10 Public parents

Reclaiming publicness of education in the new tyrannies

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Introduction

In this chapter, we explore the publicness of education from the vantage point of contemporary East/Central Europe, a geopolitical area which in 1989 experienced the liberation from Communist totalitarian state systems and Soviet colonial control. In places such as Hungary or Poland, after an initial period of embracement of liberal democracy, we are now observing the formation of new non-democratic systems, referred to by the Hungarian philosopher Agnes Heller as ***tyrannies*** (2019). In the new tyrannies, power is increasingly concentrated in the hands of a single person who strives for limitless control by transforming all democratic and participatory processes into mechanisms that help execute his will. Contemporary tyrannies rely for their popularity and success on populism and negative ideology, which mobilises nationalist sentiments vis-a-vis external and internal "enemies," and on mechanisms that help silence dissent and secme loyalties through oligarchical arrangements and public corruption. Public schools and universities, whose fragile post-totalitarian autonomy has been eroded by more than three decades of neoliberal restructuring and gradually also the renewed tightening of state control, are now platforms for the fortl1ering of anti-democratic and anti-liberal ag(SI)da. After Habermas (1992, 1998), we und�rstand public sphere as fundamental for democracy but suggest that traditional understanding ofthe public requires reconsideration, taking into account critiques ofhis O1iginal concept in light of its exclusiveness and uniformity (Fraser 1990; :rully 2012) and contemporary applicability in specific geopolitical contexts. How can we understand publicness in the conditions where tl1e public sphere, including public education, is appropriated by an undemocratic state power? What are the possibilities for reclaiming publicness in general and publicness of education in particular in political conditions, which undermine traditional meaning of publicness as an area outside of the state where free and unrestrained discussion concerning public good is possible (Habermas 1992, 1998)? How can we use a particular case (Wittgenstein 1965, p. 23) of a geopolitical situation to illuminate publicness's conceptual entanglement and its possible political uses and implications?

We will begin by describing tl1ree empirical examples from our research with Polish parents who adopted different strategies in me struggle for meir children's

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right of access to school education. This will lead us to a reflection on schools and publicness under me political conditions of Poland as a new tyranny, focusing on the key role of language as to how publicness is understood and practised. The examples will help us centre on what we consider me tyranny's fundamental feature - hegemonic centralisation and nationalisation by exclusion. We will discuss how the tyranny's state-controlled public sphere instituted as it is mrough mechanisms of exclusions is challenged through counter-public engagement and counter-hegemonic disagreement. We will follow with a conceptual discussion on the meaning of publicness drawing on the ***critical democratic*** tradition of public philosophy in the study ofme public sphere (Tully 2008, 2012; Foucault 1984, 2007), which understands publicness primarily as the diversity of ***practices ofcivic engagement.*** We will argue mat me political conditions of new tyrannies, characterised by increasing control of the public sphere by me state which limits possibilities for free civic action, compel us to mink through how we understand me relationship between me state, the public, and the private in general and publicness of education in particular.

Public parents

Ela - diversifying public school community

> First, we did not know mat Patryk had a condition. He was enrolled in a public school and the teacher called me in and kept telling me how terrible Patryk was, how everything he was doing was wrong. He just kept going and going about him. That is when I first realized that I had to find a school where teachers and classmates would want to be with Patryk and where he would be safe. Now I am looking for such a place again after the school that he attended and where he was happy was closed and I won't stop looking.
>
> (Ela, mother of an 8-year-old Patryk diagnosed with autism, Poland, 2019)

Ela is a Polish mother of an 8-year-old son diagnosed witl1 autism. In her interview with us, she described her continuing struggle to find a school which would accept her son into mainstream education classes. In fact, for few years he was enrolled in a small school mat followed legal regulations concerning education of national and etlmic minorities in Poland (in this case -me Jewish minority) mat accepted children of all faiths and none. Teachers in me school, El� remembered, actively worked wim Patryk, his parents, and oilier children to ensure the whole group's successful integration. The process was not easy, Ela said, but it worked, and Patryk liked his school. After me school was closed due to financial pressures, Patryk's classmates and meir parents refosed admittance to schools (both public and "non-public") who agreed to accept the whole class of children but without Patryk, whose disability made him unsuitable for mainstream education in me eyes ofme schools' leadership. Ela ascribed this breathtaking act of solidarity on the part of Patryk's classmates to me affective and relational bonds fostered by the genuinely inclusive approach within me school community. Thea

Abu El-Haj refers to such approach, which transforms school commumtJ:es through participatory and collective striving for full participation of children with special needs, as "substantive inclusion" (Abu El-Haj 2006).

