1875: 53); he also bettered the lot of his partners and his workers, since the gratitude of the workers towards their benevolent employer led them to extend to him confidence and co-operation which became new elements of gain to the company, which was in turn shared equitably with the labourers and their families. In Holyoake's words, Owen was a "world-maker"; he saw that the compass of his achievement in establishing a new pattern for labour and capital to work together extended beyond the bounds of New Lanark, embracing the whole of humanity. He was one of those people "whose grand-schemes have opened the eyes of the world" (Holyoake, 1875: 24), and whose "impatience and daring have done much for mankind", meditating "the reformation of the planet on which we live" (Holyoake: 22).

In his *A New View of Society*, Owen lays out his "world-making" plan for the universal improvement of the commonwealth. Learned from the lesson of his experiment at New Lanark, his plan, he tells us, requires nothing more than that children "be rationally educated, and their labour usefully directed" (Owen, 1969: 76). Now, if experience has proven the benefit of this plan, the principles on which it is founded require no such support. According to Owen, so self-evidently right are these principles that "they require only to be known in order to establish themselves" (Owen, 1969: 76). No sooner are they known than they will "direct the governing powers of all countries" who "should establish rational plans for the education … of their subjects" (Owen, 1969: 76).

For Owen, what makes education so powerful an instrument of social improvement — and what weds education to the nurturing of mutuality and co-operation — is the intrinsic plasticity of character. "Children are", Owen claimed, "without exception, passive and wonderfully contrived compounds; which … may be formed collectively to have any human character" (Owen, 1969: 80). Consequently they are, he observes, "impressed with habits and sentiments similar to those of their parents and instructors; modified, however, by the circumstances in which they have been, are or may be placed" (Owen, 1969: 80).

The forcefulness of Owen's repeated insistence on the intrinsic malleability of character, and the consequent role of education in its shaping, as the fundamental principle behind his plans for "the gradual amelioration of the condition of mankind" must be set against the view, more prevalent in the eighteenth century, but still current in the nineteenth, that character was fixed, and that universal education was not a remedy to, but cause of, unhappiness and unrest, and which led to the argument that to ensure the well-being of society "it is requisite that great numbers of [the labouring classes] would be Ignorant as well as Poor" (Silver, 1965: 23), for "giving education to the labouring classes of the poor … would teach them to despise their lot in life" (Silver, 1965: 23).

Breaking with the supposition of the social undesirability of education, Owen's outlook prepares

for the view of education as a means to self-improvement and self-advancement, which still informs current thinking about education, and for which reason students in HE are required to offset their anticipated future financial gain against the debt incurred for the 'cost' of their learning. But whereas Owen gives primacy to the social and civic benefits of education — proposed according to the principle of the mutuality of individual interests — such that public provision should be made, the role of the state now is one of insurance, promising to indemnify the student against loss should the promised value added to their employability prospects not actually be realised.

Owen proposes education as a benevolent civic remedy to the problem of working class dissolution and delinquency. The poor and working class of the British Isles, who at the time of his writing the first essay amounted to three quarters of the population, were, he says, "the worst and most dangerous subjects in the Empire" (Owen, 1969: 68). Although they are of an admittedly dangerous and delinquent character, they should not be held accountable; their character is attributable to their upbringing, education — or lack thereof — and the miserable poverty which they must endure, and which, ultimately but essentially, is a result of poor government.

Owen's account effects a transfer of responsibility and, implicitly, of criminality from the vicious and uneducated poor and profligate working classes, to those who "govern and control the affairs of men" (Owen, 1969: 70), particularly since by the nineteenth century crime was distinguished from transgression, being defined as what is injurious to society. Hence, since the condition of the working class was the consequence of their social situation, and since as a result of their condition they were made dangerous subjects, the real crime lay with those who bore responsibility for creating that condition. Nevertheless, the remedy, whilst social, targets the individual, aiming at the amelioration of the character of the working classes through the civic reform of education. In this sense, it is a philanthropic mode of the disciplinary power identified by Michel Foucault as emerging in nineteenth century Europe, which aimed not so much to punish individuals for what they did, but to exercise control over "what they might do, what they were capable of doing, what they were liable to do, what they were immanently about to do" (Foucault, 2000: 57). Education — and this is not specific to Owen, although he utilises this particular idea of education in a quite specific way — becomes disciplinary; it aims to shape character in the sense of controlling behaviour through the imposition of a pedagogic orthopaedics, that is, a pedagogy that aims at correcting behaviour by modelling it upon normative standards

