Piotr Kowzan
University of Gdańsk

https://doi.org/10.26881/ae.2024.21.04

Schismogenesis and Authoritarianism: In Search of Levers of Change in *The Dawn of Everything* by David Graeber and David Wengrow

Introduction

There are books that not only increase readers' knowledge in a particular area, but also influence their thinking on other matters. They are then assessed as valuable publications. Many reviews of *The Dawn of Everything. A New History of Humanity* (Graeber and Wengrow 2021) have already appeared, this article turns instead to how educators might put the book to work. In addition to reconstructing part of the authors' argument, I will present a glossary of terms worth drawing from the book. Based on this material, I will try to look at the problem of contemporary authoritarianism. And I will conclude by pointing out the issues that this book reveals as "to-do" tasks in contemporary pedagogical thought. Critical pedagogy has been searching for years for emancipatory tools that will allow individuals and communities to break free from the domination of oppressive structures. Graeber and Wengrow's book takes a radical new look at the roots of the problem of inequality, allowing educators to understand that social change can go deeper than just superficial institutional reforms. In this sense, their work continues the subversive traditions in pedagogy, but at the same time offers something new – it shows that emancipation can come from reconstructing historical consciousness and re-understanding our collective past.

Anthropologist David Graeber and archaeologist David Wengrow have jointly written a book that aims to challenge the belief that, before the invention of agriculture, people lived in small hunter-gatherer communities where equality prevailed. At the same time, they challenge the notion that inequality is an inherent

consequence of agricultural development and an inevitable part of urban life, the scale of which requires giving up freedom. The book became possible thanks to new information and evidence provided by science to the authors' disciplines by the sciences. However, they were frustrated by the perpetuation of the same interpretive framework, despite its growing inadequacy.

In 2011, Graeber and Wengrow began to share their ideas, readings and exchange information on the state of the art in their respective scientific fields. They wanted to take part in debate on inequality that had been growing since the 2008 financial crisis. Their playful process of writing the book, as they called it, took eight years. Sadly, less than a month after the book was submitted to the publisher in 2020, David Graeber passed away unexpectedly.

For years, Graeber explored the opening and closing of political opportunity windows. He challenged myths forged in the production of scientific knowledge, his most important work being his duel with economists in *Debt: The First 5000 years* (Graeber 2011), where he questioned the founding myths of money. The book *Bullshit Jobs: A Theory* (Graeber 2018) can be seen as a confrontation with management thinkers and the myth of labour efficiency in private companies. In *The Utopia of Rules: On Technology, Stupidity, and the Secret Joys of Bureaucracy* (Graeber 2015), the author engages with sociologists.

I am not yet familiar with Wengrow's books, but I would like to read his *What Makes Civilization? The Ancient Near East and the Future of the West* (Wengrow 2010), because it seems to me that in this work the author shows how arguments about entire civilisations are built from small material evidence.

In *The Dawn of Everything*, Graeber and Wengrow dismantle the myths that fall under the heading of 'social evolutionism' in anthropology. Although they can be dismissed in a single lecture, these myths keep resurfacing in interpretations of research results despite their lack of credibility. The response to this disciplinary issue is therefore a synthesis of research published in highly specialised fields and subfields. Given the book size, it is hard to believe it was originally intended as nothing more than a pamphlet on contemporary debates about inequality that are detached from the evidence.

In their intellectual play, the two Davids decided to examine the circumstances in which questions about the origins of inequality were first raised in Europe, leading them to clash with the Goliath of the Enlightenment. The book tells the story of how the political debate on freedom, rights and inequality emerged in Europe after failed attempts to persuade the inhabitants of the New World to accept the social, political and economic order previously unquestioned in the Old World. In this sense, it can be said that this is the book that decolonised the Enlightenment. And with Jean-Jacques Rousseau as one of its somewhat derided heroes, educators can be sure that the consequences of this re-evaluation will inevitably reach their field as well.