Eventually, however, children went their different ways, and Ela was left alone to find a school that would take Pau-yk. A well-educated parent with professional interest in educational issues, she knew her son had the right to mainstream education following Poland's ratification of the European Union's directives concerning the adoption of the UN's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN-CRPD). She knew that under the policy, Patryk was supposed to be guaranteed access to free primary and secondary education equal to that of any other child in Poland. She was also well aware of the substantial public financial subsidies that should be channelled to the school that her child with special needs would attend to support his learning. Nevertheless, in practice, the right of educational access was not being readily granted to her child. In contacts with schools - public and "non-public" - Ela's son had been repeatedly denied admission.In humiliating interactions, school principals evaded contact with Ela all together or refused to accept Patryk "because the school was not a good fit," "because parents of other 'normal children' would protest," because "teachers refused to admit her 'sick' son to their class." Ela eventually found a school that was willing to accept Patryk. Now, she works with the school, negotiating the everyday realities of her son's belonging to the school community. She is pushing for "substantive inclusion," a process that requires changes on the part of the school to allow for children with special needs to be able to participate fully and contribute meaningfolly to all school activities (Abu El-Haj 2006). Through her work in the public-school context, Ela's engagement challenges restrictive and exclusive hegemonic public imaginary of belonging, demanding its expansion through diversification.

Joanna - building «non-school" as public space under home education

> I do not need inclusion of this kind We had to take our son out of school and now he is at home Ir is not my idea, r would like normalcy for my child. Inclusion is an enormous responsibility coward another human being. M)• son, an eight-year old boy, is in deep depression after what happened to him at school. Right now I have had enough of [fonml] education. Because if education is to destroy my child, then I don't want it. I want him to be happy so as not to destroy the enormous effort we have put into his upbringing, into making him a great and happy child that he is as long as he does nor cross the threshold of aschool.
>
> (Joanna, mother of an 8-year-old son with multiple disabilities, Poland, 2018)

Joanna's 8-year-old son Eugene has a complex spectrum of impairments including autism, epilepsy, and hearing problems. She is a well-known author and activist on behalf of children with disabilities in Poland. Like Ela, she understands her child's right to inclusive mainstream education, but despite efforts at working

with public and "non-public" schools in her city to accept and create suitable conditions for her child's participation, she was forced to take Eugene out of the school system after he had fallen into deep depression.Like Ela, Joanna did not stop in her activist work - she runs a blog, speaks, and write� publicly, trying to change how disabled children are perceived in Poland. Eventually, she and other parents opened a foundation and rented a building from the municipality, creating their own educational space, which welcomes children with and without disabilities and with and without special needs. In its mission, the foundation stresses diversity, neurodiversity, and freedom as fundamental values. The space they rent is not called a "school," and children who attend it do so under the Polish law on home education. This law allows parents to take their children out of the public and "non-public" school system and teach them "at home." The children still have to be assigned to a school, which draws state subsidies per each pupil, including those children who are home-schooled. In case of children with complex disabilities such as Eugene,such state subsidies arcquite]arge, but they are very rarely channelled co the pupils whose learning they are Sllpposed to support. Instead, it is a normal practice on the part of schools' readership to absorb them into the general school budget. Joanna told us how much effort it took her to find the only school ill the large region where she lives that would cooperate wid, her foundation. She evenu1ally fow1d a partner - a "non-public" school located more than 70 km awa}'· The school's director agreed to support Joanna's project and signed up all children who attend Joanna s "non-school" in her school.The director uses all subsidies she receives for those children who are in the home-schooling track and attend Joanna's foundation to pay for teachers and supporting staff who work with them in the site of the school/non-school 70 km away.

