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The Person and Upbringing Within the Context of Anti-pedagogy and the Catholic Personalism Discourse

Abstract

According to anti-pedagogy, any form of upbringing aimed at something or someone only masks the object of the educated, making them essentially puppets, appropriately controlled from without. Any purposeful approach to upbringing appeals to attributes that make the pupil not turn out to be what he/she is, but what his/her educators would want him/her to be. This approach is in direct contradiction to personalistic pedagogy, which posits an ultimate reality and value in personhood by emphasizing the significance, uniqueness and inviolability of the person, as well as the person's essentially relational or social dimension. By emphasizing the autonomous value of a human being as a person and in propagating this with full affirmation, one is thus postulating that programs of activities supporting its development are to be subordinated to personal and spiritual values, and not to economic and technical values. This article presents the contemporary discourse between anti-pedagogy and the personalistic pedagogy with a special emphasis on Polish authors.

Keywords

person, upbringing, anti-pedagogy, personalism.

1. Introduction

Postmodernism, by questioning the education program of the modernist era, has not only rejected the legality of the enlightened meta-narration but also the discursive analysis of social reality. It also concedes that abstract notions that had served as roadmaps for educational development and premises for teaching programs have lost their universal significance. This has resulted in the lack of universal justifications for the epistemological, moral and political demands of teaching.¹ The incursion of calls for partnership and caring participation in developing the child's subjectivity does not only question the significance of education or teaching, but is an expression of total respect for the autonomy of the pupil. It also informs about providing space for multicultural education and intercultural dialogue.²

2. Anti-pedagogy

Post-modernistic anti-pedagogy has been contesting the traditional concepts of upbringing based on hierarchy of values and the development of moral reasoning. The anti-pedagogy movement emerged in the early 1970s, opposing almost everything that the theory and practice of upbringing impacts on children and the youth. One's attention should be drawn to the fact that our world, contrary to on-going developments in civilization, has not turned out to be a befitting place for children as our societies are governed in accordance with the demands and interests of adults. Anti-pedagogy has rightly pointed out that some cyclical forms of violence and brutality against children lie within the form of upbringing that is often transmitted across generations. According to advocates of anti-pedagogy, any form of upbringing aimed at something or someone only masks the object of the educated, making them essentially puppets, appropriately controlled from without. Any purposeful approach to upbringing

¹ Cf. Z. Melosik, *Pedagogika postmodernizmu*, in: *Podręcznik akademicki*, Z. Kwieciński, B. Śliwerski (eds.), Warszawa 2003, p. 457.

² Cf. H. von Schoenebeck, *Antypedagogika w dialogu. Wprowadzenia w rozmyślania pedagogiczne*, tł. D. Sztobyn, Poznań 1992, p. 12.

appeals to attributes that make the pupil not turn out to be what he/she is, but what his/her educators would want him/her to be.³

Anti-pedagogy supports the opinion that the subjectivity of a human being is preserved only when it remains autonomous, that is, it is characterized by the ability to self-determination. The formal recognition of this type of child's autonomy is of fundamental significance for anti-pedagogues. Parallel to this human concept, anti-pedagogy also promotes a category of autonomy based on responsibility. According to anti-pedagogues, the classical upbringing approaches assumed that a child undergoes the process of improvement through upbringing.⁴ It is argued that it is only by getting rid of the educational intentions that would enable a child to be treated as free, showing respect for his humanity and expressing an attitude of friendship, which fosters a new world, where people can determine themselves.

The self-referential value of the upbringing process lies primarily in saturating the child with activities that would proceed according to their own internal consistency, undisturbed by initiatives or requirements imposed by people from without. This process should take the form of support partnerships by people seeking the right direction for their lifestyle. There is need for the unconditional acceptance of the subject as a person and resignation from purposeful influencing in the interrelationship between the educator and the child. This about recognizing the personality of the pupil that intends to live a true, fulfilling and more sensible life. Proponents of the concept of a free upbringing protest against its being associated with the upbringing of a pupil⁵. For them, it is necessary to resign from intentional pedagogical acts, aimed at achieving pre-planned and intended changes in the behaviors of other people.

