

# EDUCATION – AT THE INTERSECTION OF TWO SEEMINGLY CONTRASTING VALUES: FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY

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**Abstract:** Freedom implies the absence of constraints; responsibility implies the assumption of limitations. In this context, education has a very important role, having the task of balancing the disadvantages of freedom with the advantages of responsibility. When one uses one's freedom to limit the freedom of others, things degenerate. People need to be educated for responsibility; it does not develop without help. The balanced intertwining of freedom and responsibility is an act of divine greatness. The classroom is the place where the student learns how to behave in society. Teachers have a huge responsibility because they are the most important ambassadors of authentic values. An important aspect of the concern for freedom and responsibility is found in religious education. Focusing on the development of character, on the transmission of values and on the acquisition of pedagogical content that encourages the cultivation of true faith in parallel with the development of critical thinking is the most valuable way to approach the human personality.

**Keywords:** *freedom, responsibility, moral values, education for values, religious education*

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## **Introduction**

Freedom and responsibility are two values that seem to be in contrast. Freedom implies the absence of constraints; responsibility implies the assumption of limitations. Constraints and limitations can be external and internal. The first ones have to do with the environment in which we live, with the socio-economic, historical and cultural context in which we

carry out our existence and with the degree of development of the community to which we belong.

Internal constraints and limitations are those that come from within each person, whether they are aware or not. Perceptions about the world and life, previous experiences, assumed values, the type of education received in childhood, the type of relationships developed with friends and colleagues, expectations about the future, all these make their mark on the limits we choose for our lives.

Some people deliberately challenge any constraint. Others, on the contrary, display an obedient personality, without manifesting opposition. To some extent, in this context, we can talk about nonconformism and conformity. The analysis of the two extremes and the examination of their advantages and disadvantages will lead to the choice of the equilibrium zone, where the most promising advantages can be capitalized and the most unpleasant disadvantages can be avoided.

In this context, education has a very important role. It has the task of balancing the disadvantages of freedom with the advantages of responsibility. It holds the secret by which two seemingly contrasting values can work together in a perfect balance.

## **The Value of Freedom in History**

Ancient Greek literature focused on three main values: Good, Truth, and Beauty. In parallel, over time, Judeo-Christian literature has promoted sacredness as the supreme value for believers. The idea of freedom is part of the modern values proposed by the French Revolution and the Anglo-Saxon revolutions. It is about freedom, equality, fraternity and legality (Antonesei, 2000). These values of modernity, among which freedom plays a central role, laid the foundations of current values: democracy, globalization, mobility.

The universe is based on the absolute values contained in His Law. God is the Good that includes all the other values of the Kingdom of God: truth, justice, love, kindness, mercy. The removal of man from God has made the sense of values perverted, sin interferes with man's natural ability to perceive reality correctly. Absolute values exist in written revelation. The physical order, the logical order and the moral order are part of the entire creative order. This was altered by the fall

into sin, at which point man began to create his own system of values, different from that of the Creator. Thus, true wisdom that pursues long-term goals decays to the skill of winning what you want as soon as possible. Tolerance degenerates into indifference, freedom into defiance of authority (Pop, 2005, pp. 25-35).

Many people paid with their own lives for the freedom of their families or the community they belonged to. Although they paid the highest possible price, they could not get it. Today freedom is cheap and because of this, it is misused. When one uses one's freedom to limit the freedom of others, things degenerate.

### **The contrast between freedom and responsibility**

The main way to balance the freedom out of control is to practice responsibility. The problem is that the value of responsibility is not very popular. People need to be educated for responsibility; it does not develop without help. Covaci (2019) discusses social entropy and freedom of conscience. Entropy is associated with disorder and chaos. Each system tends to disorganize. However, human societies tend to adopt rules of living that impose structural order and organization. Although initially entropy can be associated with full freedom, the rights of minorities can only be ensured through rules that have the role of organizing the social system.

Spătărelu (2016) demonstrates through quantitative studies that a high level of responsibility can be achieved by involvement in volunteer activities. The experience gained in this way protects them from marginalization, helps them to improve their professional skills and helps them to find a job faster.

Full freedom and dignity can be achieved only in relation to the Creator by developing a metaphysical perspective on the world, by seeking values that go beyond the common, because "common values are fluid and not anchored by an absolute and objective landmark, beyond the visible and material" (Maftai, 2019). The balanced intertwining of freedom and responsibility is an act of divine greatness. Only God can oversee the collaboration and co-operation of these two diametrically opposed forces.