In Joanna's foundation, just like many od1cr such initiative& in Poland (see Gawlicz 2020), children who are schooled Lmder "home education" arc in racr being educated in l)Ublic settings. The "home" of th� "home education" is cry ofi:en a public space, in which children do not learn alone ,\�th theh parents but together with each other and under the guidance of teachers and supporting staff (people wirh and without teacher certifications). The �ome education funded by the srate through per-pupil subsidies via public and "non-public" school system often takes the form ofinstimtionalised arrangements whereby schools/non-schools attended by children under the domestic education label ·arc nm as non-governmental organisations with d1cir own management boards, rules and �egulations, mission statements, and financial management. In dtls context, we frank Joanna s actions on behalf of her own son and other children as coumcrpublic imcrventions that strategkally engage the domestic to expand the public.

Kate – «non-public" alternative

> I encountered homophobia when my daughter went to preschool. There is a moment when they speak about family..........She came home with a form with empty places to be filled out - for the mother, the father, the

> mother's parents, and father's parents. And nobody asked her what her family looked like; she just got the assignment to fill it in. I decided to react because I did not want her to feel like there is something wrong with her family So I went to her school, explained, and asked if I could help in supporting the school because I know it is a challenge. I do not want to go into details of the homophobic reaction that followed, but I will say that there was nobody who would want to be involved. I also encountered terrible homophobia from the parents and felt sick for the next three weeks every time when I was taking my daughter to school. It was because I realized that it was I, her mother, who puts her at the risk of exclusion because of who I was. And that there is nothing I could do to change it.
>
> (Kate, LGBTQ mother of a 9-year old daughter, Poland, 2018)

Kate's daughter Alma does not have a psychosomatic disability, but she also experienced rejection at school because of her non-heteronormative family background. After her mother's attempt at positive intervention in procedures that could make the school more friendly to children from LGBTQ families, she experienced pushback. But like Ela and Joanna, instead of giving in, Kate has continued her work as an educational activist and researcher and speaks on issues of school-based discrimination against minorities in Poland. Eventually she decided to take Alma out of the public school and enrolled her in a "non-public" school run by a foundation that welcomes diversity as its core value and mission. The last we spoke to Kate, she was very happy with the new school for her daughter. As opposed to Joanna's "non-school" attended by children in the system of home education, Alma's school is a regular school attended by children whose parents have not availed of the domestic education alternative. In critical educational research, "choice" which allows for the extraction of children from the public school system in favour of non-public sector schools is generally seen as a negative neoliberal trend that contributes to the erosion of the public and generates further inequalities (Lipman 2011; Ozga 2000; Whitty et al. 1998). While we agree with this analysis, we suggest that in the context of the newly tyrannical political conditions, Kate's intervention - the placing of her daughter in the "non-public" school sector that welcomes difference - should be considered as expanding rather than restricting of the public sphere. In a situation when state-controlled public school system is disregarding the criteria of openness, free access, and diversity - defining characteristics of publicness - seemingly private educational initiatives thus become the spaces for the enactment of new publicness.

These examples, which illustrate everyday strategies of parents who interact with the public school system in a country where publicness is increasingly shaped by exclusionary and nationalist politics, demonstrate the very public dimension of their deeply personal struggle. By interrogating the private/public dichotomy and in line with the editors of this volume (Biesta and Säfström), we want to think deeply with these concrete cases about how they can illuminate new publicness in education.

Appropriation through exclusion: cultural intimacy of the tyranny

The premise of our argument is that what our public parents are encountering in the public school system are the effects of the ongoing process of appropriation of the public sphere by the state exclusionary discourse and concrete anti-democratic legislative and administrative measures. Since 2015, the Polish state has led a series of concerted actions against the main pillars of the democratic public sphere. In the legal arena, the political leadership hijacked the Constitutional Court and severely restricted judicial independence through the reorganisation of the country's National Council of the Judiciary and the Supreme Court. These legal reforms have allowed for the complete politicisation of the Constitutional Court. No longer independent and acting on political orders, the Court has recently instituted an almost complete ban on abortion and ruled on the supremacy of the Polish Constitution over the Lisbon Treaty, opening the way for Poland's legal exit from the European Union. The state has also attacked civil society by limiting funds (many of them coming from the EU) for independent non-governmental organisations and by streaming them into politically controlled institutions, including those with far-right agenda. The state has also launched a centralisation of the media market in Poland. At first, it has assumed political control over all public media, which now deliver party propaganda. Then, it took over the previously independent and locally influential large regional media complex (the Polska Press). Most recently, there was an attempt to eliminate the largest US-based private media corporation (TVN), threatening diplomatic relations with the US. We refer to these actions by the Polish state as tyrannical because they are directed at the limiting of democratic and participatory public action, and they are motivated by and lead to the centralisation of power in the hands of a single party and its leader. In Hungary, which is the example that Agnes Heller describes in conceptualising such tyrannies (2019), this tyrannical leader is Viktor Orban who is a prime minister and carries a political responsibility. In Poland, however, the tyrant is Jarosław Kaczynski (who only recently became a member of the current government), but who directs political action from his role as a chairman of the leading political party (Law and Justice). From this position outside of the main political responsibility, he controls what happens in the state, striving for limitless control so that nothing happens against his will. Silencing of dissent and public corruption are common to both of these tyrants' power and so is negative ideology and nationalism.