Anti-pedagogy specifically emphasizes the child's right to self-determination, that has been questioned for a long time due to existing pedagogical taboos. It also opposes the pedagogization of children's rights in that they only occur in the teleological spheres. Each person is, after all, able to have "inner knowledge", the possibility of experiencing the external and internal world, feelings, self-confidence and intuition. Adults, therefore, need to reckon with the subjectivity

³ Cf. B. Śliwerski, *Antypedagogika, czyli o kontestacji pedagogiki końca XX wieku*, „Colloquia Communia. Filozofia pedagogice. Pedagogika filozofii” (2003) nr 2, p. 73-79.

⁴ Cf. P. Piotrowski, *Jak można wspierać zamiast wychowywać?*, „Studia z Teorii Wychowania: półrocznik Zespołu Teorii Wychowania Komitetu Nauk Pedagogicznych PAN” (2014) 5/1 (8), 55-70, p. 61-62.

⁵ Cf. M. J. Szymański, *Socjologia edukacji. Zarys problematyki*, Kraków 2013, p. 87.

of children.⁶ In the light of anti-pedagogy, the belief that the child is not yet fully human until he reaches a higher state, that is to say, he or she will be able to enjoy his or her rights is rejected. Anti-pedagogy, however, commits a mistake by transferring to the child the ideal of an adult as a free, fully developed man, one that belongs to the highest developmental level in accordance with the theory of moral reasoning, claiming that a typical child is just as similar. The phenomenon of the erroneous reversal of the developmental pyramid and the questioning of developmental sequences by assigning the summit of adulthood to the child is evident here. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that problems of upbringing, including individual experiences and theories as well as the respective demands being made by anti-pedagogy will not disappear from the social sphere. The image of the liberation of children from upbringing is an idealistic and metaphysical illusion, because it does not take into account the dialectical unity of freedom and coercion, rights and duties, individual and society.⁷

3. Personalistic Pedagogy

Personalism is a philosophical and pedagogical “worldview”, but it represents more than one school, so it is better to speak about many personalisms than one. The most important basis is the affirmation of the centrality of the person. Personalism posits ultimate reality and value in personhood. It emphasizes the significance, uniqueness and inviolability of the person, as well as the person’s essentially relational or social dimension. It is worthy to recall that the Polish expert in pedagogy Stefan Kunowski has opined that pedagogy should resort to authentic Christian philosophy and adapt it to the needs of the present in the phase of contemporary sharp opposition between individualism and collectivism.⁸ In Poland, although personalism is specifically popular among representatives of Christian philosophy, one can find various analytical proposals referring to a person in this seemingly coherent stream. Personalism was assimilated, above all, by theist thinkers, who were mainly Christians.⁹

⁶ Cf. B. Śliwerski, *Antypedagogika, czyli o kontestacji pedagogiki...*, p. 84-87.

⁷ B. Śliwerski, *Współczesne teorie i nurty wychowania*, Kraków 2015, p. 338-344.

⁸ Cf. S. Kunowski, *Problematyka współczesnych systemów wychowania*, Kraków 2000, p. 29.

⁹ Cf. S. Kowalczyk, *Zarys filozofii człowieka*, Sandomierz 1990, p. 303–311.

Personalistic pedagogy has generated huge interest among educators, including theorists and practitioners, worldwide. Although it is widely known in Europe from the Christian cultural perspective, its ideals are also present in other cultures and religions.¹⁰ In spite of the existence of various fields of personalistic philosophy, it is possible to extract common themes, which are its distinctive features, which at the same time define the propositions regarding upbringing, based on personalism. Personalists accuse other contemporary approaches to man of excessive individuality and of the absolutization of the idea of freedom, and above all the omission of its full, personal dimension.¹¹ Proponents of the personalistic pedagogy underline that this trend avoids one-sidedness and reductionism over issues concerning the understanding of man, in which they see an inherently diverse being, a combination of material (body) and non-material (soul) elements. The body initiates the internal "I" as a subject, while the soul is an element that integrates all material elements of human existence, actively organizing the whole of human life.¹² The person is characterized by the fact that, not only must he/she reinforce his/her existence, but that this very existence demands, to some degree, to extract it from non-existence. Therefore, the activities relating to human morality must be inherently continuous.

