REV. JERZY KRÓL

THE PRESENT SITUATION AND THE IDEA OF PERSONALISTIC EDUCATION

A b s t r a c t. The paper begins with a brief characterization of the situation of modern man with regard to the phenomena of anonymity and loneliness caused by the lack of the traditional values and beliefs without which the question of the meaning of human life cannot be seriously approached, and a truly meaningful future thus cannot be looked forward to. Acknowledging the need for searching for a system of global humanistic ethical principles, it then argues that the fundamental principle of these explorations should be personal dignity and the awareness of the common good. These are personalistic categories, important in the pluralist world and consistent with the Christian vision of man. The paper presents educational premises that, it suggests, should be followed if upbringing and education are to be fully personalistic processes, and describes phenomena inconsistent with the principles of personalism, making reference to the principle of subsidiarity, which in the context of upbringing and education means freedom to choose the good and to implement it, and to the philosophy of rationalism which perceives the human being in terms of a personal being and defines the main manifestation of human nature as the desire to achieve a certain kind of fulfillment.

Key words: education, upbringing, personalism, subsidiarity, dignity of the person.

INTRODUCTION

There has been much discussion lately about the issues of upbringing and education. It is difficult to find a common denominator for educational and upbringing actions among the plethora of pedagogical and educational theories. The resulting confusion has its source not only in the variety of peda-

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gogical theories and systems, but also in the person's internal imbalance. This article, one the one hand, examines some aspects of this crisis and, on the one hand, it presents the positive opportunities that education and upbringing – as rooted in personalism – may bring. It also seems important to discuss these issues because it is becoming more and more common to emphasise in research on education and upbringing the need to create new humanism with a planetary perspective¹.

1. THE PRESENT - THE SITUATION OF MAN

Modern man is a nomad who no longer lives in caves and tents under a starry sky, but in luxurious hotels. Living a hotel life, he is never at home, he never stays long at one place, he is always homeless, unidentified, unknown, anonymous and lonely. Being anonymous and lonely is not so much the result of the lack of a permanent place, but the lack of the chance to settle in. The hotel is a metaphor, which stands for the lack of the world of the traditional values and beliefs which make man care for something and prompt him to constantly seek some goal. The tragedy of his life derives from the fact that, being eradicated from a great cultural tradition, he is a creature much more dramatic than his ancestors. The essence of his existence is homelessness both at the level of the values and the world of culture - the reality strange to him, from which he escapes into the virtual world or narcotic visions. He does so because, apart from the answers to questions about current issues and matters, he finds no reason for what we call the future and the meaning of life². He is aware that he is the last one and defying the biological struggle for existence he does not want to reproduce, but instead he plays with himself and experiments on himself risking his own self-destruction³. In these postmodern conditions there often appears a de-

¹ G. B o c c h i & M. C e r u t i, Educazione e globalizazione, Prefazione, Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore, s. X; see: J. K r ó l, Edukacja w dobie globalizacji, in D. B i s, E. S m o ł k a & R. S k r z y n i a r z, Wychowanie wobec współczesnych przemian społeczno-kulturowych, Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL 2012, pp. 35-49.

² Cf. J. K r i s t e v a, Pouvirs de l'horreur. Essai sur l'abjection, Paris: Points 1980; J. Ż y c i ń s k i, Personalizm po śmierci podmiotu ludzkiego, in M. R u s e c k i (Ed.), Personalizm polski, Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL 2008, pp. 9-12, 18-19.

³ Cf. P. Sloter dijk, *Essai d'intoxication volontaire*, Paris: Calman-Levy 1999, vol. 26, p. 14.

