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## OPTIMISM AND RESPONSIBILITY IN EDUCATION

### INTRODUCTION

The crisis that modern civilization faces, in its outward form is mainly perceived in economic categories – but unfortunately the nature of this phenomenon is more complex and complicated, as it also includes a whole group of causes and consequences connected with a change in man's mentality (morality) and lifestyle in the sphere of their social contacts and in the field of education and orientation of their spiritual (religious) lives. The perspective of a man's personal development is at present outlined by a dramatic tension between two civilizations that may be defined in short as “the civilization of solidarity” and “the civilization of extreme individualism and pleasure”. A society in which reciprocity and solidarity closely united with responsibility and an optimistic view of the future are the foundation of its members' mutual relations, becomes an environment where they find the reason for their personal development, and at the same time they realize the truth that it is the quality and style of life of individual people that the quality of social life depends on. On the other hand, a civilization in which extreme individualism and orientation towards pleasure dominate, becomes a source of people's serious personality disorders and frustrations, ultimately leading to the loss and distortion of the essence and fundamental aims and tasks of human and social life. People's extremely individualistic approach to life practically leads them to such a use of freedom that they do what they

want to, abandoning responsibility for their own lives; they themselves establish the “truth”, rejecting in this way the requirements of the objective truth to become «selfless» gifts for others in the society<sup>1</sup>. Extreme individualism always remains egocentric and selfish, devoid of the light of optimism, and now it constitutes one of the most serious threats to a man's personal development.

The process of formation of a young man's personality is to a large degree dependent on the existence of a defined style of upbringing in his environment, a style that regulates the mutual relations between the members of the educational group. Undoubtedly it is decisive for both the level of the teacher's responsibility and for the question if he may become a significant authority for a child. This is because the teacher's professionalism and competences find their most profound justification in his attitude of responsibility for his pupils who have been entrusted to his care, and to whom he has the duty to indicate the right way of moral and social formation<sup>2</sup>. A teacher as one of a young man's first masters and guides has to become an authority for him, someone who teaches him the art of life and explains the meaning of human existence. Such a profound comprehension of a teacher's attitude that is full of optimism and responsibility in the process of formation of a young man's personality may be found with many modern pedagogues deeply involved in the process of their own human and pedagogic formation. It is them who, with their pedagogic involvement, point to the need of taking educational actions in such a manner that could take into consideration releasing the pupil's all inborn and supernatural strength. The point is then the development of a young man, according to the principles of nature and spirit. Upbringing based on responsibility and optimism may be expressed by one short phrase: “to develop and to prevent”. This is why such circumstances and conditions have to be created for the pupil that could make his latent talents and inner powers, according to their possibilities, wake and develop, being directed to the good understood as the skill of the appropriate choice of human and supernatural values.

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<sup>1</sup> J. NAGÓRNY, *Problemy moralne współczesnej rodziny polskiej* [Moral problems of the modern Polish family], in: K. JEŻYNA, T. ZADYKOWICZ (ed.), *Wychowanie w rodzinie chrześcijańskiej. Przestanie moralne Kościoła*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL 2008, p. 90-93.

<sup>2</sup> P. MAGIER, *Współczesny nastolatek: między patriotyzmem a globalizmem* [A modern teenager: between patriotism and globalism], in: K. STĘPIEŃ, B. KIEREŚ (ed.), *Nauczyciel wobec problemów globalnego nastolatka*, Fundacja Servire Veritati Instytut Edukacji Narodowej Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL 2012, p. 210-213.

## 1. MAN AS A PERSONAL BEING

The way in which man is understood, and his possibilities and limitations are perceived, undoubtedly influences the way upbringing is defined. Hence in the theory of education one should be based on such anthropology that respects all significant elements of man's reality and leads to a realistic and integral conception of education. Hence anthropological philosophy's answer to the question about human nature is that a man is a living and rational being (Latin: *animal rationale*), identical with himself and indivisible, that he is a substantial unity of rational nature. Man is a certain kind of *compositum* – a unity of two orders: the matter and the spirit. Against this background philosophy of man builds the theory of the personal being that explains what personal life consists in and what it is constituted by<sup>3</sup>. A man is a person, and this means that he is a „somebody”, and not only „something”.