Informing Owen's *New Vision of Society* is an idea of education as the power to shape or transform through discipline the disposition and behaviour of the individual; or as he says, what is important is that the pupil not only be taught to "read, write, account and sew" but that he or she make "proper use" of these skills and instruments of knowledge (Owen, 1969: 134). The legacy of this idea of education as creating and controlling potentialities of character — which is not specific to Owen, but which is an expression or product of the development of disciplinary power, which is a power to induce rather than a power to prohibit — the legacy is as ambiguous, as is its provenance.

As Holyoake observed, co-operation, "in the sense of two or more persons uniting to attain an end which each was unable to effect singly" (Holyoake, 1875: 7) may indeed have been common since the commencement of society, but only with "the benefit … always accruing to the stronger" (Holyoake, 1875: 7) but the co-operation which "begins in mutual help, with a view to end in a common competence" (Holyoake, 1875: 7), requires the sustained cultivation of the virtues of mutuality, solidarity, fellow-feeling. In themselves, these are positive attributes of character — they are virtues because they intend sociality. However, if in themselves they are virtues, the method by which they are encouraged or inculcated can be such that it undermines them, and the teacher and the educationalist should be mindful of this. The disciplinary formation of character described by Foucault, acts upon behavioural capacities, creating and shaping aptitudes and inclinations. Such an exercise of power is not to be denounced simply because it is an exercise of power, since for Foucault power is everywhere and can be

productive as well as negative. It is problematic, nonetheless, insofar as operationalised in institutions characteristic of modernity — schools, hospitals, prisons — it treats such aptitudes and inclinations — those essential aspects of character — as analogous to skills. To speak in Aristotelian terms, phronetic characteristics are treated as technically formed properties. In other words, one might say, that the formation of character through discipline were a technical formation of character. In turn, this means that modern attempt to rationalise educational activities, as exemplified by Owen, runs the risk of hollowing out co-operation as a form of character formation, and instead conceives students in brutally instrumentalist terms rather than in terms of character formation.

But why is such instrumentalism a problem? Treating virtues as if they were skills is not unusual. It is not unusual in relation to ideas of co-operative pedagogy. That co-operative learning is defined in terms of skills, is a consequence of the equal common view that co-operation is itself a skill. Sennett speaks frequently of the skill of co-operating in Together. The frequency with which co-operation is defined as a skill is something that cannot be lightly dismissed, and so before we say why we are reluctant to see it so defined, we need to consider the reason why it is. Undoubtedly, we can become better co-operators, and so we might say, co-operation, like all skills, is something that can be taught and refined through practice. And this might lead some to suppose that co-operation is a skill. However, we can also improve our character; we can become better people, so either this is not a necessary criterion for adjudging co-operation to be a skill, or skills and virtues are not dissimilar – at least in this respect.

There is a further reason for supposing that co-operation is not limited to being just a skill. A skill can be put to good use, but it can also be used to harm. A doctor can use their medical skill to heal a patient, but they can also use it to harm them. A virtue, on the other hand, is fixed: it always looks to the good, otherwise it is not a virtue but a vice. In this respect, whilst allowing that there is an ethical aspect to co-operation, Sennett argues that it is broader; a gang of criminals can co-operate, or at least collude. There is without doubt much to be said in response to this — and much that Sennett himself says — that if it would not suffice to show that co-operation cannot not be employed viciously, would at least serve to uphold a differentiation between a skill and a virtue of character that would enrich our understanding of both. For example, if there is that form of co-operation that we call collusion amongst a gang of swindlers, then it is a drastically impoverished form: it is co-operation for a fixed, limited purpose, and it is exhausted once its end is attained; it is not full and free, and it prohibits rather than allows further co-operation with other groups.

However, there is another reason to account co-operation a virtue. We are interested in the character of the co-operator in a way that we are not in that of the builder or the doctor. For sure, we may object to the doctor for their callousness and to the builder for their rudeness. But in all these instances the concern with character is subordinate to — and, in truth, independent of — their ability to perform their professional function expertly. Even if it is not the case, we would see why someone might say that it ought to be the case that the character of the builder or the doctor is of no significance — what matters is how well they do their job, how technically proficient they are in within their respective sphere of expertise. The same cannot be said of the co-operator: we are interested in their relationship with us and with others. Certainly, the co-operator has to be 'good' at co-operating, but the sphere of the co-operator's expertise cannot be restricted to limited skills sets and practice. This is especially the case since co-operation must transcend sectional techniques and practices, as co-operation is a virtue relevant to broader society.