It is impossible to convey the full meaning of this book, since the sheer density of footnotes ensures that readers will have diverse experiences of it. The range

of interpretations and the intellectual ferment sparked by this publication can be seen in the discussions of reading clubs that have taken it up as amateurs, in the best sense of the term. In this article, I present its main themes and the characteristic concepts the authors employ in their investigations. My focus is the book's potential for thinking about education and upbringing, as well as on the relevance of its conclusions for the debate *The New Authoritarianism – Are We Asking the Right Questions?* launched by Karolina Starego and Łukasz Stankiewicz in "Ars Educandi".

In the following analysis, the title "lever of change" refers to processes and mechanisms that challenge established social orders and enable the creation of new realities. In an educational context, these levers can include pedagogical tools that challenge normative thinking and inspire critical reflection on social structures.

Reconstructing the deconstruction of the Enlightenment

This book is an intellectual disruption, and an invitation to pursue one's own inquiries in the dense thicket of footnotes and references to archaeological sites. It begins by subverting notions of the Enlightenment as an intellectual movement rooted solely in local European traditions of inquiry into the nature of the world. Instead of this myth, as it turns out, we see the people of the early Enlightenment shocked by the appeal of New World societies. We see how political debate emerged from failed attempts to persuade the inhabitants of the New World to accept the social, political and economic order previously unquestioned in Europe. The mere act of unveiling the circumstances in which Jean-Jacques Rousseau's works – especially *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men* (Rousseau 2009) – were written and gained prominence is a major achievement of this book. The further dismantling of entrenched habits of thought takes place not in a vacuum but amid visits to hundreds of ancient cities and archaeological sites.

Graeber and Wengrow were intrigued by Rousseau's interest in inequality. What could he have known about equality when writing his *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men*, and why did the Academy of Dijon, during the reign of Louis XV, launch a competition on precise this topic? This was not a continuation of medieval inquiries. The issue was new, emerging with the discovery of the New World. People eagerly read reports from there because they contained unprecedented ideas, such as sexual freedom for women and the possibility of divorce. These reports, written by exasperated missionaries, were published annually as the "Jesuit Relations of New France" (1633–1673) (Greer 2000). The missionaries recorded events in what is now Quebec, producing 71 volumes. They wrote little about inequality, but much about freedom and mutual aid, as the evangelised reproached Europeans for their shortcomings, and the Europeans responded by defending their order and denying the need for freedom. There is something perversely racist in our difficulty imagining that those responsible

for the genocide of Native Americans might have listened to what they had to say. Colonisers were accused of blindly following orders out of fear of their commanders, while Native Americana mocked their own leaders and expected persuasion. In indigenous communities, punishments were rare and crime uncommon. For the Jesuits, this posed a serious challenge, as they did not know how to introduce the idea of Christian commandments into such societies.

The travellers' accounts took the form of dialogues, as they were based on actual recorded conversations. Graeber and Wengrow introduce readers to Kondiaronk – chief of the Wyandot tribe, negotiator and signatory of the 1701 Great Peace of Montreal. They describe him as a philosopher, an eloquent speaker, and the central figure of the proto-salon at the provincial governor's house. He was also a statesman and probably an envoy of the Wyandot confederation council to the court of Louis XIV in 1691. He appeared in a 1703 book entitled *Curious Dialogues with a Savage of Good Sense Who Has Travelled*, by Baron de Lahontan (Lahontan, Gueudeville 1703). The book was so popular that for twenty years plays were staged based on its basis. People imitated the style of this conversation, but assumed that the indigenous character was fictional, otherwise he would have had to be the smartest person who had ever lived. And, on top of that, one with a perfect command of French.

Graeber and Wengrow do not claim that Kondiaronk was the only world intellectual among the indigenous peoples of the Americas. But he alone was enough to disrupt our polished, textbook image of the past. They showed how the discourse of social critique changed over time. Beginning with a discussion of freedom that shocked the missionaries, they moved on to the problem of inequality observed by Indigenous commentators who conducted their own ethnographies of invading communities. They were astonished by the possibility of material possessions being transformed into a share of political power. Such connection that did not exist in their own societies. As a result, they formulated and convincingly expressed the view that the problem is the use of money.

