

Małgorzata Łobacz

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Scientific Bulletin of Chełm - Section of Pedagogy nr 1, 23-32

2017

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

TEACHING – AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN DISCOVERING THE VALUE OF HUMANITY OF A MAN

MAŁGORZATA ŁOBACZ

*The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin,
ul. Droga Męczenników Majdanka 70, 20-325 Lublin, Poland;
e-mail: malgorzata.lobacz@kul.lublin.pl*

ABSTRACT: *Teaching is directed to integral human development. The moral sphere has a special place in the implementation of the educational process. Bringing up to values highlights above all the characteristics that constitute the person and thus: the body, freedom, truth and summarising dignity. Showing the value of the personal dignity of every human being, and in fact leading the student to place where they discover it, at the same time, we show that the man is a dynamic being. On one hand, metaphysically they "are" a person from the moment of their existence, and on the other hand – axiologically – they become a person in the way of deeds. Educational activity is an important factor (it is often the beginning) to discover this important mystery of a man – who the person is, what they are required to in moral terms. To help discover a person in a person – it is the responsibility and the task educators are qualified for.*

KEY WORDS: *educator, value of a man, personalism*

Pedagogical field is constituted by a unique personal relationship built between an educator and a student. The educator – a grown-up person, having appropriate qualifications to be able to “lead” others. The student is the one, using John Frederick Herbart’s words – who is “processed” in the process of education. This specific meeting – of the educator and the student – above all, should lead to the discovery of the value of every human being and strengthening this conviction.

The purpose of this article is to show the rank of pedagogical activities to understand the essence of a man and their personal values. Research problems undertaken are the following: Why the most well - established philosophically and compelling human concept is the theory of personalistic? How can the educator help the student discover the value of human dignity? What is personal growth of the student about?

The theory of personalistic – the foundation of personal relationship

The etymology of “personalism” refers to the Latin term *persona*, which means a person, and this is a translation of the Greek term *prōsopon*. It meant the theatre mask put on by actors in order to hide their identity. The metaphor of the mask captures well the deep sense of the person, whose entity is not constituted by anything external, it is not defined by elements which can be created or culturally defined (Chudy, 1998, p. 63). The concept of a person is therefore fundamental for personalism.

The word “personalism” was first used in the 19th century by German philosopher Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher. However, in the 20th century, both terms – a person and personalism – have gained particular importance, especially in the Christian culture. Emmanuel Mounier and Jacques Maritain had their contribution to this. In Poland, the issue of personalistic was extremely close to Karol Wojtyła, what he described in his *A person and a deed*. The value of the human being as a person together with their inalienable dignity can be found in the whole teaching of Karol Wojtyła – Pope John Paul II (ibidem, p. 65).

Personalism, which represents the mainstream of contemporary thinking, from the perspectives of different countries have taken different faces. The existence of many varieties and currents of personalism does not stand

in the way to indicate the common feature of all varieties – it is “the interest in education and pedagogical character” (Nowak, 2009, p. 226).

Contemporarily, personalism is defined as a doctrine emphasising the value of the human being as a person and which demands its full affirmation at the same time. In *The dictionary of philosophical terms and concepts* it is emphasized that “in the centre of the world of values, the personalistic orientation puts the welfare and development of the human person as a superior principle, all the particularistic goods should be allocated to, carried out by a man as a result of their free activity” (Podsiad, 2001, p. 619). This concept is also used to all initiatives focused on promoting the development of the person. Among the basic categories of personalistic pedagogy the following terms are distinguished: personalism, the person and the community.

According to personalism, openness to others is an ontic property of a person. The human being needs community for self-realisation and their human capabilities. This participation in interpersonal relations, which a commitment for the good of the individual and the common good of the people, is creating communities (Tabulski, 2004, p. 69 - 70). Personalistic participation of people and personalistic relationships between people are the basis for members of the community to choose such good, that will be good for everyone.

A special attention should be put here to an educator – pupil relation, in which the primary issue is the mutual opening of participants to each other. At the heart of educational activities of school is what happens in the interaction between a teacher and a student. Everything should help in proper formation of this relationship – law, school system, organisation, supervision, programs, but also unofficial rules which are formed in the educational situation. This relationship cannot be reduced only to the learning process. A teacher and a student are people who should be in a constant dialogue, which encompasses a much wider range of issues than knowledge transfer.

Human relationships in school as a community of people are shaped by the standards of the personalistic rules, in which the pedagogical significance is the value of becoming a person through mutual relationships. “The philosophy of this situation is summed up in indispensable in its wisdom Latin proverb *docendo discimus* (i.e. while teaching others, we learn). (...) First, if we say *docendo discimus* we mean the doubleness of both parties’ roles in the pedagogical

relationship. If I am a teacher of my student, to some extent, I am a student of my student. And, on the other hand, a student that I teach is not only my student, but also to some extent is a teacher for me”¹.