## The regulatory role of education

Glennon (1995) promotes freedom and responsibility in religious education classes. He says traditional training has an authoritarian structure. Values such as freedom, responsibility, equality, communion cannot be transmitted through traditional methods. Being influenced by the Judeo-Christian vision, the author cited above uses its values in teaching using strategies that promote student freedom, respect and taking responsibility for student learning. When using cooperative learning, it is observed that the main problem that arises is the dilution of responsibility. This has a negative influence on individual motivation. However, specific tools such as individual reading, discussions, paired answers, summarization, jigsaw, collaborative presentations or group examinations can be used to alleviate these inconveniences. According to the researcher, the classroom is a microcosm of society. If the student learns how to combine freedom with responsibility here, he will be able to take this competence outside of it.

Kiru (2019) argues that education based on love, respect, integrity and self-control can prevent the negative effects of misunderstood freedom that often manifests itself through bullying. Spătărelu (2019) includes in this discussion the concept of human dignity. To explain this, he uses ideas such as: freedom, equality, fraternity, justice and respect for life. To ensure a high level of responsibility and guarantee full freedoms for all children, the researcher proposes an action model with three levels: the level of collaboration between the three institutions involved (family, school and church), the level of identification of causes (physical, socio-social and cultural factors are analysed) and the level of action in three steps (observation, private action and public action).

Covaci (2016) investigates the virtual environment as a factor in the expression of freedom of religion and faith. Under the auspices of anonymity, certain rights may be violated, including freedom of conscience. Online education must take precautions to promote tolerance. Positioning in extremes requires extreme approaches and solutions to achieve balance. In order to respect the principles of authentic education that emphasize the need for balance (White, 2012, p. 13), the ideas of pluralism must be brought to the fore. These are naturally associated with cultural diversity, universal rights, democracy and globalism (Spătărelu, 2018).

The classroom is the place where the student learns how to behave in society. Teachers have a huge responsibility because they are the most important ambassadors of authentic values. Maybe the daily activities they organize seem to be worthless. But if those activities promote inner order, respect for others and the joy of appreciating diversity, they surpass any other good, because the power to provide meaning, brilliance and uniqueness to some destinies that initially seemed to be common.

### **Religious education and religious freedom**

An important aspect of the concern for freedom and responsibility is found in religious education. It has a special affinity for the development of character traits, and responsibility is strongly linked to this subject. Relano (2010) addresses the delicate subject of religion and belief in schools in Western countries. The author talks about the official implementation of two contradictory tendencies: the observance of parents' religious and philosophical beliefs and the school's ability to disseminate through education information that is directly or indirectly related to the religious or philosophical dimension. The values of respect for freedom, democracy, pluralism cannot simply be implemented in school. There is a need for a learning process that needs neutral, critical and pluralistic ways of disseminating knowledge.

Lower-Hoppe, Arasim and Piper (2020) bring into question the discrepancy between the need to protect individual civil liberties and the legal provisions in Western countries that take religion out of school. The authors are against the practice of banning prayers before matches and sporting events, arguing that they are part of rituals that strengthen group cohesion. The authors are against the practice of banning prayers before matches and sporting events, arguing that they are part of rituals that strengthen group cohesion. They recommend the development of policies that encourage the shaping of an inclusive environment, in which religious individuals are not discriminated against.

Spătărelu (2017) recommends several ways to promote genuine freedom intertwined with responsibility: encouraging diversity, critical education (for understanding current history and society), religious education of children (for respect for others), participation in volunteer activities (for the development of civic responsibility), the involvement of grandparents in the process of transmitting values.

Religious education can have an important say in the correct and harmonious combination of freedom and responsibility. Focusing on the development of character, on the transmission of values and on the acquisition of pedagogical content that encourages the cultivation of true faith in parallel with the development of critical thinking is the most valuable way to approach the human personality.

## Conclusions

Freedom implies the absence of constraints; responsibility implies the assumption of limitations. In this context, education has a very important role. It has the task of balancing the disadvantages of freedom with the advantages of responsibility. It holds the secret by which two seemingly contrasting values can work together in a perfect balance.

Many people paid with their own lives for the freedom of their families or the community they belonged to. Although they paid the highest possible price, they could not get it. Today freedom is cheap and because of this, it is misused. When one uses one's freedom to limit the freedom of others, things degenerate. The main way to balance the freedom out of control is to practice responsibility. The problem is that the value of responsibility is not very popular. People need to be educated for responsibility; it does not develop without help.

The balanced intertwining of freedom and responsibility is an act of divine greatness. Only God can oversee the collaboration and co-operation of these two diametrically opposed forces. The classroom is the place where the student learns how to behave in society. Teachers have a huge responsibility because they are the most important ambassadors of authentic values. Maybe the daily activities they organize seem to be worthless. But if those activities promote inner order, respect for others and the joy of appreciating diversity, they surpass any other good, because the power to provide meaning, brilliance and uniqueness to some destinies that initially seemed to be common.

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