A further transformation of critical discourse concerned the intellectual ferment before the second edition of one of the most successful publications of the Enlightenment era: *Letters of a Peruvian Woman* (Graffigny 2022). The critique of the Old World expressed by the fictional protagonist – an Inca princess named Zilia, who was kidnapped by the Spaniards – focuses on a state that allows slavery, homelessness, begging, and imposes taxes instead of distributing wealth; while condemning patriarchy (all social criticism was carried out from the position of a woman), including constraints on education (letter 34). Among those advising amendments in the year 1751 was the then future economist and controller of Louis XVI's state finances, Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot:

> „In reality, he ventured, the freedom and equality of savages is not a sign of their superiority; it's a sign of inferiority, since it is only possible in a society where each household is largely self-sufficient and, therefore, where everyone is equally poor. As societies evolve, Turgot reasoned,

> technology advances. Natural differences in talents and capacities between individuals (which have always existed) become more significant, and eventually they form the basis for an ever more complex division of labour. We progress from simple societies like those of the Wendat to our own complex 'commercial civilization', in which the poverty and dispossession of some – however lamentable it may be – is nonetheless the necessary condition for the prosperity of society as a whole." (Graeber & Wengrow, 2021: 71–72)

Later, this critique, together with the conceived stages of social evolution, was expanded by him during his lectures and picked up by Adam Smith. As a result, communities began to be classified according to their means of obtaining food, pushing those that did not use (or had abandoned) agriculture down the development ladder. The sense of European superiority was maintained, which does not change the fact that the arguments of the Indians would be considered rational in modern times, and the former Europeans – with their distance from all freedoms – may seem incomprehensible.

According to Graeber and Wengrow, Rousseau's contribution to the debate lay in his paradoxical combination the opposing discourses of the time. In doing so, however, he reduced Indigenous peoples to quasi-humanbeings who acted but lacked imagination and foresight. Crucially, Rousseau was not writing history, but through a thought experiment he sought to explain the emergence of property, which he could not help but link to freedom. His experiment eventually mutated into a metastructure of human history, in which equality come to mean the absence of what we call civilisation, namely rulers, priests, cities or agriculture.

In a sense, this is where the book truly begins. Stripped from the cognitive frames of the Enlightenment, we set off with Graeber and Wengrow to take a fresh look at the origins of civilisation and the over-interpretations that accompany rare and scattered finds, some dating back tens of thousands of years. What emerges from opening up further interpretive possibilities forms the *New Human History* of the subtitle, a consciously created and evidence-based alternative to the European narrative of our species' past. Its myth-making quality lies in the assumption that humans have always been conscious: aware of who they are, of what they are doing and that their actions arise from what they had done before, though perhaps they no longer wished to continue doing so.

Glossary of useful terms

Rather than presenting the structure of the chapters, the order of the argument and listing the successive archaeological sites the book takes us through, I will discuss some of the concepts used in the book, which seemed to me also important from a pedagogical perspective.

Schismogenesis

A useful concept to explain the dynamics of cultural change is schismogenesis. The term was coined by Gregory Bateson in the 1930s to describe how people define themselves in opposition to others (Bateson 1935). At the level of cultures, this involves the deliberate and multidimensional differentiation of geographically close communities when they perceive undesirable traits of neighbouring groups. Communities unwilling to accept certain outcomes of the social order (e.g. slavery) not only avoid the places where these occur (e.g. cities) and practise different forms of governance, but also emphasise their distinctiveness by exposing these contrasts in their material culture, especially in art. The concept of schismogenesis recurs throughout the book, covering diverse regions and historical periods – from the classical opposition between Athens and Sparta in the fifth century BC, through the communities of California and the north of the west coast of North America analysed in detail, to the political transformations in the Fertile Crescent of the Middle East after the last Ice Age.