Exclusionary nationalist ideology underlies all these centralising actions in the tyranny. Crucial to the tyrannical Polish state ideology has been the continuous production of homogeneity as the dominant national imaginary. Formed in the twentieth century and rooted in nativist conception of the nation, the Polish national ideology has been dominated by concepts of uniformity of national belonging and citizenship, deepened by the legacy of violent cleansings of difference primarily but not exclusively during the Nazi and Soviet occupations

(Cervinkova 2016). In the last decade, this exclusionary ideology has been prominently exhibited for example in Poland's (and other Visegrad states') rejection of the EU Solidarity Mechanism in 2015, preventing refugees from worn-torn Syria, Afghanistan, and Eritrea to find refuge in these EU countries. In Poland and Hungary, the states also adopted discriminatory legislation and opened extensive propaganda against the lights of the members of the LGTBQ community. Furthermore, in Poland, the government with die support of the Catholic Church in addition to further restricting abortion law, launched a war on the so-called gender ideology - claiming tl1at "gender" is a concept introduced by Western and corrupt feminists and elites and must be eliminated. This politics is an integral part of the tyrannical suppression of difference and the process whereby the public sphere is appropriated through exclusion.

Centrally controlled school curricula are implementing this exclusionary ideology of homogeneity of belonging through the historical politics *(polityka historyczna),* which draws lines of national belonging over issues related to the Communist past and problematic moments in Polish history that potentially scar the image of the victimised Catholic Polish nation. The whitewashing of the Holocaust, for example, has been central to how curricula and texts have been rewritten by Kaczyriski's political cohort, further strengthening exclusionary visions of the past and cleansing the collective imaginary of past, present, and potential Others in favour of a uniform vision of tl1e national citizen (Rubin & Cervinkova 2020).

In Poland, homogeneity emerges as a central point of what anthropologist Michael Herzfeld refers to as cultural intimacy (Herzfeld 1997). Herzfeld sees cultural intimacy as key to understanding how nation states work - instead of binary approaches that locate power with the state versus people - he says that the elites-versus-ordinary-people approaches conceal the common ground between them. He argues that "state ideologies and the rhetoric of everyday social life are revealingly similar, both in how they make their claims and in what they are used to achieve" (Herzfeld 1997, p. 2). We suggest that the dominant cultural intimacy in Poland is formed around homogeneity as an exclusionary imaginary of belonging. It is at the basis of strategic essentialism and populism of the Polish tyrannical state, who appeals to the citizens' cultural intimacy on which people draw in the course of everyday life.

The exclusionary ideology which permeates every aspect of Polish political discourse - openly racist, misogynist, ableist, homophobic, anti-EU - continuously produces and solidifies the imaginary of homogeneity as the basis of publicness. At Polish schools, this homogeneity of publicness is disrupted by the physical presence of children with diverse backgrounds and by the ongoing articulation of parents' demands for their *different* children to belong. Looking from the perspective of the oppressed, the discourse and practices of homogeneity as cultural intimacy are generating an exclusionary dominant publicness. In pushing for their children's rights for education Kate, Ela, and Joanna are challenging the pillars of cultural intimacy that lie at the basis of this officially supported and dominant publicness. Through their counter-hegemonic practices

these public parents keep democracy alive by articulating difference. They do so in different ways - transforming public school communities by pushing *for* substantive inclusion (Ela) or building alternative educational spaces open ro those excluded from the cultural intimaC)' of dominant publicness {Kate and Joanna). These public parents' srruggle for social justice for their children can be seen as mechanism of civic agency and control through which democracy is upheld, and schools and education emerge as sites in which we can observe how political futures become contested and negotiated.

