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The Basic Principles of Personalistic Pedagogy According to Joseph Ratzinger/ Benedict XVI

Abstract

The rapid changes in the socio-cultural context of life and education of the young generation in Europe prompt contemporary educators to look for pedagogical trends that may be an inspiration for comprehensive education that rises to current challenges. The authors, therefore, refer to the relational concept of a person by Joseph Ratzinger and derive from it, the fundamental principles of personalistic pedagogy. In the first part of the paper, the basic terms related to the person and their upbringing will be outlined. The second part focuses upon chief educational difficulties; in the subsequent sections, they present the conditions of authentic upbringing and the assumptions of the education process presented by Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI.

Keywords

J. Ratzinger, Benedict XVI, personalism, education

1. Personalism and education—terminological resolutions

Contemporary political, economic, social, cultural, religious, and existential contexts are particularly complex. Local factors related to human life and functioning in a specific place, merge with the increasing importance of global trends.¹ This results in significant difficulties in establishing essential pedagogical terms, as they acquire different meanings in various contexts, while global influences impose fluidity on many definitions, leading to them being blurred. Hence, even fundamental existential questions receive highly diversified answers: Who is a human being? What does a human being see as the meaning of his life? How does he define his relationships with others? What values does he live by? The multitude and diversity of responses contribute to the emergence of various pedagogical currents, including those that refer to the term ‘personalism’. Their multiplicity and diversity often contribute to the loss of the essence of the term. Among these trends, are Thomistic, axiological, phenomenological, existential, idealistic, critical, absolutist, and neo-Thomistic. As Stanisław Kowalczyk observes, due to the analysis of the content of personalism, we should distinguish its several aspects: metaphysical, which emphasizes the personal nature of the essence of being; epistemological, which means that knowledge is expressed through personality; ethical, which stresses ethical experience, and theological, which refers to the concept of a personal God.² Each of the currents mentioned above underscores the exceptional value of the human person.³

Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI also referred to personalistic trends and developed his personalistic thinking based on relational personalism. Usually,

¹ Cf. J. Mariański, *Sekularyzacja i desekularyzacja w nowoczesnym świecie*, Lublin 2006, KUL; G. Rossiter, *Understanding the changing landscape of contemporary spirituality: A useful starting point for reviewing Catholic school religious education*, “The Person and the Challenges” 3 (2013) no 1, pp 157–179; E. Osewska, *Rodzina i szkoła w Polsce wobec współczesnych wyzwań wychowawczych*, Kraków 2020, UPJPII.

² S. Kowalczyk, *Człowiek w myśli współczesnej. Filozofia współczesna o człowieku*, Michalineum, Warszawa 1990, p. 377.

³ Cf. C. Bartnik, *Personalizm*, Lublin 1995, S. Michałowski, *Kategorie edukacyjne w pedagogii współbycia osobowego*, in: *Wychowanie chrześcijańskie. Między tradycją a współczesnością*, ed. A. Rynio, Lublin 2007, p. 192; S. Kowalczyk, *Człowiek w myśli współczesnej*, Warszawa 1990, p. 399–421; C. Strzeszewski, *Humanizm integralny J. Maritaina a Vaticanum II*, in: *Jacques Maritain prekursor soborowego humanizmu*, eds. S. Kowalczyk, E. Balawajder, Lublin 1992, pp. 183–189; *Świat osoby. Personalizm Czesława Bartnika*, eds. K. Guzowski, G. Barth, Lublin 2016.

as regards the development of his concept of a person, two main periods are distinguished. In the first one, there was the transition from substance to subsistence, that is, from a static understanding of a person and his essence (close to reism), to dynamic, historic-salvific, existential, with an emphasis on a person's existence. The second period involves the transition from subsistence to relation. Here, a person is not only an individual, but a relational individual.⁴