This notion helps to move beyond the arbitrariness of cultural specificity, i.e. beyond the assumptions behind a structuralist view of reality. The particular arrangements adopted in a given culture are not random products, determinative peculiarities manifesting themselves in language, marriage rules food preparation. The perspective of schismogenesis allows us to perceive, at the root of cultural distinctiveness, a political choice – the rejection of an unwanted way of life [cf. *constitutive outside* (Laclau 1990) and *de-identification* (Masschelein, Simons 2013)]. Sometimes the reasons for variation between communities located in the same ecological conditions are missing. It has become customary to explain, e.g., why in neighbouring communities one cultivates maize and the other practices fishing, by reference to ecology rather than politics. We favour determinism in explanations, even if the research shows evidence of deliberate efforts to ensure that one group's behaviour remained clearly different from its neighbours. Interestingly, such deliberately divergent communities are nonetheless bound together by the very act of cultivating their differences.

Whereas for Rouseau slavery was a consequence of agriculture, Graeber and Wengrow point to examples of west coast communities in America, where slavery was practised despite the absence of agriculture. Moreover, slavery did not spread because the nearby community positioned themselves as the antithesis of those relying on forced labour. The authors suggest that no explanation has yet been found for such stark contrasts, and therefore Californian foragers probably followed their own work ethic.

In the social sciences we look at borrowing, so the refusal to imitate is difficult to grasp. A look at communities over a longer timeframe shows that there has sometimes even been a mass exodus from a particular place to start a different lifestyle. The notion of schismogenesis sanctions looking at what societies are trying to avoid, not just what they create. In a more pedagogical context, the concept

of schismogenesis can be particularly useful when analysing so-called educational alternatives. If we accept them as a cultural phenomenon, the "alternatives" should always be considered in relation to the practices of those institutions from which, at the outset of their activities, they tried mightily to differentiate themselves. It is also worth exploring how these differences were subsequently sustained. Such analysis will help the next generation of educators to come up with their own initiatives, instead of relying only on existing solutions to specific problems.

Seasonality

The seasonality of social structures and institutions is described in Graeber and Wengrow's book as a universal mechanism for gaining the awareness that social life can always be organised differently. Comparing how social rules shifted with the seasons made people smarter. Although treating humans as seasonal beings is a novel perspective, in this regard the authors consciously develop the thought of Marcel Mauss (Mauss 2006), who wrote about social morphology that changed according to the problems a community faced. These were not just superficial changes in terms of techniques, but also in rituals, deep beliefs and moral codes. During the season of prosperity when large animals appeared or rivers flooded, it was necessary to cooperate differently (in larger groups) than in times of difficult hunting (division into separately operating families). Thus, seasonality was to some extent forced upon people by environmental constraints, and the need to find collective responses meant that people learned to live in different social configurations over longer periods of time. The fact that they did not use writing to organise their knowledge does not imply a lack of awareness of choice. Above all, they discussed and created art through which they symbolically represented their solutions. Archaeology, supported by anthropology, reveals the depth of seasonala; transformations in morphologically dual communities. These changes ranged from family structures to the appearance of temporary policing forces at specific moments in the life of the community, only to be disbanded later. Likewise, monumental building projects alternated with their dismantling. Even the solemnly buried men of the last Ice Age may have been mere seasonal kings, which leads the authors of to ask why we ended up perpetuating such a system of government rather than another, and why we as humanity bound itself to authoritarian structures: " How did we come to treat eminence and subservience not as temporary expedients, or even the pomp and circumstance of some kind of grand seasonal theatre, but as inescapable elements of the human condition? If we started out just playing games, at what point did we forget that we were playing?" (Graeber, Wengrow 2021: 124–125).

Seasonality is thus a trait that humans largely lost, though its remnants can still be recognised today. For instance, half the year employees spend thinking about their holidays, and in the final months they prepare to give gifts to others.

In education seasonality is not only a matter of adapting to changing weather conditions but also of creating our own rhythms. Formal schooling, interrupted by holidays, opends up space for informal and non-formal learning, giving students the chance to develop in less structured and more spontaneous ways. It is worth considering how these seasons might interact, complementing one another and addressing the diverse needs of learners.