With time various aspects of this concept were explained or emphasized; it was indicated that a human person is an absolute being and cannot be used as a means but always has to be treated as a moral aim in itself. At present a great emphasis is put on the way in which individual persons are connected with one another, on their attitude towards other persons and towards their environment<sup>4</sup>. Modern philosophy “defining things rather from the point of view of their manifestations than their essence, stresses awareness or responsibility as a characteristic feature of the person. However, in actual fact both being a person and the personal life are closely connected with the spiritual element in a man, since only a spiritual being can be a person. Making one's own decisions is a manifestation of the personal “I” of a man including both the spirit and the matter. A personal subject may not be reduced to drives or biological forces. A man is someone who is personal, superior to his own actions and responsible for them. A person is the subject of thinking and an autonomous source of actions. He is fully realized by his psychical-spiritual life that exceeds the material-biological domain<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> B. KIEREŚ, *O personalizm w pedagogice. Studia i szkice z teorii wychowania* [For Personalism in Pedagogy. Studies and Sketches in the Theory of Education], Fundacja Servire Veritati Instytut Edukacji Narodowej, Lublin 2009, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> G. O'COLLINS, E.G. FARRUGIA, *Zwięzły słownik teologiczny* [A Concise Dictionary of Theology], Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM 1993, p. 175-176.

<sup>5</sup> J. GOLEŃ, *Wychowanie seksualne w rodzinie. Studium pastoralne* [Sexual Upbringing in the Family. A Pastoral Study], Rzeszów: Poligrafia WSD w Rzeszowie 2006, p. 36.

The theory of a personal being states clearly that features (the need to cognize as well as love and freedom) distinguishing a man from the whole natural world are inscribed in his nature; and his being a subject towards laws, his identity (completeness) and his religious dignity indicate his transcendence over the society<sup>6</sup>. Hence a man appears as a person who is “a potentialized being, which means that personal life is given to him, and at the same time it is set to him as a task, so it is subject to actualization in the field of culture; a man cultivates the world and himself”<sup>7</sup>.

The classical conception of a man is an integral vision of a man's being, and it is called personalism (Latin. *persona* – person). As a philosophical trend focused on the uniqueness of the human person, personalism “puts the good and development of the human person in the centre of the world as a superior rule to which all particular goods are assigned, goods that are realized by a man as result of his free actions”<sup>8</sup>.

## 2. PEDAGOGY OF OPTIMISM

The issue of formation of personality in young people is in a particular way inscribed in the reality of everyday hardships and of searches for new educational strategies that are made by numerous representatives of pedagogical theory and practice. This is because the desire to discover again an integral, full of optimism way of forming young generations becomes an unusually urgent problem, especially in the face of dynamically occurring social, cultural and moral changes. The degeneration of traditional values that may be observed, as well as the man's loss of trust in his own strength are the cause why it is indeed necessary to refer to pedagogical optimism in the field of education, optimism that could allow one to counteract the spreading among young people of fatal nihilistic visions of the future of the world and mankind. Pedagogical optimism in the broadest meaning may be identified with all conscious and intended educational actions taken in view of man's integral development, in which the advantage of good over evil, where the individual's attitude towards life, towards certain events or towards other

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<sup>6</sup> B. KIEREŚ, *O personalizizm*, p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> A. PODSIAD, Z. WIĘCKOWSKI, *Mały słownik terminów i pojęć filozoficznych dla studiujących filozofię chrześcijańską* [A Concise Dictionary of Philosophical Terms and Notions for Christian Philosophy Students], Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX 1983, p. 269.

people, is permeated with dominating elements of hope and of belief in positive values of life, of these events and of the people<sup>9</sup>. Hence education based on optimism presumes instilling in a young person a relatively lasting tendency to perceive, explain and assess the world and the events that occur in it in terms that are rather positive than negative, and developing in him the tendency to expect rather favorable events, and not unfavorable ones<sup>10</sup>. The assumptions of pedagogical optimism ultimately allow a man to achieve success in life as far as the realization of his human potentialities are concerned, giving him in this way a profound sense of happiness and satisfaction with life.