claration of a person's death and of the decline of the human subject⁴. When there is no person and human subject, there is no question of "who am I?" or "what is the meaning of my life?" Instead another question appears: "where am I?". And according to this question man begins to define his identity in a nomadic way: changeable, unstable, and "hotel-like". Meanwhile, the person's internal balance must be based on relatively solid points present in the environment. This balance is threatened today by rapid cultural changes, especially those that affect the following elements of culture: religion, world outlook, attitude to history, ethics, law, customs and art. The fast pace of changes in these areas causes insecurity and vulnerability in people, and it also burdens adults and makes the upbringing and education of children difficult. Also today, the following observation is valid: the quality and durability of cultural achievements depends on the system of values of a particular cultural community. If cultural achievements become neglected, then they die. And they can only be preserved if – in the process of upbringing – we manage to persuade young people about their values. This persuasion may be effective only if adults are aware of what should survive and if they arrange their lives according to this knowledge⁵. This is the basis of proper upbringing and education of the next generations, because upbringing and education are tasks far more important than the simple passing of knowledge. Education concerns the issues directly related to the meaning of life and the duration of human culture. As noted by Zygmunt Bauman, modern man seeks this meaning in many ways. It may manifest itself in the limitless consumption of various goods which becomes the equivalent of a full life. Life seems to have meaning and value as long as it gives a chance to consume. For those who cannot consume, life loses its value and it becomes meaningless. As a result the collapse of the whole vertical personality occurs, the loss of one's originality and initiative, and reluctance in communicating with others. The inability to consume becomes equal to social exclusion – excommunication from the "church of consumerism", excommunication from the participation in the "cult" which takes place in a supermarket, that is the modern "cathedral". For this kind of man there is nothing more exciting or precious than shopping, i.e. replacing items that he already has, but does not

⁴ S. C o n n o r (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2005, pp. 103 n.

⁵ W. B r z e z i n k a, *W dobie przemian kulturowych*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM 2004, pp. 5-7.

longer like, with new desired ones. He is looking for the solution to his life problems in shops. He is attached to shopping from the cradle to the coffin. The pleasure of doing shopping becomes the equivalent of a full life. Until recently, the main reason for many wars and unrest in the world was the struggle for bread and rice. Today, in many parts of the modern world the need for bread was replaced by a new strong desire of things and consumption, and this new desire is increasing. Since not everyone can fulfill this desire, more and more symptoms of anger and humiliation can be observed. This resentment can easily break out in the form of street riots, destruction and vandalizing of shopping centers as it took place in the streets of London in 2011. The impulse of this action is thinking according to the principle: if I cannot have it, it is better to destroy it.⁶

2. IN THE DIRECTION OF THE PERSONALISTIC VIEW OF THE WORLD

In light of these dangers many people feel nostalgia and the desire to escape to a reality uncontaminated by technological achievements. Others, on the other hand, are ready to give themselves uncritically to the global mechanisms of economic profit. It must be noted that globalization cannot be stopped completely, just as we cannot return to the state of the world from the time before the Industrial Revolution. However, globalization can be controlled, by reinforcing some processes and eliminating others. To do this, one has to look for a system of global ethical principles which enable us to make moral judgments about the most important developments brought about by globalization. The fundamental principles of this basis of humanism should be the dignity of the person and the awareness of common good. These are two personalistic categories which are most important in a pluralistic reality of the world and at the same time they are consistent with the Christian vision of man⁷. A strong opinion on Christian personalism and its im-

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⁶ Cf. Z. B a u m a n, Conversazioni sull'educazione, Trento: Erikson 2012, pp. 89-95; Z. B a u m a n, Posmodernistyczny obraz człowieka w społeczeństwie, in "W poszukiwaniu człowieka w człowieku. Chrześcijańskie korzenie nadziei". VI Kongres Kultury Chrześcijańskiej, Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL 2012, pp. 165-168; A. P a s z k i e w i c z, Pokolenie "R", in M. Z. S t e p u l a k (Ed.), Specyfika wychowania w systemie rodzinnym, Lublin: Wyższa Szkoła Ekonomii i Innowacji w Lublinie 2013, pp. 113-115.