Heroic communities and politics

Heroic politics is a competitive form of rule characterized by numerous charismatic leaders. Together with administration (control of knowledge) and sovereignty (control of violence), it forms part of the triad that constitutes domination. In Graeber and Wengrow's account, these elements are the prime suspects for being the necessary links in the creation of the state. And while they help explain the rise of many power structures considered to be states, some cases, such as the Minoan civilisation in Crete, escape this hypothesis. Still, the term is useful for describing what we nowadays call democracy, which in essence is an agon involving a few, while the rest of the community play merely the role of spectators.

Heroic politics stands in contrast to typical hunter-gatherer or egalitarian societies, where principles of equality and individual freedom are more important. Relationships between actors in heroic communities are based on strict codes of honour and loyalty. In this respect, they resemble mafias. Members of such communities are obliged to provide services and pay tribute to their patrons, and in return receive protection, financial support, and access to the privileges and benefits of aristocracy. In these so-called courtly societies, lavish feasts, elaborate entertainment, and other forms of patronage are common, designed to secure loyalty and reinforce ties between patrons and their clientele. Social hierarchy is strongly linked to hereditary titles, privileges and property, with access controlled by aristocratic elites.

The term "heroic communities" was coined by Hector Chadwick in 1912 (Chadwick 2010) on the basis of literary studies, but over time evidence of this collective characterisation of aristocratic communities living on the outskirts of bureaucratically run cities, often in the mountains, was growing. Political action there consists of a quest for fame and intra-group competition for followers and slaves, often decided in theatrical contests, i.e. duels, games, races. Within their communities, these people rejected trade but settled loyalty obligations in detail, and revenge was the driving force behind their actions at the time.

Therefore, the notion of "heroism" in this context does not refer to individual heroic acts, but to a collective form of political action where principles of honour and loyalty govern social interactions. Understanding the term allows us to think about the dynamics of power and the constraints on access to power, both in a historical and contemporary context. It provides educators with a framework for analysing leadership and authority in educational settings.

Social freedoms

The discussed book proposes an alternative way of thinking about freedom, pointing to its tangible social forms instead of abstract formal principles considered for individuals. The social dimension of these proposed freedoms is that other people are needed to make them happen. Fundamental, according to the authors, is the freedom to move to another place. It is not only about being able to travel or move out, but also about hospitality and granting asylum. Its essence is a guarantee of acceptance elsewhere without degradation to a subordinate status in the new community. The second freedom is the ability to ignore and disobey orders, i.e. the freedom to disobey. It relies on the guarantee that one will be heard and avoid ostracism. So if we want people to follow orders, they have to be persuaded to do so. The third is the – abstract to us – freedom to "shape entirely new social realities, or shift back and forth between different ones" (Graeber, Wengrow 2021: 504). Graeber and Wengrow argue that these freedoms are not only related, they fall apart like dominoes: " As long as the first two freedoms were taken for granted, as they were in many North American societies when Europeans first encountered them, the only kings that could exist were always, in the last resort, play kings." (ibid.: 504–505). Play kings can be removed relatively easily when they overstep the boundaries. But even as clumsy they are tolerated when other ways of exercising power seem less secure. However, " Play kings cease to be play kings precisely when they start killing people; which perhaps also helps to explain the excesses of ritually sanctioned violence that so often ensued during transitions from one state to the other." (ibid.: 506).

Among the evidence for these social freedoms, I like the book's descriptions of Palaeolithic hunter-gatherer communities, which were not a cluster of densely related people but were cosmopolitan. This required undertaking journeys to distant places at least once in one's life, and this would not have been possible without the guarantee of being welcomed into a new community. It is only from around 12 000 BC that a sense of separateness (see schismogenesis) grows and distinct cultures begin to emerge as a result of exaggerated differences. However, the general direction of development towards microdifferentiation was sometimes disrupted by the proliferation of languages dominating the empires.

New authoritarianism – do we ask the right questions?