So putting stress on pedagogical optimism in a teacher's life and work is an appeal to his experience, knowledge and practical wisdom as well as to the strength of his authority as a necessary contribution to the process of educating the young generation and of building the civilization of life based on constant values and on respecting the dignity of every man. One of the essential factors that decide about intensity or indeed about the very occurrence of those full of optimism educational actions is the problem of discovering the creative possibilities in the teachers themselves, as well as in the existing systems and methods of pedagogical work. This is because in practice pedagogical optimism assumes achieving educational progress at whose foundations there are various educational acts forming many-sided aid for the developing man. In pedagogical sciences there is a rather common conviction that educational success is connected with optimist perception of the reality, or, that it is a sort of confirmation of the teacher's pedagogical optimism. A pedagogue optimistically taking pains to educate young people, at different stages of his work does not assume that he is going to suffer a defeat but on the contrary, he thinks he can overcome the difficulties he is going to encounter and achieve the aims he has set. Optimism in education is inseparably linked with the human need of recognition and confirmation of oneself and with social trust and bolstering one's confidence of the acquired skills and knowledge. In pedagogical work it also should be a certain element of inspiration through which both the teacher and the pupil broaden the range of responsibilities they assume, taking new tasks to cope with and making themselves exceed the skills that they had up till that moment, in this way

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<sup>9</sup> W. OKOŃ, *Nowy słownik pedagogiczny [A New Dictionary of Pedagogy]*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademickie „Żak” 1998, p. 275.

<sup>10</sup> M. MIKOŁAJCZYK, *Optymizm [Optimism]*, in: T. PILCH (ed.), *Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku*, vol. 3, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademickie „Żak” 2004, p. 877.

becoming freer of various determinants as well as of routine behavior and patterns of work. Pedagogical optimism then contributes to revealing and expressing the features of a man's personal life in a maximum degree, so that it boosts his desire to transcend himself and his mediocrity. However, the question if pedagogical optimism ultimately will become the determinant of the "new quality" in a man's life is decided by the effort to develop that he consciously undertakes, and not only by passively waiting for the profits that life brings.

This is exactly why the teacher's professionalism and competences find their most profound justification in his attitude of optimism and his responsibility for his pupils who have been entrusted to his care and to whom he has the duty to indicate as well as to guarantee the way of moral and social formation<sup>11</sup>. Efficiency of the teacher's work is most often a function of definite external conditions, interpersonal relations, educational methods and features of personality that is generally understood as the whole of a man's relatively constant and integrated psychological and physical features that determine the way of acting that is specific to him<sup>12</sup>. Hence it is doubtless that the results of a teacher's work to a large degree depend on his personality that is usually shaped under the influence of social conditions, the culture of the environment, his conscious educational actions and his self-education. Every epoch assigns teachers specific tasks the performing of which requires some definite personality traits. In modern times a teacher's mature personality – his optimistic attitude towards the world and the man is formed as result of his own activity and of positive actions of the environment owing to which such structures are formed that guarantee it possibly best, which means peaceful social functioning, and make it possible to perfect the personal developmental potentialities. Among the most frequently indicated traits of the teacher's mature personality characterized by optimism the following are mentioned: a coherent system of values integrated into the ability to communicate interpersonally and to cooperate with others as well as the skill of setting long-term tasks that give a real prospect to enrich himself and to intensify the personal development of the teacher's pupils<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> K. WROŃSKA, *Kondycja współczesnej rodziny w kontekście przemian (kryzysu) autorytetu* [The condition of the modern family in the context of transformations (crisis) of authorities], „Rocznik Pedagogiki Rodziny” 2003, vol. VI, p. 123.

<sup>12</sup> W. OKOŃ, *Nowy słownik*, p. 278; N. SILLAMY, *Słownik psychologii* [A Dictionary of Psychology], Warszawa: Wydawnictwo „Książnica” 1994, p. 193.

<sup>13</sup> K. OSTROWSKA, *Osobowość* [Personality], in: D. LALAK, T. PILCH (ed.), *Elementarne*