So if co-operation is not a skill but a virtue why is this important? To answer this it is necessary to return to Aristotle, whose thought informs Sennett's thinking, and indeed marks out the horizon of our conceptuality. What we have been here calling 'skill' is what Aristotle called *tekhne*. *Tekhne* is, for Aristotle, a kind of knowledge; it is a know-how. It is a know-how because it is a thinking about things that are not by necessity but that can be otherwise: it is knowing-how to make something happen, or a knowing-how to do something. For this reason, Aristotle calls it a type of deliberation. However, there are, for Aristotle, two types of deliberative thinking, the

second being what he calls *phronesis*, which is often translated as 'prudence' and sometimes as 'practical wisdom'. *Phronesis* is a sort of circumspection or deliberative concern over one's own doings. Whereas *tekhne* is a productive know-how — a knowledge relating to making, *phronesis* is a practical wisdom — that is concerned with acting.

But why is it important to distinguish between *tekhne* and *phronesis*? To answer all too briefly, it is because, for Aristotle, the human is not, and is never, a finished product or article, notwithstanding all talk to the contrary. This not-being finished is not a deficiency, but is rather the distinctive virtue of the human being. The product is a determinate entity: it is conceived and created in accordance with a fixed end, and its being is exhausted by that end. By contrast, the human is an indeterminate being — a point that is captured by the Aristotelian notion of praxis or acting as opposed to making: in praxis or acting, the end lies in the acting: the deed or action is its own end. In deliberating about acting the deliberator deliberates about him or herself. This deliberation is not originally or primarily a decision made by a reflective subject; it is not an explicit, reflective and judgmental consideration about what to do, but a deliberation that is first of all enacted. In acting we fulfil, or at least encounter the possibility of fulfilling, our highest potentiality.

Conclusion

It is critical to maintain that co-operation is a phronetic virtue because co-operation goes all the way down through our being: being a co-operator is not a skill but who we are. Co-operation is a matter of character — it designates an attitude, a disposition, a way of being and acting. And getting to grips with co-operation is essential, so that what is needed is not an account of the various skills that are held to make it up, but a description that conveys the vivacity of the co-operative character as it is inculcated in teaching and learning, and to provide that it is necessary to enter into its phenomenology.[5] Foucault is a particularly important thinker for this project. His criticism of the enlightenment values of transparency, instrumentalism and autonomy are crucial and should be taken seriously in order to revitalise and augment the historical mission of co-operative education. What is distinctive about our analysis, is that Foucault helps historicise the founding principles of Owen's early views on educational reform. Foucault's genealogies of power allow us to supplement the mechanistic education in the context of Victorian patronage, and the industrial conception of education with a broader conception of pedagogical and civic virtue. Thus, the importance of understanding character as a co-operative virtue is that, firstly, it allows us to elucidate what is distinctive about the character of co-operative education, as from, say, nefarious types of co-operation. Secondly, it provides a response to Foucault's central problem for modern education, ie the concentration of autonomy in specialised spheres of educational achievement and outcomes. Finally, our theorising of co-operation as an Aristotelian virtue provides us with pedagogical practices which resist instrumentalist and productivist accounts of education that are essentially hierarchical rather than egalitarian.

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Notes

1 See, for example, Woodin (2015: 2) who points out that, "while the largest 300 co-operatives have an economic power equivalent to the Canadian economy, it has been estimated by the UN that co-operatives have supported at least half the world's population".
2 This is noteworthy within the context of our discussion of the virtues of co-operation, as it implies that the virtue of teaching is precisely its capacity to undermine received skills sets.
3 In the UK, this has historically not been the case for the co-operative movement which has parliamentary representation alongside the UK Labour party.
4 It nonetheless raises a number of key questions, for it is not clear what sense 'honesty' has here, nor is it clear in what sense this moral quality has become a productive force, nor what sort of productive force it is.
5 Our future research intends to build on our findings here with a theorising a phenomenology of co-operative education.

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