Public/non-public: confusions of language

Before we tum to how we can conceptually rethink publicness based on the examples and discussion so far, we need to address the centraliry of language to how publicness is understood and practised as a political arena where democracy can be perfom1cd and sustained. Let us take our Polish case, specifically looking at how publicness is defined and articulated when it comes to educational institutions.

P.ost-1989 Polish law distingufahes between two types of institutions on all levels of education - public and non-public *(P1'bliczne* i. *,iiepubticz�* Usrawa 1991). The main difference is supposedly in the system of financing. Public schools are folly supported from public funding (state and/or local government). "Non-public" schools are mostly financed through private means (tuition, donations), but they also receive public funding. "Non-p11blic" primary and secondary schools are given limited subsidies from local governments, while non-public colleges and Wlivcrsitics are eligible for stat-e subsidy for research and doctoral training. Fttrtherrnore, in everyday discourse, "non-public" schools are often referred to as "private" (profit seeking) or "community" schools (non-profit). While Polish law allows for "non-pllhlic" schools to be established by an individual or an organisation, an absolute majority of "non--publk" schools arc founded and managed by non-goverrunemal organisations (foundations and a$ociations - secular and religious), frequeotly set up for chat very purpose.

You may have noticed that we have consistenrly usec quotarion marks when speaking about "non-public" schools and edLJcation in rl'lis text. This is because we want to point out a fondamenral contradiction when it comes to the 'non-publicness" of "non-public" cdltcation in Poland. We argue tbar public and "non-public" Polish educational institutions are all public in tl1e sense that they fulfil public role and serve the public. Both public and "non-public" ed\lcational insrimtions are governed by the same legal regulations and fall under the jurisdiction and oversight of the corresponding governmental institutions, who control them tl1rough regulatory mechanisms, including examination system and curricular compliance. The alleged difference berween "non-public" and public education is that the latter is supposedly free. However, public university education for example, is not free - all public universities, after giving limited admission to tuition-free programs of study to applicants with the highe t high-school leaving certificate scores, offer much larger pool of tuition-based

placements. Similarly, public primary and secondary schools are obligated to offer open access to all children. But as the cases of parents we described in this text illustrate, in practice, those pupils, whom the school does not deem suitable, are excluded based on their difference. And it is the "non-public" schools, as we showed, that open their doors to these students excluded from the homogeneous learning community of public schools, often offering free places to those in need of scholarships.

In the post-1989 period, public secondary schools in Poland have been stratified through neoliberal mechanisms of high-stakes testing and selection. Therefore, especially in large Polish cities, high-achieving public secondary schools are reserved for privileged students, functioning as gateways to full-time tuition-free placements at prestigious public universities. Polish "non-public" tertiary educational institutions (outside of notable exceptions) are generally considered less prestigious and serve those less privileged (students from small towns and rural areas, students who did not perform well enough in centralised examinations on which entry to prestigious secondary schools is based, students whose parents did not have the funds to pay for extra grinds, mature students returning to education, and others). It is these less-privileged students who then enrol and pay tuition in "non-public" higher educational sector, while their more privileged and successful peers get a "free ride" financed from public sources. Paradoxically therefore, in the Polish landscape of cultural intimacy governed by homogeneous imaginaries of belonging and educational inequalities, "non-public" school and university sector often fulfil the role of what is properly understood as public education - free, diverse, and open to all.

Our point here is to draw attention to the importance of language in how publicness is defined and how it can be manipulated. The Polish state benefits from the public/"non-public" language entanglement. The legal language of the Polish education system equates the state with what is public and relegates the "non-public," which it cannot fully ideologically and financially control, to a place outside of the public realm. This helps to maintain the fallacy of ascribing the public to state institutions while denigrating non-governmental and non-state institutions as "non-public" and, by extension, profit-seeking. In stable democratic systems, in which education is relatively independent of state control ensured by such mechanisms as free elections of school principals and school councils, as well as prerogative of teachers' autonomy in the classroom, we can imagine that such equation of the state and the public can be justified. However, public education can serve as a dangerous instrument in the hands of tyrannical power, which seeks to appropriate everything public. The linguistic construction of public/"non-public" education, present in Poland since 1991, has enabled the state to treat public institutions as its private property, which does not require oversight from the public because linguistically, this education which the state considers its private property, is public.