Optimism characterizing the teacher's personality should make him a creative man, that is one who sets himself defined aims in his work, who predicts the course of the education process and all kinds of difficulties his pupils may encounter. A lot depends on his personal contribution to organizing the educational environment, good conditions of learning, nice surroundings, attractive classes. It is first of all him that contributes to creating a proper atmosphere in an educational institution<sup>14</sup>. A teacher who with hope and optimism does his work should also be characterized by expression, dynamism and pedagogical powers of observation. Expression is the broadly understood ability to hand down his thoughts, feelings and desires to his pupils. It expresses his "emotional" attitude to his pupils, and at the same time his profound satisfaction with the work he does. This is because when dealing with the person of the pupil the teacher should perceive his professional work in terms that intensify the development of his pupil and make it more dynamic. The results of the teacher's work depend to a large degree on his attitude towards the pupil, on how the teacher perceives and assesses the object of his actions. Also, the way the teacher sees himself, the way he assesses his spiritual life, the abundance of his thoughts and ideas influences his perception of his pupils' individual needs and conditions of development<sup>15</sup>. A true teacher with an optimistic attitude towards his work sees himself in community with others, willingly takes care of his pupils and he accepts himself in this role. Looking at his pupils from the point of view of a teacher-optimist he perceives them rather as his "allies", people who are able, amicably disposed, reputable, people one may rely on and whom he may trust. However, to achieve these aims it is no less important what system of values the teacher represents. His special interests should include all that has a constructive and inspiring quality: work, duty, punctuality, meticulousness. And with respect to personal values he should appreciate all that a man usually achieves with his own effort, e.g. knowledge or skills. An active, creative, optimistically disposed teacher tries to broaden his world; he sets himself and others high standards, is expansive and has the attitude of a conque-

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*pojęcia pedagogiki społecznej i pracy socjalnej*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademickie „Żak” 1999, p. 167.

<sup>14</sup> G. MIALARET, *Profil nauczyciela-wychowawcy [The profile of the teacher-educator]*, in: M. DEBESSE, G. MIALARET (ed.), *Rozprawy o nauczaniu*, vol. 2, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN 1988, p. 49-54.

<sup>15</sup> J. HOMPLEWICZ, *Etyka pedagogiczna [Pedagogical Ethics]*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Salezjańskie 1996, p. 113-114.

ror<sup>16</sup>. His optimistic bearing and his interests infect his pupils, and his impeccable conduct, earnestness, honesty, justice and reliability become the most perfect instrument of educational influence. It is just such a teacher-optimist, with broad interests and a rich spiritual life that enjoys his pupils' recognition and liking, and with time he becomes an authority for them. So for a teacher having an optimistic and cheerful character does not mean tenderness and leniency but such a conduct in which beside understanding the pupil's needs also some requirements will be set, the fulfillment of which allows the pupil to grow up as a responsible individual, one that is valuable for the society.

It sometimes happens that optimism in education is comprehended in the wrong way and is mistaken for uncritical acceptance of the child, which has a bad influence on the proper development of the child's personality. Hence the teacher has to maintain the awareness of the strong and weak sides of himself and of his pupils; he also has to have a realistic appraisal of the educational situations. It also has to be emphasized that pedagogical optimism states that a child, as it were, is to discover his personal potential himself; and rationality as well as transparency of the educational process that leads to them assumes avoiding punishments and threats, and using encouragement. A pedagogue who is guided by a child's good must not allow fear to accompany education, as it would limit the developmental potential of the pupil and form in him a pessimistic attitude towards the world. Hence, a pedagogue's task should be to create such conditions of an integral development and education for his pupils that would instill optimism in them and would favor achieving successes which their abilities allow<sup>17</sup>. Moreover, a teacher who in his work is guided by pedagogical optimism should have a clear awareness of the ultimate aim, because in the art of education aims have a decisive function. A perception of them that is incomplete or erroneous, or forgetting about them altogether, is a proof of one's incompetence and becomes the cause of one-sidedness and distortions of the educational process. So a true teacher passionately takes part in his pupils' life, he is interested in their problems, tries to find out what their views are, participates in their sports and cultural life, in their conversations; as a mature and responsible friend he indicates good aims and the ways to achieve them, he is always ready to

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 197-198.

<sup>17</sup> M. NOWAK, *Podstawy pedagogiki otwartej. Ujęcie dynamiczne w inspiracji chrześcijańskiej* [Foundations of Open Pedagogy. A Dynamic Approach in the Christian Inspiration], Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL 1999, p. 308-310.



explain problems and point to the right criteria, in order to improve their marks and their conduct that deserves a reprimand, and all that with prudence and kind firmness. In such a climate of pedagogical optimism the teacher is not considered to be “a stranger”, but he becomes an authority and a friend for their pupils<sup>18</sup>. He can do then a lot in the field of education if, instead of paying attention to others he will look at himself and at his own personal development and at perfecting his own pedagogical skills in order to become a person who breathes peace and harmony into his pupils, and in such a person pedagogical optimism is united in a natural way with understanding, respect for others and with cheerfulness. Hence the value and efficiency of even the best pedagogical methods are closely connected with the personalities of those who use them. It may be then suspected that if a teacher is a mature and even-tempered man, one full of optimism, and in this way able to act in a creative way, he can delicately and efficiently influence the permanency and climate of friendship in educational relationships.