⁷ Cf. Ż y c i ń s k i, Personalizm po śmierci podmiotu ludzkiego, pp. 12-13.

pact on the changes in the European culture was expressed by Thomas Halik: "The West does not know more sublime standard than that of personalism and a higher value than that of a person, an irreplaceable individual"8. However, despite the fall of the great anti-personalistic, collectivist ideas and ideologies, the world has not made much progress in implementing the idea of human dignity. Also in the countries directly affected by communism one can observe a glaring lack of personalistic valuations expressed very clearly in the teaching of John Paul II, and in particular in his encyclical Redemtor hominis. The Pope presents man as a "sacred reality received from God as a gift, whose natural and moral structure must be respected"9. Anna Politkovskaya makes a sad remark, which refers not only to the situation in Russia: "[...] time is passing and years have passed since the fall of the communist party - and yet, some traditions of the past remain intact. The most overwhelming one is a pathological lack of respect for a human being, and especially for those who, in spite of all the circumstances, work selflessly and devotedly, and with a real love for the cause they serve. Well, authorities have not yet learned how to thank people who have dedicated themselves to serving our country"10.

3. THE PREMISES OF EDUCATION IN THE SPIRIT OF PERSONALISM AND ITS DENIAL

The respect for a human being can be fostered through education in the spirit of personalism. This kind of education can help people become fully human. This process takes place when the education enables a person:

- 1) to find out the whole truth about himself/ herself who s/he is and where s/he is going;
 - 2) to learn the truth about the world and his/her own place in it;
 - 3) to learn the truth about the society, duties and the rights of a person;

⁸ T. H a l i k, *Zacheuszu! Kazania na niedzielę i święta*, Transl. A. Babuchowski, Kraków 2006, p. 213. Unless stated otherwise, all the English translations of all the quotations in this paper have been done by the translator/the author of the article.

⁹ Jan Paweł II, Encyklika "Evangelium vitae" (25 V 1995), vol. 2; Encyklika "Centesimus annus" (1 V 1991), vol. 38.

¹⁰ A. Politkovska ya, *Rosja Putina*, Warszawa 2005, p. 245; cf. Życiński, *Personalizm po śmierci podmiotu ludzkiego*, pp. 12-13.

4) to prepare to freely choose the learned truths and the values, and to take on social roles¹¹.

Franciszek Adamski rightly points out that education in the socialist era completely rejected the premises of personalism. He also remarks that the current educational system is defective in this respect. As an example he takes the educational system of real socialism, he evaluates it and presents it as a model against which the contemporary ones can be checked from the point of view of personalism. He gives some comments which can help to see when education is no longer protecting a person:

- 1) if education does not reveal to the child the whole truth about man, it leads to a reduction of human nature to only one dimension, e.g. a material one, and it leads to treating a person as an object, which is the result of the lack of a proper philosophy;
- 2) if it does not allow the full freedom of choice which is inherent to man, then it results from the lack of axiological references;
- 3) if the process and institutions of education are treated only as instruments, and the school is incapacitated and ideologically programmed, teachers are treated as objects and reduced to the role of the channels of information and knowledge and its enforcers who do not help to direct the student towards the pursuit of truth¹².

If the educational and upbringing processes have any of the symptoms outlined above they have nothing to do with personalism, because the implicit or explicit goal of such upbringing and education will be to surrender the child to one line of thinking and ethical order. Such upbringing and education acquire an ideological dimension and become instrumental in the hands of the state political power. The voice of parents, religious organizations and community associations is completely ignored in such case. In socialism and totalitariani sm it is practiced in the name of nationalization of schools, in which case it is the government who decides on the whole education. Education in such context becomes anti-education because, arranged in such a way, it denies the human right for a proper development. The autonomy of the human assumes the freedom to gradual discovery of the truth and goodness, as well as the freedom of choice, which should be made after gathering sufficient knowledge. If education is at the service of ideology and treated

¹¹ Cf. F. A d a m s k i, *Poza kryzysem tożsamości. W kierunku pedagogiki personalistycznej*, Kraków 1993, pp. 9-15.

¹² Ibid.

instrumentally there is no place for choices. Instead, the choice is made for the child, for parents and guardians, and the idea is only to make the child – through "education" – choose what has already been chosen for him/her. The basis of this "education" is the fear that someone might not be able to a make the right choice¹³. Education and pedagogy are transformed into the propaganda of ideology. As it is shown by the history of human societies who have experienced collectivist ideology (Nazi Germany, the USSR, PRC), education converted into ideologisation usually becomes a means of building a utopia, and the state becomes most interested in making claims to this education¹⁴. Such education does not so much create man, but rather produces him and therefore – when faced with a state (its officers, laws and bureaucratic mechanism) – man as an individual does not mean anything and cannot have any rights, including the right to education¹⁵.