Personalism assumes that human's value and dignity abide in him, the very fact that points to man as having both fundamental and autotelic values. A human being cannot, therefore, be treated instrumentally as a means to an end. Her existence is primarily defined by references to other people and relationships with them, which, in the case of Christian personalism is having relationships with others and with God.¹³ By emphasizing the autonomous value of man as a person and in propagating this with full affirmation, one is thus postulating that programs of activities supporting its development are to be subordinated to personal and spiritual values and not to economic and technical values. Only then can one talk about optimal conditions for the development of a person – understood as a free being, capable of self-determination, having the opportunity

¹⁰ M. Nowak, *Pedagogika personalistyczna*, in: *Pedagogika*, t. 1, *Podręcznik akademicki*, Z. Kwieciński, B. Śliwerski (eds.) Wyd. PWN, Warszawa 2003, p. 232.

¹¹ S. Kowalczyk, *Personalistyczno-integralna koncepcja człowieka* J. Maritaina, „Pielęgniarstwo. Problemy Dydaktyczno-Medyczne” (1997), 6 (35), p. 9-12.

¹² Cf. R. Guardini, *Podstawy pedagogiki* (1928), in: R. Guardini, *Bóg daleki – Bóg bliski*, tł. J. Koźbiał, Poznań 1991, p. 275-278.

¹³ B. Śliwerski, *Pedagogika ogólna. Podstawowe prawidłowości*, Oficyna Wydawnicza „Impuls”, Kraków 2012, p. 271-272.

to express himself through appropriate deeds and works. All other values should be subjected to the development of the person. One must not forget that in dealing with the analysis of the meaning and nature of personal existence, personalism recognizes, in some sense, the mysterious character of human existence, which, however, does not entail the exclusion of the possibility of in-depth studies. This invariably means, that there is no single theory or set of statements capable of fully explaining human life. An important feature of a person is his/her dignity, namely internal, not derived from society or history, innate and natural mark of man, demanding affirmation, respect and protection. A good life is a life in harmony with human dignity.¹⁴

Emmanuel Mounier and Jacques Maritain are among thinkers who can be regarded as the “fathers” of personalism, including aspects that relate to shaping moral life. This first program for developing a social system with a fully personalistic character was presented on the eve of World War II. It emphasized the need to eliminate all forms of subjugating a person and to surround him with a space for independence and privacy of life. This should also enable him to organize social life and authority based on the principle of personal responsibility; guarantee citizens’ freedom of action – the creation of a climate of freedom. The basis for this program is the initial thesis which says that society is not an end in itself – on the contrary, it has a servant attitude incorporated into its essence. Relying on this servitude nature, it follows that it should penetrate the lives of its members as free persons only if and only where its helpful presence is indispensable. Jacques Maritain consistently opposes all reductionist approaches to man, using the integral humanism he created. He had no doubt that the answer to the fundamental question of who man is should be made to philosophy and religion, but not to the natural sciences.¹⁵

Polish thinkers, especially Catholic priests have made significant achievements at the level of personalistic reflections. Wincenty Granat, thus developed personalism within the Augustinian-Thomist thought, observing that the distinctiveness and uniqueness of the human being is a specific feature of Christian humanism. Despite the fact that a person is not a component of any other existence, material or spiritual, or some kind of community, he is in many ways

¹⁴ Cf. J. Gałkowski, *Jan Paweł II o godności człowieka*, in: *Zagadnienie godności człowieka*, J. Czerkowski (ed.), Lublin 1994, p. 108.

¹⁵ W. Chudy, *Filozofia kłamstwa. Kłamstwo jako fenomen zła w świecie osób i społeczeństw*, Warszawa 2003, p. 312.

intertwined with them via many knots.¹⁶ Mieczysław Krąpiec based his theory of personal existence on the assumptions of the anthropology of Saint Thomas Aquinas. He demonstrated the transcendence of a person in relation to nature and society. A person transcends nature through acts of intellectual cognition, love and freedom.¹⁷ Stanisław Kowalczyk's need to deepen his personalist thought, is connected with his awareness of the need to properly explain the idea of man, deformed both by Marxism and other contemporary philosophical trends.¹⁸ Czesław Stanisław Bartnik has been, for more than half a century, trying to develop the school of personalization. The person in his conception, constitutes an inconceivable synthesis of the material and spiritual realms, body and psychic, objective and subjective, physical and self, interior and exterior, immanent and transcendent.¹⁹

4. Karol Wojtyła's personalism and upbringing

One of the most important contemporary personalists, also respect to education, was undoubtedly John Paul II (Karol Wojtyła). The essence of his personalism is the concept of dignity, which accrues to a man because he is a person and hence, he should strive for it. While presenting Karol Wojtyła's thoughts, Jan Galarowicz indeed writes: „Because dignity is a significant value (the highest value in the realm of created beings) and at the same time fragile (easily vulnerable, demanding unbreakable solidarity with it), it is worth striving for intensively.”²⁰ Karol Wojtyła had noticed that man as a person remains in a personal relationship with values and virtue, because in contrast to animals he chooses values

¹⁶ H. Piluś, *O godności człowieka jako osoby*, „Studia filozoficzne” (1989) nr 284–285, p. 174.