According to Joseph Ratzinger, a person does not exist in absolute singularity. Since the Absolute is a person, it is not singular. If something lacks or cannot have a relationship, it cannot be a person. Transcending singularity is inherent in the concept of a person.⁵ This is evident in the very words from which this idea emerged: "The Greek word *prosopon* means literally 'look toward'; with the prefix '*pros*' (toward) it includes the notion of relatedness as an integral part of itself. It is the same with the Latin *persona*."⁶ Thus, a human being obtains his personal identity through reference to others. Endowed with the ability to know, love, and freedom, a person resembles God, who is a communion of love. To understand the reasoning of Pope Benedict XVI, it is necessary to bear in mind that he views the person from a theological, and not purely philosophical, perspective. Christian revelation shows God, who is personal on the existential plane, not the substantial one. The Holy Trinity is the Communion of Divine Persons in one Divine Nature; it is self-contained, yet remains in relationships.⁷

J. Ratzinger was building on John Paul II's work on personalism⁸, "The image of God means, first of all, that human beings cannot be closed in on themselves. Human beings who attempt to do this, betray themselves. To be the image of God implies relationality. It is the dynamic that sets the human being in motion towards the totally Other. Hence it means the capacity for relationship; it is the human capacity for God. Consequently, human beings are most profoundly human when they step out of themselves and become capable of addressing God on familiar terms. [...] Therefore, the image of God also means that human persons are beings of word and of love, beings moving toward Another,

⁴ Benedict XVI, *Świadkowie Chrystusa. Apostołowie i uczniowie*, Rosikon Press, Warszawa 2007, p. 22.

⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, Ignatius Press, 2004, p. 184.

⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction...*, p. 180.

⁷ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Introduction...*, pp. 180–196.

⁸ Cf. E. Osewska, B. Simonič, *A Civilization of Love according to John Paul II*, „The Person and the Challenges“ 9 (2019) no 1, pp. 23–32.

oriented to giving themselves to the Other and only truly receiving themselves back in real self-giving.”⁹ Thus a human being, by his inherent nature, is a being directed “from” and “toward”—he needs to reach out to others.

In Ratzinger’s relational concept of a person, a human being exists in reciprocal ‘for’, in a relation of a mutual gift that has a personal and community-building character. The gift means self-giving, it strengthens and shapes the bond between persons, as “we can only be saved—that is, become ourselves—when we engage in the proper relationship.”¹⁰ In his teaching, Joseph Ratzinger stresses that a human being becomes himself not by what he does, but by what he receives. He must, therefore, wait for the gift of love as he cannot receive love except as a gift. He cannot ‘do’ it himself. And one can become completely human only by being loved, by allowing oneself to be loved.¹¹

The world in which we live proposes “to place a vain hope in the work of our own hands.”¹² For we are self-sufficient and can create ourselves. Here, Joseph Ratzinger sees a great danger, for we know how to ‘do’ things, but we have forgotten how to ‘be’. As he explains, we are aware of what can be ‘made’ of things and people, but we hardly speak of what these things are, what a human being truly is.¹³ The rapid development of technology often leads to reducing human beings to mere cogs in economic and technological progress, as they must be subjected to the mechanisms of production or social engineering. Also, they become an easy target in the games of various strategies and ideologies.

According to the Church’s social doctrine a human being exists ‘for’ and is endowed with the ability to know, love, and be free. But Benedict XVI is also aware of the ways in which love has been misconstrued, misinterpreted and undervalued,¹⁴ because a human being is to grow in a world full of tension, fear, and “post-truth”. Ideologies are constantly invented by people who promise many

⁹ J. Ratzinger, *In the Beginning...? A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall*, trans. Boniface Ramsey, O.P., William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1995, pp. 47–48.

¹⁰ J. Ratzinger, *In the Beginning...?*, p. 73.

¹¹ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Introduction...*, p. 272.

¹² *Message of His Holiness Benedict XVI for Lent 2006*, “Jesus, at the sight of the crowds, was moved with pity” (Mt 9:36), https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/len/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20050929_lent-2006.html (12.04.2024).

¹³ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *To Look on Christ: Exercises in Faith, Hope, and Love*, Crossroad Publishing Company, New York 1991.