Personalism also indicates the right direction in building human relationships. This current is opposed to the objective treatment of human beings. Subjectivity is the opposite of objectification. Object is – as the name suggests – something that is in front of us. The thing which can be used, means to achieve the objective. It is otherwise with a subject – it is a base, a foundation, an end in itself, here, a person as the conscious offender of acts, endowed with reason and free will, is emphasized. It assumes subjective relation between people, including a student to a teacher, and the teacher to the student. In pedagogy, subjectivity should be “the autotelic value, expressed (...) in student’s own activity (...) it means that a man is someone, who has specified identity with more or less distinct individuality that distinguishes them from others (...)” (Klim-Klimaszewska, 2009, p. 236). This indicates that subjectivity of the student in the teaching and educational process is implemented in situations where:

1. operations carried out are consistent with their needs and interests;
2. they participate in the issue of the selection of work forms in the classroom;
3. they make evaluation;
4. they experience interactions consistent with others;
5. they know the student code (ibidem, p. 238).

The starting point in pedagogy should be a reflection of the educator/teacher on whom they educate and what they aim to in the process of education. A pupil is fully a person, with all characteristics constituting any other human. In turn, education from the perspective of personalistic philosophy aims to development of the person. A factor that can contribute to the achievement of that objective is undoubtedly proper communication between the participants of the meeting (educator and student). The educator enters into a dialogue with his student when they respect their

¹ About a difficult thing of how to teach art. Małgorzata Pęcińska talks with Marek Dyżewski, broadcast in II Programme of Polish Radio on 14 October 2004.

freedom, tries to talk to them and get in their life. In addition, the educational relationship is seen as not unidirectional (teacher to student), but as a reciprocal relationship. The role of pedagogical dialogue (and the main task of the educator) is the discovery of the ethos, the basic canon of values by which the student will be able to discover themselves again and again through all their lives (Chudy, 2006, p. 67).

Educator and “visualisation” of human dignity

A person is someone special. The classic definition of the person established in the sixth century AD by Boethius, defines it as “*naturae rationalis individua substantia*”, which means the unit substance of a spiritual nature. This formula is a metaphysical term of a person, it highlights the sensible element, individuality and substantial being (Chudy, 2004a, p. 76 - 77). This definition does not, however, exhaust the full characteristics of the person. It requires the completion of axiological - ontological aspect, which was made by Jacques Maritain, Emmanuel Mounier and Karol Wojtyła inter alia. In this interpretation, the axiological features of the people are highlighted such as: freedom, truth, corporeality and dignity almost built on them (ibidem, p. 77).

Freedom is a special value. It is a decision of the will, and therefore, the answer of a person to emerging challenges and cries. We can choose the good, building our humanity at the same time, or advocate for evil, burdening ourselves with guilt (Galarowicz, 1992, p. 543). The second axiological dimension of being a person is reasonableness, that is a reference to truth that makes a person the only one of a kind. The third axiological feature of the human person is carnality. It is of a particular value, as it allows the expression of mental states and entering into a dialogue with another person (ibidem, p. 536).

The last, and the summarising feature of the existence is dignity. It is “non-transferable and indestructible. It is a core value, which a man does not have themselves, but receives it from the moment of their occurrence. They can only grow it, developing spiritually” (Podsiad, 2001, p. 318). It is especially disclosed in emergency situations. It reminds of its existence when someone is trying to undermine it and cross it out. It reveals itself through experiencing guilt, sense of shame caused by harm, own misdeeds. Experiencing the dignity integrates into a deep knowledge about who the person is, what their nature is, what their

purpose is (Szostek, 1991, p. 33). “No one has more or less of it, this value is the foundation of the equality of all people against each other and the principle of universal human rights” (Chudy, 2004c, p. 74).

The value of the personal dignity is, in modern times, often confused with other human characteristics determined as dignity. It's especially about the individual dignity and the personal dignity. The first one – a personal dignity – focuses on job function, position or profession, for example the dignity of teachers, the dignity of judges or chairmen. Therefore, it is “the value resulting from the recognition of, or given by the society, as well as from the self-recognition or the well-being (...) on the basis of these external relations” (Chudy, 2004a, p. 78). In turn, the personal dignity is designated by the psychological aspect, it emphasises the attitude of a man to themselves, as well as self-esteem (ibidem, p. 79). Both personal and individual dignities are variable, they were not given once and for all, as it is in the case of personal dignity.

Educational process should be reduced to “revealing” personal dignity, helping the pupil in the diagnosis. “This is not a purely theoretical knowledge, but such recognition of personal value, which implies a kind of inspiration for action. Getting to know the dignity tells us to do something, and it does not allow to remain indifferent. The desire for activity, «awakened» by realizing personal dignity, is characterized by the desire to give (...) in response to the dignity, both own as well as of others, is love in its most fundamental sense – as a will to give” (ibidem, p. 82).

The top criterion for the dignity of the person is love which does not allow for the instrumental treatment of the man. The world of people throughout its range is for people – the subject of moral action – “the field of responsible love” (Szostek, 1996, p. 22). Therefore, it follows, that the dignity of the person “is a value in itself and by itself, and it requires to be treated as such, and never as an object that you can use, a tool or a thing” (Jan Paweł II, 1999). The thesis of the unchangeable nature of the person constitutes an essential argument in numerous discussions about the value of human life.