Pedagogues who are aware of their aims and tasks they are to carry out should not very easily give up reaching for creative, valuable and full of optimism solutions in the field of education and socialization of the young generation. In this case giving up would mean depraving a great mass of children and adolescents of education based on constant human and supernatural values, and at the same time of the “familiarity” resulting from natural bonds that are born between the teacher and the pupil, whose source is mutual acceptance, respect and trust. Undoubtedly the young generation needs a model from which they could get knowledge and protection from threats they cannot oppose by themselves<sup>19</sup>. So the presence of teachers who may be trusted in the lives of young people supplies them with models worth of following and does not condemn them to discovering the truths that have been discovered a long time ago. Examples of pedagogical optimism understood in this way can be noticed in the educational work conducted by, among others, J.H. Pestalozzi, St John Bosco, J. Korczak, A. Kamiński or S. Kunowski as well as many other outstanding pedagogues who, seeing their pupils' educational problems were able to refrain from criticizing them and from expressing authoritarian rigorism, and could show understanding that

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<sup>18</sup> JAN PAWEŁ II [JOHN PAUL II], *Ojciec i nauczyciel młodzieży* [*Young People's Father and Teacher*], Rzym: TP 1988, p. 18-22.

<sup>19</sup> J. DOMINIAN, *Autorytet. Chrześcijańska interpretacja psychologicznej ewolucji pojęcia autorytetu – władzy* [*Authority – a Christian Interpretation*], Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax 1988, p. 92.

released enthusiasm and passion for development. They took actions aiming at close cooperation between the teacher and the pupil, establishing common rules of conduct. They set young people tasks that required creative, innovative attitudes and behaviors, taking into consideration their abilities and choosing methods of pedagogical work in the most proper and attractive way, and by changing the style of educational guidance they tried to gradually introduce attitudes characterized by openness and trust into the educational relations.

In our times it is necessary that people who work as pedagogues can efficiently and strenuously, and at the same time discreetly, offer help to young people at the moment when they need a guide in order to choose and decide who they want to be, what to do, what position to take in the society and on the basis of what values to build their future. Hence it seems that any reflection is important which allows pedagogues to discover anew and to understand better the proper range of their responsibility for the young generation as well as to understand the source of optimism, the ways of building it in them, supporting it and protecting it from trends that decrease its educational value and significance in the life of the young generation.

### 3. RESPONSIBILITY IN EDUCATION

The issue of responsibility is in a special way inscribed in the world of human interests and academic searches connected with education. In academic literature many positions occur from the domains of philosophy, ethics, law, pedagogy, psychology or ecology and environmental protection that refer to the category of responsibility and try to explain its various aspects and dependencies. Generally the concept of responsibility is most often associated with: a moral or legal duty consisting in bearing the consequences of one's acts; the feature of a man's conduct that results from controlling this conduct in relation to others and self-controlling his own development; the basis of self-realization, of morality, of social bonds; a moral value manifested in the psychological experiences of a man (a personal "I") and in his acts<sup>20</sup>. In K. Wojtyła's personalist philosophy responsibility is inseparably connected with values; ipso facto it is a right and a duty as well as a man's destiny.

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<sup>20</sup> E. ALBIŃSKA, *Odpowiedzialność [Responsibility]*, in: *Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku*, p. 773-775; W. OKOŃ, *Nowy słownik*, p. 270-271.

Traditionally numbered among ethical issues it is one of the fundamental moral values besides such ones as freedom, dignity or justice. Hence responsibility appears to be a complex and many-sided category dependent on conditions, situations and aspects. It assumes a relationship between an act and its consequence and may be treated as a human disposition for some definite evaluating and acting. Since it is a moral category it is first of all concerned with individual experiences and interpersonal relations, including educational actions and influences. This is why in pedagogical academic reflection the most often distinguished planes of responsibility are concerned with: the problem of the teacher's profession – because the teacher is responsible for the results of his educational work; responsibility as the positive feature of the teacher's and the pedagogue's personality; and with the shaping of the attitude of responsibility in the pupils in the process of moral education. Moral responsibility is an expression of self-control and sensitivity of the conscience that is understood as the ability to control one's responsibility<sup>21</sup>.

