

Conception of Integral Person as Basis of Education in the 21st Century

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Abstract

As far as modern education is concerned I agree with the statement, expressed long time ago by Hannah Arendt, that its main problem is inability to reject authority and tradition although "it has to develop in the world which structures are not defined by authority anymore and which is not integrated by tradition". The problem becomes more and more complicated, because local cultures and global culture, thanks to expansion of technology and everyday use of multimedia, undergo constant dispersion and multiplication. It deepens the process of disintegration of man. In other words, contemporary cultural experience, which has educational character, do not support development of integrated man, it means man who simultaneously acquires abilities allowing to exist in the world and value the world. That is why in my speech I express the opinion that one of the essential duties of constant education (lasting for the whole life) based on media and cognitive knowledge (useful and efficient) and on network experiences is an attempt to work out new conceptions of an integral person. I assume that the biggest challenge of contemporary education is man, who possesses numerous technical abilities but do not know how to value technology, its consequences and their own attitude towards technology. That is why I consider the role of axiology in education which shapes students' competences to develop plurality in thinking and acting and to open to dynamics of reality.

Keywords: *Integral person – cultural disintegration – ecological education – self-government*

The whole human experience has educational character and that is why the presuppositions of pedagogy change together with transformations which take place in the nearest and further reality surrounding man. In spite of the changeability, one of the most important aims of didactic and educational processes is, almost always and everywhere, an attempt to shape an integral human being - someone who is quite coherent in thinking, words, deeds and emotions. An integral human being is also distinct and definite for themselves and for other people in mental, emotional and operational aspect. Of course nobody wants the man, as a "product" of pedagogy, to be fully predictable and balanced in their thinking and behaviour, deprived of their distinctness and uniqueness. Integrity should be understood as a sense of entity, felt inseparableness, as an ability to integrate wisdom and emotionality and to complete themselves according to possibilities, needs and necessities. The weakest point in achieving this educational aim in practice is most often its association with particular political ideologies and religious doctrines. Because all institutionalized beliefs are immune to biological and cultural variety, to reaching uncertain future liberating aspirations of individuals and social groups, to everything which is not obvious or not defined. In other words, integral man is a model construction and aspiration of pedagogy to create one is an attempt to concretize utopian idea, as a rule, it cannot and should not fully come true.

Formulating such definition of human being has a big educational value in comparison to aspect definitions of man and their personality presented by various branches of knowledge. They always propose partial approaches to man. That is why such universalizing concept may be worth using especially when we think about current dilemmas and problems of pedagogy commonly experienced at the beginning of the 21st century in the whole world, regardless of the level of civilization development, political and economic systems and quality of living. I recall the concept in my discourse not in the aspect of Christian personalism or other religious or political philosophy, but in the context of general condition of contemporary man. I treat the conception of an integral human being as educational ideal which was practically destroyed in fast-changing reality. It deprives many pedagogic and educational processes of sense, it efficiently and permanently disperses systems of values, causes unknown information disturbances, cultural shocks and problems with conscious accommodation of people to new everyday reality. I practically only postulate necessity of revitalization of the idea of an integral person as educational answer to confusion of contemporary man in techno-reality. I state "that the world of technological innovations mingles with everyday reality and that full participation in the reality requires this technological instrumentation. [...] Various apparently dispersed technologies function in the frames [...] of the system, they influence and they are dependent of social reality. [...] they appear to be socio-technological systems themselves"

(Żabicki 2007, pp. 212-213). This tendency in development of our civilization became stronger at the end of the previous century when the division of technology into hard, which takes professional service, and soft, which as gadgets especially multimedial is available for everyone, became more distinct.