The book *The Dawn of Everything. A New History of Humanity* seems relevant in the context of a discussion on the emergence of populist and authoritarian forms of government. In the light of schismogenesis, many of the pathologies of public life in Poland, e.g. the manifestation of homophobia by politicians, the perverse failure to respect human rights (such as the right to privacy), can be understood as an attempt to distinguish themselves from societies in the European Union, whose

modes of governance have unsettled parts of Polish society. In turn, the obsessive attachment to lying (denial in spite of facts and the proliferation of so-called *fake news*) can be interpreted as the typical claim of any authority, especially one that is fragile or seasonal, to present itself as part of a new cosmological order. A decisive moment in stabilising the power of such "jester-kings" has always been ostentatious killing. The situation on the Polish-Belarusian border suggests that we have entered this stage.

When thinking about contemporary problems, such as the rise of authoritarian tendencies in the countries of our region, we tend not to look too far into the past. Yet authoritarian tendencies return in ever new disguises. The book shows that modes of social organisation need not be limited to, nor identical with, the institution of the state. In its light, social order also has little to do with the means of production or with the managerial feudalism often described as capitalism's latest incarnation. Instead, the authors suggest seeking cultural answers to political questions. To explain the political order, therefore, we need to look at what we cultivate daily and how it relates to what our neighbours cultivate – in other words, at what our culture designates as weeds. The main suspects in shaping the political order would be a work ethic that allows for exploitation (historically, aversion to slavery predefined social organisation), and the near-total eradication of trade unions, which remain the true measure of a society's capacity for self-organisation.

If we look at what may survive from our time for authors of similar books in the future, the impact of authoritarianism on the material basis of life in Poland, on our aesthetic choices and forms of socialisation, may prove to be negligible. Authoritarian power does not even control the language: from cultural patterns to the names given to children. Events in which power affects daily life are trans-local – an example would be restrictions on freedom of movement during a pandemic. The impact extends to the staffing of the management of institutions related to culture (theatres, galleries), science (institutes, universities, curators and possibly school principals) and the power departments (replacement of generals, dismantling of intelligence and counter-intelligence services, deprofessionalisation of the police profession). However, contrary to what may seem, this is merely clientelism, that is, gift-giving with the intention of gaining repeated political support (Hicken 2011). These institutions control (and degenerate) niches, but mass culture is elsewhere. The time young people spend at school is giving way to time spent in the virtual world. And important security decisions are made after obtaining agreement from allies. Where energy and resources need to be concentrated, for example in healthcare systems for citizens, entropy, i.e. the dissipation of potential, and in practice an increase in mortality of the population, prevails. As a result there has been the effective privatisation of health care services. An attempt to differentiate itself from the so-called West and orchestrating a mere spectacle of political agency (monuments instead of housing) therefore seems desperate in the face of problems such as demographic decline, mediocre health care, environmental

pollution and water shortages, degrading energy infrastructure, insufficient housing, etc. The book *The Dawn of Everything* offers examples of former cities where the imposed authoritarian way of government (instead of democracy) did not work with the life of the inhabitants, resulting in depopulation.

Europeans today are politically more like the indigenous peoples of the New World than the inhabitants of the old continent at the time of the great discoveries. Europe once found critical partners to talk to about society, while China has not. They did not achieve their enlightenment, but only exercised despotism, perfecting the state. Faced with the power of China and Russian imperialism, whose structure is reminiscent of absolutist France before the Enlightenment, we remain inhabitants of a world still cultivating social freedoms. Left to their choice, the people of the countries bordering Russia prefer this European freedom. For people fleeing from the east, it doesn't really matter whether they join the Cheyennes from Poland or the Apaches from the Czech Republic or Germany, because from the outside we represent freedom anyway. For us, these differences are greater, we see cracks and threats of another schism in the European confederation. Brexit has shown Poles that, despite formal freedom of movement and settlement, it is not entirely possible to rely on the integration of migrants into society being sustainable. This has probably somewhat weakened societies in relation to governments and employers in many countries, where the threat of their abandonment by disgruntled residents had to be taken into account by those in power.