A broad view of responsibility both in the social and pedagogical perspective allows one to notice that it concerns “all the people and includes all the personality; it is treated as an indivisible whole functioning in certain social and natural conditions. Responsibility is a moral and social category. The attitude of responsibility is formed by participating in social life. Shaping the attitude of responsibility is the basic aim of social-moral education. Forming a responsible person assumes the necessity of his comprehensive development (stimulating his creativity and responsibility)”<sup>22</sup>. In this context the interest in education of children and adolescents, in their physical and spiritual shape, in a dynamically changing world incline many representatives of pedagogy to make efforts to search for proper ways of young people developing their humanity and fully growing up to responsibility for themselves and for others<sup>23</sup>. In every age one may notice the educational care of the older generation that is richer in experience, knowledge and practical wisdom, that has the advantage of being an authority, for the youngest (children and adolescents) that are only at the stage of intensive physical, social and moral development. One of the significant factors that decide about the intensity or indeed about the very occurrence of those educational relations between the

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<sup>21</sup> E. ALBIŃSKA, *Odpowiedzialność [Responsibility]*, pp. 773-774.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, p. 774.

<sup>23</sup> H. GAJDAMOWICZ, *Postmodernistyczna wizja człowieka. Kontekst pedagogiczny (The post-modernist vision of the man. The pedagogical context)*, in: M. NOWAK, P. MAGIER, I. SZEWCZAK (ed.), *Antropologiczna pedagogika ogólna*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL 2010, p. 137.

generations is the problem of responsibility and the issues of freedom and educational consciousness that are connected with it<sup>24</sup>. In the past the connection of responsibility and education had a profound justification in tradition and culture and was a kind of a guarantee of the social and educational order; but at present, in the era of rapid social and cultural changes both the very education and its constant connection with responsibility are questioned.

A crisis of responsibility in the sphere of education seems to lead inevitably to the formation, especially in the young generation, of attitudes characterized by egoism and the tendency to willfulness. Many educational circles struggle today with the serious problem of educating the young generation in a responsible way, so that young people could maintain the right proportion between autonomy that is due to them on the one hand, and the requirements they should meet and duties they should perform in the name of their own and of social good on the other. Hence often a tendency is observed in this field to an excess of educational authority that in fear of the charge of lack of responsibility chooses "power" as an educational method, or the opposite, it prefers renouncing the setting of clear requirements understood as usurpation of the power over the pupil. The progressing albeit slow emancipation of children and adolescents from the authority of parents and teachers often leads to a situation in which educational circles feel excused from responsibility for the quality of their educational actions and also to disappearance of sufficient care for the future of the young generation. Education without referring to responsibility seems very much restricted and in a way impossible.

Education in a broad sense assumes all effects on a human individual that result in a man's personal individuality. Educational influence in this meaning is characterized by a certain spontaneity being based mainly on intuition and fairly popularly understood tradition, customs and culture. The range of this influence is rather wide as it includes the social environment, interpersonal relations and the cultural and civilization context as well as the psycho-social climate obtaining at a defined place and time. Axiology of the educational process understood in this way is often accidental and short-term, and sometimes its elements neutralize or cancel each other out. On the other hand education that assumes a planned educational influence with a closely defined aim and in a definite situation is perceived in a completely different meaning. A process of educating a young man understood in this way assumes a well thought out strategy and conscious axiology of human reality. Pedagogues

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<sup>24</sup> N. SILLAMY, *Słownik*, p. 195.

(parents, teachers) then have to strive to harmonize their educational acts, in a responsible way trying to hand down a model of life worthy of its value to a young man. Hence a pedagogue, acting responsibly on the basis of the authority he has, should use such educational methods and initiate such processes that will allow the pupil to feel fulfilled in his humanity, and at the same time to become responsible in his actions<sup>25</sup>. The skill of functioning responsibly in the social world is an unusually important factor of a man's personal maturity and an expression of his moral autonomy. In this sense responsibility may only be understood as being guided in one's life (or acting) by the consequences of one's acts and accepting the results of one's conduct. So responsibility appears to be one of the elementary features of a man's behavior that is the result of guiding this behavior with relation to other human beings, and at the same time of self-guidance with taking into consideration one's own development. It is also a pedagogical category that defines the level and quality of the pedagogue's attitude towards children and youths<sup>26</sup>. Undoubtedly educational responsibility is a result of such factors as: the pedagogue's moral maturity, his kindness towards the pupils, or his will to achieve an educational success.