Public educational inStitutions on all levels have been aftccted by this sense of ownership of public education by the state. Schools are now tightly under the state's control made possible through far-reaching organisational and

curricular reforms. The superintendents (named by the state) already have increased power over what happens in schools, including overseeing how the state curriculum is implemented. The most recent projected school reform plans for supe1intendents to also gain the power to name school principals, control access of non-governmental organisations into schools (previously important agents of anti-discriminatory and progressive educational innovations), and carry out rulings concerning "educational crime" - a new punitive concept and mechanism designed to discipline non-compliant principals and teachers.

It is in this context of the state's appropriation of the public sphere that we understand parents' actions, including those tl1at take the form of choosing educational pathways framed as "non-public" as the expanding and reclaiming of publicness under the political condition of new tyranny.

Rethinking publicness from the new tyrannies

We have now elucidated the conditions of publicness in Poland as an example of a new tyranny. We reflected on how this type of rule (Heller 2019) centralises power in the hands of the state controlled by the will of an individual leader, relying on exclusionary ideologies of belonging. We desctibed concrete cases from our research with parents' encounters witl1 public schools to show how the dominant publicness is challenged through citizens' counter-hegemonic and counter-public disagreement and action. We also illuminated how linguistic confusions favour the tyrannical state to appropriate and manipulate the meaning of the public. We now turn to a consideration of how discussion of publicness in these particular political conditions can illuminate publicness' conceptual entanglement and point to possible understandings of publicness beyond established dichotomies and interpretations.

The concept of the public/publicness/public sphere has a long: and complex history. Linguistically, d1c idea comes from the "great dichotomy" of the Roman law (Justinian's ***Corpus iuris***) (Bobbio 1989), which made a distinction between what belongs to a group or society as a whole and is subjected to public law, and that which belongs to its individual members or lesser groupings (like households) and is subjected to private law (Bobbio 1989, p. 3). The first formulations of this dichotomy clearly indicated the supremacy of the public over the private. This superiority was first challenged by the diffusion of Roman law and eventually overruled in modern conceptions of the state of nature and civil society/state (Locke, Hohhes), which reinforced the private over: the public and introduced the inviolability of private property as one of the universal human rights (Keane 1989, p. XIII).

It is in this understanding of the difference between the private and the public that the "liberal tradition", as opposed to the so-called classical tndition, has its roots. Broadl)r speaking, in its more contemporaneous formularion by neo-classical economists, the distinction demarcates the difference between the "public" authority of the state and "private" individuals and their free relations in tl1e market. On the otl1er hand, classical tradition, whose beginnings we can

find for example in Aristotle's ***Politics,*** refers to the ancient opposition between ***oikos*** and ***polis.*** The private is recognised as ***oikos*** - inferior domestic sphere of production and reproduction occupied by women, slaves, and children. The public is referred to as ***polis,*** an area of political decision-making and action through deliberation, not necessarily limited to state institutions but restricted to free citizens of Athens (Arendt 1958; Biesta 2012). To complicate this picture, the concept of civil society in this configuration could be perceived as both private and public. It can be seen as private when juxtaposed to the state in both early theoretisations (Machiavelli) and modern concepts of civil society (Gramsci). Or it is publk when it is opposed to the personal - a sphere of intimacy or family - such as in early theories of social contract or in modern feminist critiques (Squires 2018, p. 132).

Habermas's conception of the public sphere, which he introduced in ***The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*** (1962, 1992), starts a new "critical liberal tradition." Habermas understands publicness as an arena in which public consensus is negotiated through free, unlimited, and rational discussion/ deliberation on public good, which he considers a fundamental condition of democracy (1992, 1998). For Habermas, the public sphere is distinct from the state, towards which it can be critical and consists of private individuals who come together to discuss public matters. However, the public sphere is also distinct fi.-om the private, understood as individuals pursuing private interesrs. At the same time, Habermas considered the public sphere distinct from official economy since deliberation and discussion on public matters could not be based on commodity-exchange relations.

The essential element of this idea, which Habermas later developed in his theory of communicative action, was the conviction that the fundamental condition of any kind of use of language (e.g, strategic or instrumcntal) is communicarion based on mutual undemanding and agreement (Habermas 1984). This hypothetical and counrerfac.tual ideal se1"Ved as a model for his understanding and critique of modern democracy. It led him to view public sphere as an open arena co which all citizens could have access, in which all inequalities and hierarchies must have been suspended, and. all discussants were to be considered as peers (Habermas 1992; Fraser 1990, p. 60). Even though Habermas' considerations were based on historical and specific analyses of eighteenth-century bourgeois public sphere, Rabermas believed that this public sphere was a rational and ,miversal model for building and nurturing modern democracies.