Lessons for pedagogy

Why do we even need to write and read books about other people being intelligent, discussing, criticising, and deciding what society will look like? Perhaps this is because in our collective thinking about the world we look for logical continuities with which to tell the story of social change. Historical events are explained by the buildup of phenomena preceding them and following the logic of the surprising events of the time, so retrospectively everything fits together. The case is similar when we promote change, we present positive role models called "good practices". We pay little attention to negative reference points or playfulness, without which a new social organisation has little chance of hatching. The concepts of schismogenesis and seasonality help to understand social learning, consciousness change and emancipation.

Festivals such as the Pol'and'Rock Festival (formerly the Woodstock Festival) and, on a smaller scale, games and visits to virtual worlds, after which reality peels away from the obvious – to use the language of Peter Jarvis' learning theory (Jarvis 2009) – are our equivalent of seasonal social structures. Too often we overlook the potential for what Mikhail Bakhtin taught us to call carnivalisation to disrupt the dominant social order, treating the festive world upside down merely as a safety

valve. Yet our ability to create alternatives does not go hand in hand with the ability to dismantle institutions, a fact reflected in the common saying that nothing lasts longer than the provisional.. In this context, it is worth asking: With respect to what is the school as an institution schismogenetic, and in what ways does its seasonal variability reveal itself? What distinguishes the winter term from the summer one? Are can we imagine, even experimentally, suspending the school system altogether?

Graeber and Wengrow's book makes almost no mention of schools, other than to point out that, on the basis of data from the city of Uruk, the Sumerians can be credited with inventing the teaching of writing and reading within classrooms run by teachers (Graeber, Wengrow 2021: 315). However, in the later Old Babylonian period (2000–1500 BC), literacy was also taught in homes in Mesopotamia. Therefore, as long as the absolute value is historical continuity, even minor changes will seem revolutionary.

The Dawn of Everything. A New Human History inspires a revolution also at the level of thinking about pedagogy as a discipline. Anthropology and archaeology are closely linked to the legacy of colonialism. Graeber and Wengrow showed how much there is still to be done through this legacy and how to deal with it. In pedagogy, we are far from having done our homework on decolonisation, in particular the relationship between pedagogy and militarism. Without *The Dawn of Everything*, it would be difficult to understand the value of ridiculing authority figures. Although authorities notoriously overstep the boundaries of their knowledge by speaking outside the sphere of their own competence. Their orders and precepts may or may not be obeyed. Such a most poignant transgression of competence is the establishment of the intellectual tradition according to which ancient Greece became the emblem of democracy. Other forms of self-government are not considered properly democratic or even possible. Meanwhile, cities larger and older than Athens practised self-government in a more inclusive way than the Greeks, which was also imprinted in their architecture.

The disciplines of archaeology and anthropology as well as pedagogy are close to each other, partly due to the influence of Rousseau. Pedagogy tends to teach about how things should be taught, rather than learning from what is. It is worth noting with what enthusiasm we teach teachers and with what difficulty we learn from their experience. The role of a school – a remarkably enduring and widespread institution – in shaping productive differences between equally trained societies also demands clarification. Graeber and Wengrow's book opens up a perspective for educators in which difference is central to the educational process. Education is not just about reproducing knowledge, but about making a difference – a new way of thinking that enables a critical view of existing structures (cf. Szkudlarek, Starego 2018). For a pedagogy that is constantly negotiating its place between theory and practice, this book provides a unique tool for transformation. Instead of imitating, it allows the creation of new knowledge and alternative social structures that grow out of a deep reflection on the history of inequality.

Findings from anthropological and archaeological discoveries challenge traditional narratives about the development of societies, particularly those based on Enlightenment thought. For educators, this perspective provides a valuable tool for analysing deterministic views of social evolution and encourages students to think critically about the assumptions underlying contemporary social structures.