The structure of the person and their dignity are their inalienable and immutable elements from the conception to natural death. Ethical sanction is based on this, it prohibits any “attacks” on these values (Chudy, 2004b, p. 30).

Therefore, affirmation of human dignity means as much as the putting this person over all that comes from it. All human works and creations are only means

that a man uses to achieve a particular purpose (Wojtyła, 1994, p. 418). A man as a man should, therefore, always be considered as a worthy goal – a decent good.

Only a true master can raise a human to become a human, and help them discover their personal value. “Meeting a true teacher can be the meeting with the master, if it is done on the basis of love. It has the power to change the life of a person-student. It is meeting someone halfway, noticing their uniqueness and freedom” (Chudy, 2009, p. 202-203). A master, a teacher, an educator when affirming the value of students, irrespective of their origin, abilities, individual predisposition, capacities or their lack – brings them to the border, where they will discover the value of a man, their personal dignity. It is impossible to show dignity, to present it with some teaching aids. The only way to resolve it is own example, respect of others, all men, compliance of words and deeds. In the educational work of the educator a kind of metaphysics of help is revealed, which is a type of service to another person – weak, growing up, more experiencing their existential fragility of a man. An educator should therefore assist their student most of all in these dimensions, which decide about the fulfilment of a man as a person, and particularly, in strengthening the values of personal dignity (Chudy, 2006, p. 60).

Without education, on the one hand, without self-educational trouble of a person, on the other hand, they would be “either a static entity (...) or would be a subject to the outer will” (ibidem, p. 67). Overcoming existential fragility is a building virtue whose foundation is personal dignity.

Education as personal growth of a student

The man is a person from the moment of conception – in the metaphysical plane. And at the same time, they can and should “grow” as a person. The word “becoming” a person has a moral character. John Paul II indicates the activity of teaching as important in the personal growth of the human being: “In education, in fact, it is about that the man became more and

more a man, in order to «be» more, and not just «have» more - so through all that they «have», «possess», they could be more and more a man” (Jan Paweł II, 1980, p. 4), become richer in their humanity.

Such understanding of education should be distinguished from contemporary form, a kind of human training, where targeting of a young man

on the utilitarian, hedonistic or material values are stressed. In the current era, the ease and convenience, success, career, impressive profit, the attractiveness and youth are increasingly preferred. Characteristic of this culture mottos are: “use”, “seize the opportunity”, “catch”, “promote” and others. Thus, a kind of role reversal which is experienced in a modern culture, not so much using beauty to feed collective consciousness and imagination, what feeding itself with the waste of social life and encouraging to adopt attitudes aimed to consumerism should be worrying.

In German such education is determined by the term *Bildung*. “This is rather about the domain of practical benefit, life pragmatism, benefits, often pleasures, pursued by man and in favour of the society. This concept of teaching – the most commonly used in the sense of education – is usually related to values such as communication skills, honesty, kindness, respect for others and civility, but also material safety, good education, a lucrative profession and social relations” (Chudy, 2004a, p. 81 - 82).

In fact, the real education, it is above all the aid given to a man when self-realising as a person, in the realization of their humanity. The man is not a perfect being, “closed”, “completed” in the shape of their humanity. This fortuitousness, close to every person indicates that every man needs help. Therefore, the fundamental mission of culture is education, or help in defeating this existential weakness, and thus – in getting to the fullness of humanity.

In education young people should be shown the way to achieve the personal maturity – it should start from an early age. If, during childhood, a man understands who the human being is, what value they have, then they will affirm themselves and others, they will not be indifferent to the needy in difficult situations. The role of the family, school and the church are very important. Axiological emptiness of transition additionally justifies the need to promote such values and attitudes as: the personal dignity and respect for the dignity of others, integrity, subjectivity (Melosik, 2001, p. 19 - 21).

Man not only grows and develops physically. Above all, they grow up morally. This maturing process is about seeing this what is spiritual, about noticing people as human beings, seeing their personal dignity. That maturation does not, however, happen in the spontaneous acts of physical and mental growth. Here, cognitive acts facing acknowledgement of the subjective aspect of the person

and their particular spiritual values are needed. Knowledge about the good, which is what is spiritual in the world – and therefore the spiritual sphere of a man, a person, their value and dignity – builds awareness of the duty to love each person, awareness of moral obligation which, when fulfilled, helps approach the perfection of the human being. Here, a significant role is played by the “leader” – teacher and educator, who, by generating personal development in others, increases as an educator, a scholar, and finally – as a person. It is only when they teach – and thanks to this fact – that they become better teachers. They grow up to put the welfare of the student over their own good.

In Klaus Schaller’s formula it is said that education is “methods and processes that allow the student find themselves in their humanity” (Nowak, 2000, p. 289; Schaller, 1971, p. 248). Therefore, it is extremely important activity, and hence, a great responsibility rests on the educators. They, in fact, are responsible not only for the transmission of rules, principles and values. They may not also be limited to assistance in adapting to social life. This, the most human activity, in its essence, leads to understanding of the humanity of a man.

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