¹⁴ Cf. *Caritas in Veritate* 2.

things, but primarily care for their good and reject what constitutes the essence of being human. That is why these ideologies become a prison for humanity. For it is hard to refer to the dignity of human, to protect and respect it, if a human being is reduced solely to few dimensions, subjected to the influence of global corporations, dependent upon the decisions of politicians and imposed cultural patterns. This dramatic situation results from the formation of socio-cultural life based on a false understanding of the essence of person. From the point of view of Christian personalism, the view characteristic of the exact sciences is particularly dangerous: it states that a human being is an accidental specimen of the biocosmos evolution. In the field of social sciences man is reduced to a social construct, a semantic creation of cultural narratives.¹⁵

In contemporary reality, one is faced with a strong “*attempt to promote a vision of man apart from God and apart from Christ*.” This sort of thinking has led to man being considered as ‘the absolute center of reality, a view which makes him occupy—falsely—the place of God and which forgets that it is not man who creates God, but rather God who creates man. Forgetfulness of God led to the abandonment of man.’ It is therefore ‘no wonder that in this context a vast field has opened for the unrestrained development of nihilism in philosophy, of relativism in values and morality, and of pragmatism—and even a cynical hedonism—in daily life.’ European culture gives the impression of ‘silent apostasy’ on the part of people who have all that they need and who live as if God does not exist.”¹⁶ Bearing this in mind, can we seek hope for a human being, his life, growth, and education?¹⁷ Can we expect that the approach to human suddenly changes?

Every human being needs to be educated, especially in the face of the diversity and multitude of ideologies, philosophies of life, and ideas about life. They make it difficult to see the goal and meaning of our lives clearly. Benedict XVI spoke about this urgent need for education in his Letter to the Roman Diocese issued in 2008: “It is impossible not to be concerned about the formation of the

¹⁵ Cf. S. Kowalczyk, *Ciało człowieka w refleksji filozoficznej*, Lublin 2009, KUL, pp. 9–122.

¹⁶ *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Europa of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to the Bishops, Men and Women in the Consecrated Life and All the Lay Faithful on Jesus Christ Alive in His Church, the Source of Hope for Europe*, p. 9, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_20030628_ecclesia-in-europa.html (11.04.2024).

¹⁷ Cf. *Wychowanie chrześcijańskie. Między tradycją a współczesnością*, ed. A. Rynio, Lublin 2007, KUL.

new generations, about their ability to give their lives a direction and to discern good from evil, and about their health, not only physical but also moral. Educating, however, has never been an easy task and today seems to be becoming ever more difficult.”¹⁸ It is, therefore, legitimate here to ask the question: what is education? Academic disciplines define it in various ways, addressing its scope, underlying disciplines, character, significance, and functions in man’s life. Undoubtedly, education is a dynamic reality directed toward the growth of man. It requires effort, taking action, and transitioning from positive longings to realization, from one’s developmental good seen from the future perspective to its realization.¹⁹

Pope Benedict XVI saw the changes in the socio-cultural sphere, such as the increasing attitude of *laissez-aller*, the decline of authorities, individualism, subjectivism, the wavering of universal values hierarchy, the marginalization of Christianity, consumerism, the cult of the body, and others. That is why he pointed to the emergency of education and cautioned educators against the temptation to give up or refrain from educational activities.²⁰ As he explained, “We all have at heart the good of the people we love, especially our children, adolescents, and young people.”²¹

In his eyes, the growth of children and youth is an urgent challenge and a priority that should be put into practice by educators. Therefore, he emphasized three crucial aspects of education:

1. Education requires that a human being is treated as a person (attitude, behavior, transformation);
2. A human being should be perceived through the prism of his ontological relation with God who revealed Himself in Jesus Christ;
3. The integrity of education, with particular emphasis on the formation of conscience.²²

¹⁸ *Letter of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Faithful of the Diocese and City of Rome on the Urgent Task of Educating Young People*, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/letters/2008/documents/hf_ben-xvi_let_20080121_educazione.html (11.04.2024).