In the center of the field of educational responsibility there is invariably the human person; hence the pedagogue has to show responsibility for himself, for another man and for the world of values – the ability to realize them. This is a project of perfecting the person by turning towards good and by participating in it ever more, even to the degree of “transcending oneself”. However, pedagogical experience teaches us that a human individual “is able to actualize his «nature» only with the cooperation and help from other people, that is a full development of one's personal life may be obtained only in a community. [...] The birth of a man, his education, development and achieving human perfection within the limits accessible to a man are only possible within the various forms of social life”<sup>27</sup>. The necessity of grown-ups' (parents, teachers, pedagogues) responsibility for the personal development of the young generation follows from this. This educational responsibility unites

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<sup>25</sup> M. NOWAK, *Podstawy pedagogiki otwartej*, p. 272; W. CHUDY, *Pedagogika godności. Elementy etyki pedagogicznej [Pedagogy of Dignity. Elements of Pedagogical Ethics]*, Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL 2009, p. 15-16.

<sup>26</sup> J. ŻEBROWSKI, *Odpowiedzialność jako wartość i jej wychowawcze implikacje [Responsibility as a value and its educational implications]*, in: U.B. KAZUBOWSKA (ed.), *Odpowiedzialność rodzicielska jako wartość. Teoria i praktyka*, Toruń: Wydawnictwo Akapit 2010, p. 15-16.

<sup>27</sup> M.A. KRĄPIEC, *Ja – człowiek [I – Man]*, Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL 1974, p. 289.

generations, it is owing to it that the young may experience interpersonal co-dependence and solidarity in achieving the personal fullness. A responsible pedagogue, entering the relation with his pupils, should predict the consequences of his acts and take only such ones that serve the personal development of his pupils. This is because adults may not claim the right to completely subordinate the young generation or make them dependent on them, and even the more so they may not limit, manipulate the process of development of a human person or make it instrumental; this would violate the identity of the very idea of education as perfecting a person with respecting his full freedom and dignity. Only parents and those who are trusted by parents may take part in the process of development and formation of the person of a child, creating possibly the most favorable conditions for actualizing his potentiality. However, the very process of perfecting the person of a child has to become his own work and the fruit of his own personal effort. The roles and responsibility of “adults” in this process of development are determined by the principle of subsidiarity. The point is that social life (upbringing, educational institutions) should always serve the good of a man, his „process of perfecting” and his development. So achieving the fullness of a man's personal development requires responsibility on the side of people and institutions supporting this process that starts at the moment of conception and continues until the moment of a natural death.

The disorientation in the sphere of values connected with education that we can see in the modern age causes that ever more often voices are heard about the need of constantly raising the standards of the pedagogical culture of educational circles, in which “wisdom” as a prerequisite of educational responsibility should become one of the significant factors of educational influence. In Z. Kwieciński's opinion wisdom is “not only the ability to use knowledge as a whole, as if «across» its inner artificial divisions [...] but also the ability to exceed the paradigms and one's own cognitive representations, experiences and patterns of thinking that have been prevalent until now; it is the ability to find and give meanings in oneself and in culture, it is also the ability to ask new difficult questions, including questions about one's own thinking”<sup>28</sup>. For many modern pedagogues a lack of support for their educational activities on the foundation of true values and pedagogical

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<sup>28</sup> Z. KWIECIŃSKI, *Od wychowania w posłuszeństwie do wychowania w odpowiedzialności* [From the upbringing in obedience to upbringing in responsibility], in: K. KRUSZEWSKI (ed.), *Pedagogika w pokoju nauczycielskim*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne 2000, p. 39-40.