The effects of such education are:

- making the content and process of teaching and education superficial;
- killing the cognitive enthusiasm in the child;
- undermining trust in the social structures;
- weakening of the sense of meaning and purpose in life
- becoming dissatisfied with everything except for pleasure and using 16.

Personalism emphasizes the ontological value of man-person. This means that everyone:

- 1. is a person even before they reach their full autonomy (the full personal dignity comes with conception);
- 2. has his/her dignity and worth other people are not the source of this dignity and worth;
- 3. a person is the highest, absolute value, it is a value per se, i.e. by itself;

¹³ Ibid. pp. 10-11.

¹⁴ See: H. K i e r e ś, *Socjalizm czy personalizm? Ku kryterium oceny programów edukacyjnych*, in R. K i e r e ś (Ed.), *Służyć kulturze*, Lublin: Instytut Edukacji Narodowej 1998, pp. 59-73.

¹⁵ An example could be the doctrine of Hegel, which pertains to the state, see L. D ubel & J. M a r a l c z y k, *Historia doktryn polityczno-prawnych*. Lublin: AWH Antoni Dudek 2001, pp. 243-252.

¹⁶ See: A d a m s k i, *Poza kryzysem tożsamości*, p. 11.

4. for this reason, being a person per se, i.e. having a value by itself, s/he has his/her own purpose, which is the improvement of one's existence and s/he can never be the means to an end¹⁷.

A person from this perspective is an integral entity and a whole, not just a part of something. S/he is complete and s/he is the source of one's own duties, responsibilities, rights, values and freedom. A person wants to strive for his/her own perfection, to develop his/her potentials, predispositions, the innate characteristics, and therefore s/he needs help from others, that is upbringing and carers. Only in this way can s/he become a mature personality. The teacher cannot replace a person in his/her activity, but he can stimulate this process by becoming a mediator of an "educating" culture, that is the one that corresponds to the "educational capacity" of a person. In such educational process the culture functions as the means and not the goal of education, which means that it helps to achieve the highest possible degree of personal development¹⁸.

4. THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY

Personalistic education in this form is an education that leads to freedom to choose the good and to do the good; it is an ability to search for the good and strive for it, because it is a means of our personal improvement. The teacher then should adhere to the principle of subsidiarity. On the one hand, he should primarily create such conditions that would release the potentialities of the child, on the other hand he must secure these conditions so that they do not allow choosing pseudo-values. The child's development and perfection must be his own work, the fruit of his own efforts. The decisive factor in this case is the child's attitude towards the values, which he must confront if he wants to make them his so that they can enrich him and make him capable of choosing them and co-creating them. Such personalistic education helps the individual in the first place, but also it is at the service of the whole society. Yet, as F. Adamski points out, that this does not mean, that ultimately education is subordinated to the society. He makes a critical remark that "ethics is at the service of the society, but it does not mean that social groups can control it or subjugate it through relevant legislation". The

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 12.

¹⁸ Ibid. pp. 11-12.

point that is education, ethics and the society essentially should be at the service of man and help him to develop and improve. Education as a system and idea is clearly subordinated to the common good of the society, but it cannot ruin the good of the individual – as it has already been said, education is primarily at the service of the individual. Therefore no social, state or political group can control education, submit it to any desired targets, create its own concept of the "common good", or monopolize the institution and the direction of education¹⁹.