¹⁹ Cf. M. Nowak, *Teorie i koncepcje wychowania*, Warszawa 2008, Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, pp. 178–181.

²⁰ Benedict XVI, *Letter...*

²¹ Benedict XVI, *Letter...*

²² M. Górecka, *Pedagogia Boża wobec kryzysu wychowawczego w ujęciu Benedicta XVI*, “Niedziela ogólnopolska” 36 (2023), p. 69.

The concept ‘integrity of education’ came to dominate the language of Catholic education since Vatican Council II, but J. Ratzinger links strongly this idea with personalism and christocentrism. Benedict XVI was deeply worried about the educational crisis, because he saw a dichotomy developed between the education based on a cognitive emphasis and the integral education. While adopting the Pope’s idea that education should treat a human being as a subject, and should have a Christological dimension and integrity, it is also worth noting the contemporary difficulties regarding education.

2. The various difficulties of contemporary educators

It is difficult to determine unequivocally who or what is at the root of the crisis in education. Also, why so many difficulties in the process of education are encountered by all those involved in education, including parents, caregivers, and teachers? The individualism, subjectivism, relativism, emotivism, and irrationalism propagated by postmodernity, lead to a resignation from presenting and formulating universal truths and classical educational principles.²³ Examining the situation, Benedict XVI identified two main threats inherent in educators themselves. The first is the temptation to “give up”, to refrain from the efforts of education, and to abandon the search for solutions. That is why educators often withdraw from fulfilling these tasks, even if they see that they would be right. Moreover, sometimes they do not even undertake them. In this way, they conform to societal acceptance of the arbitrary behavior of the pupil and axiological chaos. The second threat that refers to educators themselves is “the risk of not even understanding what their role or rather the mission entrusted to them is.”²⁴ Education is sometimes treated as the fulfillment of professional obligations written in work regulations—it does not entail one’s commitment or responsibility. And yet, education requires personal and religious maturity from educators. Without it, they merely execute directives of educational policy.

An educator needs to understand who the pupil is. For a given mode of education will largely depend upon the adoption of a specific concept of human nature stemming from philosophical currents and political assumptions. The main tendencies in educational currents have arisen in relation to political, social,

²³ Cf. *Caritas in Veritate* 21–33.

²⁴ Benedict XVI, *Letter...*

and cultural life. They have been expressed in three streams of pedagogical thought: the personalistic current, which is usually put forward by Christian democracy parties; the Marxist current, found in socialism and communism, and the secularist/liberal current, which is close to liberal-socialist and social-democratic powers. It can be assumed that these currents are based on three basic categories: personalistic refers to the category of “the person,” Marxist emphasizes the category of “practice,” while secularist stresses “secularity.”²⁵

If educators are not mature, if they do not accept the basic anthropological principles, do not understand the present context of education and are not convinced that what they do is right, then, as the result, the contemporary mentality and culture prevail “which induce one to have doubts about the value of the human person, about the very meaning of truth and good, and ultimately about the goodness of life.”²⁶

“There is a growing mentality of relativism, which holds that everything is equally valid, that truth and absolute points of reference do not exist.”²⁷ What remains important is only what can be experienced and calculated, and individual freedom (mistakenly understood as unlimited autonomy), becomes the highest value to which all other values are to be subordinated.²⁸ “It then becomes difficult to pass on from one generation to the next, something that is valid and certain, rules of conduct, credible objectives around which to build life itself.”²⁹ However, one may still be optimistic for “none of these difficulties is insurmountable. They are, as it were, the other side of the coin of that great and precious gift which is our freedom, with the responsibility that rightly goes with it. As opposed to what happens in the technical or financial fields, where today’s advances can be added to those of the past, no similar accumulation is possible in the area of people’s formation and moral growth, because the person’s freedom is ever new. As a result, each person and each generation must

²⁵ Cf. M. Nowak, *Podstawy pedagogiki otwartej. Ujęcie dynamiczne w inspiracji chrześcijańskiej*, Lublin 1999, pp. 230–265.