wisdom gives rise to uncertainty and the feeling of being lost, and sometimes even doubt and a loss of the awareness of how important and responsible task they should perform in the social life for the young generation. This is because a pedagogue who is aware of the fact that freedom assumes faithfulness to the truth and good as well as it obliges one to be responsible for the acts and decision that he makes, should develop his abilities to understand and to assess difficult situations in education and he should search for a way to solve them properly<sup>29</sup>. Hence on the ground of pedagogy responsibility constitutes an indispensable condition making a man open to other people and to the world of values that surrounds him. The ability that a human person has to overcome himself and his weaknesses as well as to dispose of his wrong tendencies, just like his willingness to offer help to others, show his sense of responsibility that is rooted in every human being – and what is necessary is an impetus – a person to release in a man the sense of responsibility that is typical of his human condition. Indications of educational responsibility should be then looked for first of all in a certain ability to build interpersonal bonds and an inner strength in an educational group that is based on mutual respect, trust and dialog. Pedagogues, as the ones whose knowledge and experience are a lot greater, are an extraordinarily valuable source of information about the world and about life for the young generation; they are also a model for resolving difficulties and a great emotional potential that is able to serve children and youths as support in critical situations. A pedagogue who is guided by responsibility in his conduct knows himself well, knows what is important for himself – in other words: he is responsible and he teaches others to be responsible. The basis of educational responsibility is respecting “the good and dignity of the child” as well as respecting and accepting his individuality<sup>30</sup>. In this sense a pedagogue becomes the spokesman for the child's dignity, for his right to respect and his right to protection against being used and against violence.

So the position of a pedagogue is built by his attitude of responsibility for the pupils who have been entrusted to his care and to whom he has the duty to indicate the right way of moral and social formation<sup>31</sup>. The strength of educational responsibility for this process contributes to creating and deve-

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<sup>29</sup> K. WOLSKI, *Autorytet wychowawcy a prawo dziecka do wolności* [The pedagogue's authority versus a child's right to freedom], „Studia nad Rodziną” 1998, nr 2, p. 39-40.

<sup>30</sup> W. CHUDY, *Spoteczność zakłamate* [A Mendacious Society], Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa 2007, p. 350.

<sup>31</sup> K. WRÓŃSKA, *Kondycja współczesnej rodziny*, p. 123.

loping in children and youths the mechanisms of imitation, identification and modeling. It is the pedagogues who by their presence supply them with models of “responsibility”, which makes children try to imitate them, and then identify with them and want to be like them – also responsible in their lives and activities. However, it should be remembered that usually a child, imitating the behavior of the teachers and pedagogues with whom he has emotional bonds, adopts their way of being, their values and behavior. Identification with an educational environment having a great moral potential facilitates lasting and profound assimilation of norms and rules of responsible conduct, so as with time also in his consciousness aware and responsible choices and decisions could be made.

#### A FINAL REFLECTION

The process of formation of a young man's personality to a large degree is dependent on the existence of a definite educational style in his educational environment, and especially in the family. The educational style regulates mutual relations between the members of the educational group. Undoubtedly the educational style characteristic of the given group decides about the level of educational responsibility of its members and about an optimistic approach to life and to resolving educational problems. This is first of all proof of the fact that the quality of the young generation's life is to a large degree dependent on the pedagogues' ability to creatively enrich the children's and youth's spirit and mind; and the pedagogues must be responsible and must have an optimistic attitude towards them<sup>32</sup>. However, it should be remembered that a man needs an example of optimism and responsibility not only in the period of childhood and adolescence, but also in the later period, when it is “adult children” who need an example coming, among others, from parents' and pedagogue's (moral) responsibility, so that they could fully realize the potential of their possibilities in social and family life.

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<sup>32</sup> A. JANCZUR, *Wybrane czynniki kształtujące styl życia młodzieży* [*Selected Factors Forming the Young People's Lifestyle*], Rzeszów: WSP 1988, p. 37.



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## OPTYMIZM I ODPOWIEDZIALNOŚĆ W WYCHOWANIU

### S t r e s z c z e n i e

Wszelkie relacje wychowawcze potrzebują pewnego zakotwiczenia w odpowiedzialności i optymizmie pedagogicznym. Artykuł dotyczy zagadnienia wychowania człowieka odpowiedzialnego, optymistycznie nastawionego do rzeczywistości, co jest prawdziwym wyzwaniem dla współczesnych rodziców i pedagogów. Można to osiągnąć między innymi poprzez odpowiednie stawianie celów oraz precyzyjne planowanie działań wychowawczych.

**Słowa kluczowe:** optymizm; odpowiedzialność; wychowanie; dziecko.

## OPTIMISM AND RESPONSIBILITY IN EDUCATION

### S u m m a r y

All educational relations have to be anchored in responsibility and in pedagogical optimism. Hence the article concerns the issue of raising a man who is responsible and who has an optimistic attitude towards reality, which is a real challenge for modern parents and pedagogues. This can be achieved, among others, by setting adequate goals and planning educational actions in a precise way.

**Key words:** optimism; responsibility; upbringing; child.