¹⁷ M. Krąpiec, *Kim jest człowiek*, in: *Wprowadzenie do filozofii*, M. Krąpiec, S. Kamiński, Z. Zdybicka, P. Jaroszyński (eds.), Lublin, 2003, p. 185–194.

¹⁸ Cf. J. Kosiewicz, *Człowiek i społeczeństwo w pismach Stanisława Kowalczyka*, in: *Filozofia pochylona nad człowiekiem*, E. Balawajder, A. Jabłoński, J. Szymczyk (eds.), Lublin 2004, p. 135–153.

¹⁹ Cf. K. Bochenek, *Personalizm*, in: *Filozofia współczesna*, L. Gawor, Z. Stachowski (eds.), Bydgoszcz-Warszawa-Lublin 2006, p. 231–233.

²⁰ J. Galarowicz, *Człowiek jest osobą. Podstawy antropologii filozoficznej Karola Wojtyły*, Kęty 2000, p. 148; J. Stala, *Der Mensch als Person: Die bestimmende Grundlage für Johannes Paul II. in seinem Bild von der Familie*, „The Person and the Challenges” 2 (2012) nr 2, p. 41–59; J. Stala, *Die Transzendenz als bestimmendes Merkmal der Person in der Anthropologie und der Pädagogik Johannes Pauls II.*, „The Person and the Challenges” 2 (2012) nr 1, p. 61–75.

and enquires about the real virtue. “Every person demands special treatment, owing to his dignity. The personalistic norm speaks of how one should relate to another person.”²¹ “Man is born as a person and remains such, and he through his moral deeds realizes his potential personality by developing his character and moral virtues: „education is creativity about the most personal object – always being educated, he remains the only person that can train an animal.”²² Self-determination in humans may, on the one hand, be the only goal in life for some people. Hence, no one ought to use a person as a means to a goal. John Paul II had indeed, with respect to God, written that since a human being is the basic dimension of reality, its horizon, principle and purpose, it should, in consequence, always be perceived in the perspective of full humanism, – a view that takes into account the transcendence of a human being towards the world, as well as of God towards man.²³

Personalism is, according to Karol Wojtyła, a radical way to appreciate a human being, who has a superior position in relation to nature in its entirety, standing above everything we encounter in our visible world. Regardless of various ideologies and economic systems, this philosopher focuses on the person – the only basic human reality that existed prior to any ideological, social and political split.²⁴ He, thus developed a kind of personalistic norm: „This norm as a principle with negative connotation states that a person is such a virtue, that does not accept being exploited, being treated as an object of exploitation and hence as a means to an end. A parallel view is the positive connotation of the personalist norm, which sees a person as such a virtue in respect of which the only proper and wholesome reference is love.”²⁵

Christian personalism is conducive to the modern man’s perception of his appreciated subjectivity, both at the level of the individual life, and social and political relations he designs. He, thence, formulates the concept of teleological moral education, based on this subjectivity and objective axiology. Personalistic pedagogy, in fact, remains part of anthropology, and in considering who a person

²¹ J. Galarowicz, *Człowiek jest osobą. Podstawy antropologii filozoficznej Karola Wojtyły*, Kęty 2000, p. 149.

²² K. Wojtyła, *Miłość i odpowiedzialność*, Lublin 1986, p. 54.

²³ Jan Paweł II, *W imię przyszłości kultury. Przemówienie w UNESCO, Paryż 2.06.1980*. „L’Osservatore Romano” (1980) nr 6, p. 4.

²⁴ S. Fel, *Jana Pawła II personalistyczna koncepcja pracy*, in: *Testament społeczny Jana Pawła II*, J. Kupny, M. Łuczak (eds.), Katowice 2006, p. 91–111.