²⁶ Benedict XVI, *Letter...*

²⁷ *Message of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI For the Twenty-Sixth World Youth Day (2011)*. https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/youth/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20100806_youth.html (12.04.2024).

²⁸ *Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Participants in the Convention, Verona* https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/october/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20061019_convegno-verona.html (16.04.2024).

²⁹ Benedict XVI, *Letter...*

make his own decision anew, alone. Not even the greatest values of the past can be simply inherited; they must be claimed by us and renewed through an often anguishing personal option.”³⁰ That is why education is crucial. And just like human is endowed with dignity, so is education. While he was addressing the professors and educators at the Catholic University of America on 17 April 2008, the Pope said that the dignity of education consists in striving for the true excellence and happiness of those under care.³¹

With regard to the educators who carry formation of young generation, Benedict XVI underlines: “Faith, hope and charity go together. Hope is practised through the virtue of patience, which continues to do good even in the face of apparent failure, and through the virtue of humility, which accepts God’s mystery and trusts him even at times of darkness. Faith tells us that God has given his Son for our sakes and gives us the victorious certainty that it is really true: God is love! ... Faith, which sees the love of God revealed in the pierced heart of Jesus on the Cross, gives rise to love. Love is the light and in — the end, the only light — that can always illuminate a world grown dim and give us the courage needed to keep living and working. Love is possible, and we are able to practise it because we are created in the image of God”³² An educator, teacher, pedagogue therefore, is faced with a person and not some ‘material’ to be formed freely in love, hope and faith. That is why education should aim toward the future developmental good of the pupil, so that he realizes his potentiality, shapes his will, and grows as “a unique person”, both on the individual and social planes. The question is, however, what the basic conditions and principles of education in pedagogical activity are.

3. Conditions of authentic education

The radical changes in contemporary context of education does require the search for answers to questions about the nature of the human being, his or her dignity and the correct process of education. The style and pace of life in contemporary, postmodern societies has changed the way that many people, especially

³⁰ Benedict XVI, *Letter...*

³¹ *Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI, Conference Hall of the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., 17 April 2008*, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2008/april/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20080417_cath-univ-washington.html (12.04.2024).

³² *Deus Caritas Est* 39.

youth relate to meanings, virtues and the purposes of life. Young people may pay little attention to deeper questions because its meanings seem to have little connection with their everyday living.³³ In order to help children and young people to achieve personal and religious maturity, educators need to meet the conditions proposed by Pope Benedict XVI, in his *Letter to the Diocese of Rome on the urgent task of education*.

The first of these conditions is to get up close and personal, to show trust, which is born from love. Building a lasting bond with the child requires dedication and commitment. The first years of a child's life seem to be the most vital. For during this time, their growth, conditioned by the quality and frequency of sensory experiences from the surrounding environment, both objective and subjective (the mother and father), may progress correctly. Consequently, a bond of closeness will naturally form. That is why, Pope Benedict XVI appeals to parents to always remain in "reciprocal love". As he explains, "this is the first great gift your children need if they are to grow up serene, acquire self-confidence and thus learn to be capable in turn of authentic and generous love. Further, your love for your children must endow you with the style and courage of a true educator, with a consistent witness of life and the necessary firmness to temper the character of the new generations, helping them to distinguish clearly between good and evil so they in turn can form solid rules of life that will sustain them in future trials."³⁴ Closeness and trust result from love, and parental love should be selfless, seeking to give rather than take. Love means longing for good—both external and internal. The former is "mere decency, honesty or social utility of a person—the substance of his so-called moral backbone."³⁵ The latter, however, is "the happiness of a person—it is the internal feeling that life is meaningful and that one wants to live."³⁶ Therefore, a parent or teacher "knows that if he is to educate he must give a part of himself, and that it is only in this way that he can help his pupils overcome selfishness and become in their turn capable of authentic love."³⁷ We can now see what a difficult task parents

³³ Cf. G. Rossiter, *Religious education and the changing landscape of spirituality: Through the lens of change in cultural meanings*, "Journal of Religious Education" 55 (2010) 2.