However, Habermas' conceptualisation of the public ignored the possibility of the existence of ***count&rl!Hhlic.s*** those which are excluded from the official discourse and which are based on ocher than classical liberal bourgeois needs and demands - for example, nationalist, class, or gender publics (Fraser 1990). Habermas' concept implies the existence of what is essentially one public sphere in which equal citizens take pan in discursive deliberation and justi-6cation. .Philosophy's role in this tradition is co seek to theoretically reconstruct the essential features of the public sphere that arc present in an unfinished variety within the multiplicity of its existing form. This elitist and unitary understanding

of publicness does not consider exclusionary operations of power and does not appreciate the strength of everyday civic practices. We would argue that if applied to situations in the new cyrannies this conceptualisation of publicness places publicness in the hands of the state, leaving citizens, such as our public parems without agency and hope.

In$tead, in rrying co undem:and publicness in the context of the new cyr.m-nies, we propose to draw on the critical democratic tradition of public philosophy in the study of the public sphere which understands publicness primarily as the diversity of practices of ci,<ic engagemcm (Fraser 1990· Tully 2008 2012; Foucault 1984, 2007; Rosanvallon 2008). This understanding of publicness stresses the multiplicity (as to the types, numbers, reach, and historicity) of public spheres, which it considers as irreducible characteristics of publicness. Public sphere understood in this way is an arena of counter-hegemonic disagreement, based on probing, testing, call.ing into question, negotiating, or modifying different aspects of public spl1erc through citizens' practices (RosanvaUon 2008). Public philosophy's aim is not co propose normative theory of justice or equality but rather to expose historical conditions of possibility of a specific set of practices constituting a given mode of governance and the public itself. This can be achieved by gaining critical insight into language and practices by tracing their genealogies and thus exposing their historical and contingem character. The aim of this exposition is not just clarification bur rather transformation of the subjects' self-understanding in order to recognise their situation of oppression, enabling them to see the possibilities of governing themselves differently (Foucanlt 1984; Tully 2008, pp. 15-18).

In our understanding of publicness we build on two essential concepts - multiplicity and everyday language practices - both of them considered in the context of exclusionary operations of power. V\7e refer ro Wittgenstein's reflections on the multiplicity of language games and forms of life (Wittgenstein 1999, §23) and Foucault s studies of discourse as rule-governed practice. Both Wittgenstein and Foucaulr share thcir interest in language or discourse as cem:ral points of reference for their philosophical metl1ods. As a consequence, they both pay much attention to the connection between langi1ag-c and practice and ro the idea of the publicness of language. Foucault sees discourse as a set of practices ,-hich form the objects of which they speak (Foucault 2002, p. 187). Discourse consists of actual statements ("discursive event?) in their multiplicity, dispersion, and natural regularicy, wbich ,:an be captured only by "the archaeologist." Similady, Wittgenstein's botlt early and late philosophy is informed by the conviction tl1at "[a]U philosophy is the critiquc of language'" (Wittgenscein 2002, 4.0031). Late Wittgenstein stresses thar it is practice that determines the form of our language and thought. Describing language game as a form of life, a practice related to the use of words (Wingenstein 1999, §23), Wittgenstein rejects his own earlier rcifying view on language, based on the claim that words have d1.eir fixed meaning situated omsidc of language. fo face, his main idea of philosophical therapy is ro bring words back from their metaphysical to everyday use (Wittgenstein 1999, §116).