Graeber and Wengrow showed readers thinking ancestors who had the ability to navigate between social orders. They pointed out that the notion that technological progress leads to authoritarianism or even despotism grew out of the misconception of Rousseau, who believed that the small scale promotes equality, while on the large scale societies must be appallingly unequal and oppressive. The authors demonstrated that people have a track record of avoiding uncomfortable social orders. The book constitutes a manifesto against inventing mythical origins and thinking that social relationships must be based on violence. It is also a great praise of public discussions.

References

Bateson G., 1935, *Culture Contact and Schismogenesis*, „Man", no 35, pp. 178–183. Chadwick H.M., 2010, *The Heroic Age*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Grafigny F. de, 2022, *Listy Peruwianki*, transl. R. Bochenek-Franczakowa, Warszawa: Wolne Lektury, Fundacja Nowoczesna Polska.

Graeber D., 2011, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*, New Jersey: Melville House.

Graeber D., 2015, *The Utopia of Rules: On Technology, Stupidity, and the Secret Joys of Bureaucracy*, New Jersey: Melville House.

Graeber D., 2018, *Bullshit Jobs: A Theory*, New York: Simon & Schuster.

Graeber D., Wengrow D., 2021, *The dawn of everything: A new history of humanity*. Penguin UK.

Greer A. (Ed..), 2000, *The Jesuit Relations: Natives and Missionaries in Seventeenth-Century North America*, New York: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Hicken A., 2011, *Clientelism*, „Annual Review of Political Science", no 14, pp. 289–310.

Jarvis P., 2009, *Learning to be a person in society: learning to be me*, [in:] Illeris K. (Ed..), *Contemporary Theories of Learning: Learning Theorists... In Their Own Words*, Ne York: Routledge.

Laclau E., 1990, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*, London: Verso.

Lahontan L.A. de Lom d'Arcee de, Gueudeville N., 1703, *New Voyages to North-America. Containing an Account of the Several Nations of That Vast Continent; Their Customs, Commerce, and Way of Navigation upon the Lakes and Rivers; the Several Attempts of the English and French to Dispossess One Another; with the reasons of the miscarriage of the former; and the various adventures between the French, and the Iroquese confederates of England, from 1683 to 1694. A geographical description of Canada, and a natural history of the country, with remarks upon their government, and the interest of the English and French in their commerce. Also a dialogue between the author and a general of the savages, giving a full view of the religion and strange opinions of those people; with an account of the author's retreat to Portugal and Denmark, and his remarks on those*

courts. To which is added, a dictionary of the Algonkine language, which is generally spoke in North-America. Illustrated with twenty-three maps and cuts, London: J. and J. Bonwicke, R. Wilkin, S. Birt, T. Ward, E. Wicksteed, J. Osborn.

Mauss M., 2006, *Techniques, Technology and Civilisation*, Ed. and Introduction N. Schlanger, New York–Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Masschelein J., Simons M., 2013, *The Politics of the University: Movements of (de-)Identification and the Invention of Public Pedagogic Forms*, [in:] Szkudlarek T. (Eds.). *Education and the Political. New Theoretical Articulations*, Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Rousseau J.J., 2009, *Discourse on Inequality: On the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men*, Auckland: The Floating Press.

Szkudlarek T., Starego K., 2018, *Ontologie polityczności, polityki utożsamienia. Profesor Tomasz Szkudlarek w rozmowie z doktor Karoliną Starego*, „Parezja", no 1 (9), pp. 97–131.

Wengrow D., 2010, *What Makes Civilization? The Ancient Near East & the Future of the West*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Summary

Schismogenesis and Authoritarianism:
In Search of Levers of Change in The Dawn of Everything by David Graeber and David Wengrow

The article focuses on the potential impact of the book *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*, written by anthropologist David Graeber and archaeologist David Wengrow, on the thinking of educators. This book challenges existing myths about society's development and social inequalities and synthesizes the results of scientific research. The authors turned their original plan to write a pamphlet on contemporary inequality into a comprehensive book. The book examines how Europe began to examine issues of inequality and its origins, and uses terms that can be used to describe the contemporary drift of some countries towards authoritarianism.

Keywords

schismogenesis, indigenous knowledge, authoritarianism, decoloniation, critical pedagogy