³⁴ Benedict XVI, *Letter ...*

³⁵ J. Chmielewski, *Wychowanie do szczęścia*, "Edukacja i Dialog" (2004), no. 10, p. 2.

³⁶ J. Chmielewski, *Wychowanie do szczęścia*, p. 2.

³⁷ Benedict XVI, *Letter...*

and educators face: to raise children out of love, in love and toward love. It is both a gift and a mission.

The capacity for loving is strongly connected with the capacity for suffering, inscribed in our life. In his encyclical *Spe salvi*, Benedict XVI explains that the measure of one's humanity is determined in relation to suffering and the one who suffers. Accepting the one who suffers means that we somehow take on his suffering. This is expressed in the Latin term *con-solatio*, "to be together" so that the one who suffers does not feel alone. Thus, love is realized which cannot exist without self-sacrifice. Otherwise, a man becomes an egoist and denies love.³⁸ The Pope explains the essence of Christian love and notes that a person is not loved because of this or that trait. One loves the other who manifests himself through various qualities, but is always more than the sum of them. One loves the other the way he is, along with his weaknesses.³⁹

Another condition for education to be authentic is finding a balance between freedom and discipline. As the Pope explains, "If no standard of behavior and rule of life is applied even in small daily matters, the character is not formed and the person will not be ready to face the trials that will come in the future."⁴⁰ To educate well means to instruct on how to use freedom. But what is freedom according to Benedict XVI? On the occasion of the XX World Youth Day, the Pope said that "freedom is not simply about enjoying life in total autonomy, but rather about living by the measure of truth and goodness so that we ourselves can become true and good. This gesture is necessary even if initially our yearning for freedom makes us inclined to resist it."⁴¹ Those who educate "must therefore accept the risk of freedom and be constantly attentive in order to help him [the pupil] to correct wrong ideas and choices."⁴² But we, as educators, must never refrain from reacting when we see that our pupil errs, "to pretend we do not see the errors or worse, that we share them as if they were the new boundaries

³⁸ *Encyclical Letter Spe Salvi of the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI to the Bishops, Priests and Deacons, Men and Women Religious and All the Lay Faithful on Christian Hope.*

³⁹ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *To Look on Christ...*

⁴⁰ Benedict XVI, *Letter...*

⁴¹ *Homily of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, Cologne-Marienfeld, 21st of August 2005;* https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2005/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20050821_20th-world-youth-day.html (11.04.2024).

⁴² Benedict XVI, *Letter...*

of human progress.”⁴³ We must not forget that the educational relationship, sometimes very difficult, is the encounter of two kinds of freedom, and education itself is a process in which a man’s freedom is shaped.

In the process of education, the authority of the educator is crucial. It is “the fruit of experience and competence, but is acquired above all with the coherence of one’s own life and personal involvement, an expression of true love.”⁴⁴ Due to his sincere actions for the benefit of the pupil, living in line with the adopted norms and principles, competence and experience, an educator is “a witness of truth and goodness. He too, of course, is fragile and can be mistaken, but he will constantly endeavor to be in tune with his mission.”⁴⁵

Responsibility is yet another condition for authentic education. In the teaching of Benedict XVI, there are three kinds of responsibility. First, we have a responsibility before ourselves, that is, personal. There is also a social responsibility, for we live among other people and through our actions, choices, and words, we influence the entire community.⁴⁶ If we are believers, we recognize our responsibility before God. Responsibility requires one’s effort, consistency, and keeping one’s word.