The idea of the centrality of language in the philosophical method and the idea of the connection of language and practice lead us to a particular understanding of publicness. According to Foucault, practices are composed of rules, which must necessarily have a public, regular, and linguistic character (May 1997, Olssen 2017). This means that the existence of practices and rules requires the existence of community in which they are established and applicable. Similarly, Wittgenstein, by analogy to game, points to the rule-governed character of language, emphasising thus the regular, conventional, and social nature of human communication (Wittgenstein 1999, §207, §208). According to Wittgenstein, following a rule is a practice, and for an expression or behaviour to be recognised as rule-following, it must have a communal context. There must be someone who will be able to recognise the activity as conforming to the rule or failing to do so. These observations exclude the possibility of understanding private language as rule-governed language, since such language would fail in instituting any rules and could not have any practical consequences (Wirrg<:nsr.ein 1999, §268). Wittgenstein therefore sees language as an essentially public activity a kind of site, in whkh the public space or the common (collective subjectivity) in the human form oflife is established, formed, and expressed (Sgii 2004; Gakis 2020). Wittgenstein's reflections concerning tl1e use of "I" and critique of privacy or ownership of the inner ideas, sensations, or feelings in PJJiwsophical Im,estiga tion.s (Wittgenstein 1999, §§398-411) also support the view that it is language that constitutes a space of the public.

In both conceptions, language is understood as diverse and multiple practices established through and in accordance with rules, which must necessarily be public. While Wittgenstein stresses that these rules are established in the co�1rse of everyday use of language, he is not interested in possible distortions of the rules caused by extra-linguistic mechanisms. Foucau lt's research into rules focuses on showing how they are produced through the workings of power and practices of exclLJsion, bringing attention to the different forms that discursive exclusions take - in the form of prohibition, division, and rejection, or the true/false opposition (Foucault 1981, Pezdek & Rasinski 2016). 1n this sense, Foucault shows how discourse is established by excluding certain practices to ourside of � hat is public, which in this case refers to that which is sanctioned as scholarly, rational, socially/eco11omicaJly useful, tru,e, and so on.

Drawing on these philosophkaJ approaches, we understand publicness not as a uniform sire ofagreement and £reo earching for ti}e common good (Habcrmas) but as an open space of discursive multiplicity where practices ofexclusion or oppression 1:a.n be made visible and challenged. The publicness of language, and especially, d1e publicness of the oppressive practices involved in language, is a condition ofresisrancc against oppressive power. As all language is essentially public, it is impossible to imagine spacc:s that would be deprived of publicness. This questions the traditional liberal and classical divisions between private and public. The multiplicity of language games and forms of life which shape our everyday language and rules, and which must be observed in order to engage in comnrnnication, arc reflected in the multiplicity of forms of publicness in

which citizens take action. Therefore, as publicness is created by multiplicity of everyday practices, its complete appropriation is not possible. Public spheres are necessarily open to the interests and needs that may be traditionally considered as 'private,' making complete appropriation of publicness by the tyrannical state impossible.

Discussion: the new publicness of education

During our last interview in April 2022, as she was explaining the financial and logistical challenges she faced in the day-to-day running of the educational foundation, Joanna said

> I am exhausted every day, [the foundation) is taking so much of my time. We struggle financially, and the work is also very difficult because children who come to us are damaged from the public school system, and they require a lot of care. The work with parents is also difficult because we insist that the education and well-being of their child requires close cooperation on their side. But I forget about the hardships when I look at Eugene. The progress he has made is unbelievable and he is a happy child again.

JoaMa gives all her free time to a fow1dation that is creating educational space for her own child but also other children excluded from the homogeneity of cultural intimacy dominant in Polish public schools. In Joanna's narrative we see how her deeply personal motivations to create conditions for development and happiness for her son intermingle with her public commitment.

The empirical cases of public parents in Poland help us reposition their fight for their children's rights for education from a sphe_re of private and "non-public" interest to chat of coumer-pl1blic intervention, which in effect reclaims the public sphere appropriated by the tyrannical state. Their counteractions articulate demands for publicness and- help expose the misuse of language embedded in how the public and the "non-pl1blic" education has been defined in post-1991 Poland. They use the space of "non-public" education to create spheres of action which expand possibilities of diversifying the homogeneous culcutal inti.mac;• of belonging dominating Poland's school communities. Publicness and public sphere become spaces of multiplicity of citiz.ens' action5 id1rough which relations of oppression arc being made visible and arc challenged.

Through d1e prism of Wirrgenstein's and Foucault's critiques, which scress the fi.mda01ental publicness of language and its connection to practice and power, we can move beyond the definitions of private/public in bow we analyse publicness of education. This allows us to sec how the "non-public" rcaUy is public, moving beyond the Fallacy of binary oppositions that mask the workings of hegemonic state power and conventional critiques of educational neoliberalism towards rethinking what the new publicness of education can be (not only) under the conditions of new tyrannies.

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