Personalism has a clearly outlined idea of subsidiarity which should be a fundamental principle guiding education and a standard attitude of the teacher towards the child. Although F. Adamski criticizes mainly the educational systems of socialism and communism, yet, his observations may be applied to political systems defined as democratic. An interesting discussion took place in Sweden at the Moderate Party Congress in November 2012. The issue of subsidiarity was discussed not from the perspective of how a liberal country should be restricted so as not stifle individual initiative and consequently favour individualistic attitudes, but from the point of view of what kind of society the state should rule and promote. With the reference to this discussion Hallonsten Gosta writes that the society is made up from the bottom of the initiatives of people related by family ties, friends' and environment ties. A community is not the result of the decisions and activities of the government or state institutions. It is a bottom-up process which begins with specific free persons who go to reach the top, through natural and social circles, including the family in which parents have the right and duty to educate their children according to their beliefs and values. The European Convention on Human Rights expresses it in very clear terms. No-one has the right to bypass these parental rights and claim this right for themselves. This is the role of the principle of subsidiarity to protect such natural ties from the coercion of the state. The state, on the basis of the principle of solidarity, should foster a mutual cohesion of the community and promote the common good. The principle of subsidiarity is a bulwark against the liberal and market trends which often affect man. Moreover, as the author notes, the principle of subsidiarity may lead to reviewing the current Swedish family policy and the principle of the state neutrality in relation to various forms of relationships. It can also cause changes in the tax policy and help communi-

¹⁹ Ibid. pp. 13-14.

ties and organizations to mobilize their own forces to operate at a level of the family, the individual and the state and as a result become more and more independent from the state institutions. The author also rightly notes that both the Swedish tradition and the Catholic social teaching, which is the source of subsidiarity, emphasize the importance of solidarity and the equality of people²⁰.

5. REALISTIC PHILOSOPHY – THE SUPPORT OF PERSONALISTIC EDUCATION

According to realistic philosophy, the human being is seen as a personal being. Without a person there would be no right to upbringing and education. This concept has been developed originally from the idea of St. Thomas Aquinas²¹. Empowering a person with what s/he is entitled to do and to be by the virtue of being a person and the pursuit of the human nature to achieve fulfillment, is linked to the right to education, so that a person may excel in personal life. Upbringing and education are means to the fullness of a personal life. Personal life is permeated and animated by the knowledge, love, creativity and religion, by which a person finally comes – through God's supernatural help – to the fullness of life. Thus, education and the very right to it, enables man to improve his knowledge, to excel in love and creativity, and finally to develop spiritually by the virtue of being a person²².

St. Thomas explains that the natural environment of man (a person), and thus a natural way to implement the human right to education, is a human community and other persons who help that person to live well²³. Without

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²⁰ Cf. H a 11 o n s t e n G., *Ett nytt politiskt slagord*, Retrieved from http://signum.se/ (accessed 18.05.2013).

²¹ St. Thomas' concept of man as a personal being is consistent with the natural and common-sense, direct experience of being a human, which is an experience accessible to everyone. This concept allows to avoid many incongruities that arise even on the basis of individualism and collectivism, the vision of man as a rational animal or spirit trapped in the flesh (see A. M a r y n i a r c z y k, *Realistyczna interpretacja rzeczywistości*, Lublin 1999, pp. 89-100, Zeszyty z metafizyki III).

²² Thus, from the perspective of the truth of the personal status of man we distinguish four dimensions of education, four ways of the human development. On culture as a person's way of life and on the branches of culture see M. A. K r ą p i e c, *Człowiek i kultura*, Warszawa 1996 – the whole paper.

²³ "Alio modo iuvatur homo a multitudine, cuius est pars, ad vitae sufficientiam perfec-

this help a person would not achieve perfection, nor would s/he survive at all. In the environment of other people, man as a person grows and strives for perfection, makes use of the benefits of education. Human perfection is the goal, and the measure of his upbringing and education. For this reason, Thomas emphasizes that all the arts and sciences are subordinate to a single purpose, that is to the good of man, and the good is his happiness²⁴. There can be a lot of mistakes in the understanding, interpreting and implementing of the human right to education. The most grave mistake is trying to detach man from his own goal. It takes place when education is subject to a process of alienation and turns into a kind of technology of shaping human resources which are "moulded" according to some ideological project, usually with the view of using "human resources" to implement a utopian project. Education understood in this way does not educate, nor does it lead to the implementation of the good, but instead it "produces" workers, intellectuals, members of the nation or social class, Europeans, etc. in accordance with the objectives of a particular ideology²⁵.