This educational striving should be accompanied by unwavering hope, which Benedict XVI calls “the soul of education”. When placed in God, hope gives support in moments of weakness, it prompts one to act and give a sense of strength, due to the value of the goal one has chosen. “Hope that is addressed to God is never hope for oneself alone, it is always also hope for others; it does not isolate us but renders us supportive in goodness and encourages us to educate one another in truth and in love.”⁴⁷ Christians are people of hope. However, “our hope is threatened on many sides and we even risk becoming, like the ancient pagans, people ‘having no hope and without God in the world’ [...]. What may be the deepest difficulty for a true educational endeavour consists precisely in this: the fact that at the root of the crisis of education lies a crisis of trust in life.”⁴⁸ The goal of Christian hope is, therefore, the gift of love that goes beyond what we can

⁴³ Benedict XVI, *Letter...*

⁴⁴ Benedict XVI, *Letter...*

⁴⁵ Benedict XVI, *Letter...*

⁴⁶ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Letter...*

⁴⁷ Benedict XVI, *Letter...*

⁴⁸ Benedict XVI, *Letter...*

do; one that we cannot force, and which is fundamental for us. Our hope tells us that our longing for infinity is not in vain.⁴⁹

The above-mentioned points allow us to outline an integral theory of education based on Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI foundations. Among the most vital traits of the Pope's model of education, there are:

1. Subjectivity which entails the awareness of one's place in the world, and the ability to create one's own life. It confirms that education is about a subject that is always unique;
2. Educational relation, that takes into account the subjectivity of the educator and the pupil;
3. Integrity, understood as the growth of the entire person. It encompasses his physical, mental, social, spiritual, and religious life;
4. Relationality, that is, our being "for", the ability to reach out to the Other, to know and to love; the ability to be a gift;
5. Educational optimism, that "makes" us overcome difficulties through the proper use of freedom and responsibility. It manifests itself in one's readiness to help correct erroneous choices;
6. Education out of love, in love, and toward love;
7. Recognition of the authority of the educator who, through wisdom, competence, and commitment, engages in the process of education;
8. The educator who can bear witness to the values/virtues he has adopted;
9. Balance between freedom and discipline in line with one's developmental processes;
10. Educational awareness and responsibility for the educational process (personal responsibility; responsibility before society and God);
11. The principle of hope, that makes it possible to overcome obstacles that arise from the current socio-cultural context;
12. Adopting Christian realism which asserts that education is not only about a relationship between people, but also a relationship with God, who confirms the reliability of His promises thereby affirming our capacity to attain humanity and sanctity.

In a time of social, cultural, and spiritual confusion, Benedict XVI explains the profound significance of the Incarnation, Life, Passion, and Resurrection of Jesus, for good is stronger than evil. As he writes, "When the foundations are shaken, however, and essential certainties are lacking, the impelling need for

⁴⁹ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *To Look on Christ...*

those values once again makes itself felt: thus today, the request for an education which is truly such is in fact increasing. Parents, anxious and often anguished about the future of their children, are asking for it; a great many teachers going through the sorrowful experience of their schools' deterioration are asking for it; society overall, seeing doubts cast on the very foundations of coexistence, is asking for it; children and young people themselves who do not want to be left to face life's challenges on their own are also asking for it in their inmost being. Those who believe in Jesus Christ, moreover, have a further and stronger reason for not being afraid: they know in fact that God does not abandon us, that his love reaches us wherever we are and just as we are, in our wretchedness and weakness, to offer us a new possibility of good.⁵⁰

4. Conclusion

There is no simple guarantee that the proposals given above will solve all the problems of contemporary education, but the basic principles of personalistic pedagogy given by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger / Pope Benedict XVI lead to pedagogy of hope and is helpful to see new orientation of education and pedagogy. At the anthropological level, Benedict XVI highlights the dignity of human being and his/her relationships with Jesus Christ, other persons and himself/herself. Pope Benedict XVI points to pedagogy in truth, love, closeness, trust, freedom, and discipline, at the same time emphasizing the significance of the educator's authority. A person and his comprehensive growth are the subject of education. To educate well, therefore, one must know who a human being is, and what his nature is.⁵¹ At the same time, one must remember the relationship of this person with others, including God. It is then that a man is not closed within himself but has a chance to grow fully.

⁵⁰ Benedict XVI, *Letter...*

⁵¹ Cf. *Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Bishops of the United States of America on their 'Ad limina' visit*, 19th January 2012, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2012/january/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20120119_bishops-usa.html (11.04.2024).

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