²⁵ K. Wojtyła, *Miłość i odpowiedzialność*, Lublin 1986, p. 42.

is, it, at the same time, defines what he/she should become in his/her development. All educational influences, including those relating to the lower layers of the personality structure, lead to this conclusion, which first and foremost is the spiritual development of man. Ways of influencing the spiritual sphere and personal “I” are being sought after within the framework of personalism, with the primary postulate being the subjective treatment of the person in the process of education. It is important to develop and harmonize the activities of the body and soul, as it is only the harmonious association of both elements of authority that constitute a true perfection and creates the basis of a beautiful character.²⁶ Education/upbringing always appears as a goal, not a means within the framework of personalism. A state that recognizes service to mankind as its essential task, ought to take into account factual moral development and not just its unrestricted selfishness.²⁷

Education, through the perspective of personalistic philosophy, aims to develop the human person, based on the respect for freedom, characterized by enabling mutual dialogue between people – the teacher and the pupil.²⁸ Franciszek Adamski had in his introduction to the publication “Personal upbringing” noted that “personalism, as a philosophical premise for education fully examines the secrets of human existence, taking into account all its spheres: intellectual, moral, psychological, religious and social. He emphasizes the full development of the human being, both as a person and a member of the human community as the goal of education. Development is, here, understood as the fulfillment of the human person in his existence by unleashing the ability to contemplate its existence, including the hull of creative energy therein concealed.”²⁹

The basic feature of human life is its continued development. The overt preparedness for continuing development, R. Guardini argues, enables a human being to express his/her essence more fully. The genesis of this development rests in striving to be better. Human life revolves between its current self, and the possible being. This is part of the development of the fundamental

²⁶ Cf. J. Kostkiewicz, *Kierunki i koncepcje pedagogiki katolickiej w Polsce 1918-1939*, Kraków 2013, p. 52.

²⁷ Cf. B. Śliwowski, *Edukacja (w) polityce. Polityka (w) edukacji. Inspiracje do badań polityki oświatowej*, Kraków 2015, p. 597.

²⁸ Cf. M. Łobacz, *Relacja wychowawca – wychowanek z perspektywy filozofii personalistycznej. Implikacje praktyczne*, in: *Filozofia wychowania w praktyce pedagogicznej*, A. Szudra-Barszcz, S. Sztobryna (eds.), Lublin 2012, p. 105–106.

²⁹ F. Adamski, *Personalizm – chrześcijański nurt myślenia o człowieku*, in: *Wychowanie osobowe*, F. Adamski (ed.), Kraków 2011, p. 5.

right of preference for what is better, striving to be a better self.³⁰ Education is ultimately the totality of the ways and processes that help the human being to accomplish their human nature. If education does not reach the „core of the person”, then young people will be subject to pedagogical activities, which can be regarded as pseudo education, nurturing, administrating, training or moralizing. Therefore, through education, as noted by J. Tarnowski, one must understand the totality of ways and processes that help the human being to fulfill his/her human nature. The conviction, herein stated, is that each person strives independently to accomplish his own human nature, while the external person (teacher) can only enhance or hinder the process.³¹

5. Conclusion

Being human from the very first moment of conception, man gradually learns to be himself, the basic knowledge with which education can be identified. Since every human being is different and unique, everyone has to be treated individually. One must never forget that each person possesses a true and completely unique value that has to be reckoned with and whose personality needs affirmation. We can only speak of upbringing, when it depicts the true person, the truth about what he represents and what it ought to be.

The search for the essence of transgressions of human nature, results in the awareness that man is something unfinished, restless and, in fact, unhappy, unable to satisfy his own needs. He is, at the same time, the only one who is fully aware of the finite, and above all, death. It, thus, seems that he lives to achieve something that is unattainable. This peculiar unfinished state of man is not just a shortfall, as it signifies a fundamental openness to transcendence, which in him is immanently distinctive.³² Although every person bears some kind of responsibility for his/her transgression, he/she also needs education, even at a moral level, and hence he/she looks forward to meeting with a teacher – a real master. A meeting of two equals who undertake a genuine personalist dialogue is indispensable.

³⁰ Cf. M. Peretii, *Brevesaggio di una pedagogia personalistica*, Brescia 1978, p. 51.

³¹ Cf. J. Tarnowski, *Człowiek – dialog – wychowanie. Zarys chrześcijańskiej pedagogiki personalistyczno-egzystencjalnej*, „Znak” (1991) nr 436, p. 69.

³² Cf. S. Chrost, *Homo capax Dei jako ideał wychowania*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, Kraków 2013, p. 155.

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