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In the light of the outlined factors which alienate man from the world and his human nature it seems important to put personal dignity in the forefront as the value and basic principle in the processes of education and upbringing. This approach seems to be a chance for a greater inner integrity of man, integrity with others and the surrounding world. The category of a person and his/her values allows man to bring himself out from the confusion he falls into under the pressure of the reality perceived as the world of objects and consumption. Personal dignity is the force integrating man internally and it helps him open up to the common good; it also revives solidarity between

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tam; scilicet ut homo non solum vivat, sed et bene vivat, habens omnia quae sibi sufficiunt ad vitam: et sic homini auxiliatur multitudo civilis, cuius ipse est pars, non solum quantum ad corporalia, prout scilicet in civitate sunt multa artificia, ad quae una domus sufficere non potest, sed etiam quantum ad moralia; inquantum scilicet per publicam potestatem coercentur insolentes iuvenes metu poenae, quos paterna monitio corrigere non valet" (Sententia Libri Ethicorum, Lib. 1, L. 1, No 4).

²⁴ "Omnes autem scientiae et artes ordinantur in unum, scilicet ad hominis perfectionem, quae est eius beatitudo", St. T h o m a s A q u i n a s (*In libros Metaphisicorum*, prooenium).

²⁵ See M. A. K r ą p i e c, Rozważania o narodzie, Lublin 2004, pp. 49-57.

people, without which human existence is at stake. It is beyond doubt that in the recent years it was John Paul II who had the greatest influence on the development of the idea of personal dignity and the protection of this dignity. According to him the ultimate dimension of personal dignity is in the vocation to holiness. The Pope's recommendations in this area should not be rejected particularly by those involved in the education and upbringing of the future generations. If education and upbringing reject this perspective, that would lead to their ideologisation and decline. It can be clearly seen in the case of the ideology of communism, according to which the person, the value and the good of the person are subjected to the collective and socio-economical mechanisms. By contrast, in personalism the person is a value by the virtue of being a person; what is more, in personalism education and upbringing are perceived as a potential aid in the development of a mature personality. From the beginning of this process what matters most is the personal value and dignity, regardless of the person's results achieved in education and upbringing. Moreover, the person's value does not depend on to what extent she manages to develop her skills and abilities striving for a personal wholeness.26 It seems that education and upbringing based on personalisite foundations is the best way to serve man. It also helps to overcome - in the processes of education and upbringing – the chaos of the modern culture and the popular values.

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²⁶ J a n P a w e ł II, *Centesimus annus*, Roma 1991, No 41; See: J. K r ó l, *Wychowanie a potrzeba ukazania sensu życia*, "Scientia" (Chełmskie Towarzystwo Naukowe), 2013, No 7, pp. 11-33.

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OBECNA SYTUACJA I IDEA PERSONALISTYCZEJ EDUKACJI

Streszczenie

Punktem wyjścia artykułu jest krótka charakterystyka współczesnej sytuacji człowieka w odniesieniu do zjawisk anonimowości i samotności, spowodowanych brakiem świata tradycyjnych wartości i przekonań, bez których nie znajdujemy pewnych racji dla tego, co nazywa-

my przyszłością i sensem ludzkiego życia. Wychodząc od potrzeby poszukiwania systemu globalnych, humanistycznych zasad etycznych, wskazuję, iż fundamentalną zasadą tych poszukiwań powinna być godność osoby i świadomość dobra wspólnego. Są to personalistyczne kategorie, ważne w pluralistycznej rzeczywistości świata, spójne z chrześcijańską wizją człowieka. Wskazuję zarówno przesłanki wychowawcze, jakimi należy się kierować, aby wychowanie było w pełni wychowaniem personalistycznym, jak i zjawiska niezgodne z zasadami personalizmu. Nawiązuję do zasady pomocniczości, która w wychowaniu jest wolnością wyboru dobra i jego realizacji. Odwołuję się też do filozofii racjonalistycznej, która ujmuje byt ludzki w kategoriach bytu osobowego, a główny przejaw ludzkiej natury wiąże z jej dążeniem do pełni, tj. do spotencjalizowania człowieka. Temu celowi także powinno służyć wychowanie.

Słowa kluczowe: edukacja, wychowanie, personalizm, pomocniczość, godność osoby.