Basing on worldwide scientific studies concerning techno-reality it is difficult to answer the question whether development of technology so far has made them closer to man. Whether it results in the situation when technology will be adjusted to man or man will have to adjust to technology? Without doubts thanks to " technological revolution" the quality of living of many people constantly improves but simultaneously it contributes to numerous individual and social crises which were announced long time ago in numerous publications by such thinkers as Jean Baudrillard (culture of domination of technical code, which is based on rules of neutralization and indifference), Neil Postman (culture of technopoly changing people into slaves of technique), Paul Virilio (culture based on philosophy of speed, which makes life of man similar to "life of a machine") or Zygmunt Bauman (decomposing everything "liquid modernity") (Baudrillard, 1988; Postman, 1992; Virilio, 1997; Bauman, 2000). Nowadays even the biggest techno enthusiasts admit that techno-reality leads to radical disintegration of former social orders. The process became much faster when culture became more and more network-like and life of man became more and more "wired" (Jonscher, 1999). According to Derrick de Kerckhove, whose opinion is commonly shared, "Network is an extremely decentralizing force" (1998, p. 81) it disperses society in which man lives so man disintegrates themselves as well, their personality and their identity. It disintegrates more strongly than all human inventions, evoking earlier breakthroughs and technical revolutions, did.

I share well proven Hannah Arendt's statement, expressed in the publication published several years after the end of the Second World War, that education is in deep crisis because of crises of authorities and tradition - two basic sources of values which education was always based on (1994, p. 231). It is easy to prove that in the last half of century authorities less and less often guarded structural thinking and moral order, and tradition in a visible way lost its strength of uniting human cognition and activity. Technical revolution intensified the processes and cultural disintegration almost became the direction of social development. As aforementioned Zygmunt Bauman proves, contemporary order-making transforms into fabricating indefiniteness (Baudrillard adds indecisiveness) languages less and less often conduct their segregational functions, and we are surrounded by multi meaningfulness which we have to accept and which we have to learn to live with because it is indispensable (1991). Developing Arendt's thought, in reality of the 21st century we can state that nowadays one of the biggest challenge for education is disintegrating character of our cultural experience (or even more general: life experience). It is based on pro-technological attitude to ourselves and to the world, on domination of plurality and multiplication, acceptance of forms of multiplied changeability in everyday life (so called debauched proteism) and building the sense of reality on "open sources" (on constant opening to "liquid modernity").

Contemporary world do not support integrity of human being, it disturbs integrating processes because of increasing separation (dividing) of technical progress and moral progress. Simplifying the whole issue of this gap, it is enough to compare two basic competences of multimedia and the most important technologies users: technical abilities and valuating abilities. Taking into account already mentioned division into hard and soft technology it is easy to notice that contemporary man, even when they are not very talented or educated, uses technical inventions quite well, although they often do not even understand how they work they achieve great efficiency and different targets in their activities. Almost every high technology user has problems with its valuating, with valuating of their use of machines and valuating the consequences of their own interactivity, their relation to multimedia. Right now we can witness Bauman's prophecy come true, whom I recall for the last time in my dissertation. It appeared twenty years ago and concerns "thin membrane of order" which is guaranteed to man by postmodern morality, "morality without a reason or a cause (1994, p. 84).

The aforementioned gap between technical progress (today we should rather say: technological) and morality is neglected by some researchers especially by techno-enthusiasts. Sometimes it is even treated as a prize which has to be paid for expanding our own freedom and crossing former borders of human cognition. They think that real experience of everyday reality through indulging in computer games, in society of blogs, in the Internet fan groups and other virtual places, reevaluates former knowledge and deepens experience of technology users. According to Henry Jenkins participating in networks societies is a specific test for democracy, civil attitude and assemblies, because it allows for "games" about politics and elections, it teaches co-operation and mechanisms ruling virtual communities, it allows to become creative and innovative man (2006, pp.221- 227). Jenkins and other researchers sharing his opinion talk about contemporary culture as "culture of participation" in which people take multimedia in their own hands creating their own network communities, conducting dialogs with mass media and learning to process reality in new ways. They are of course right but contemporary cultural practice do not allow to perceive fully optimistically the latest technical inventions. Technology allows to commit offences (for example: giving false data about themselves or about others or performing false sales) and crimes (for example stalking or seducing minors) or even terrorist attacks, Using technology often leads

to "narcolepsy" and other personality disturbances and to disturbing interpersonal relations between people especially children (for example sexting : sex + texting - sending pictures and films showing their own naked bodies and intimate contacts). Examples illustrating moral regress connected with easy access to new technologies can be multiplied, that is why not only in colloquial discourses the phrase "man in network" does not only refer to modernity and civilization progress but it is also cultural metaphor meaning existential trap in which people get. In my opinion, which I expressed in one of the texts published recently: "in information society the most popular is the vision of a person-individualist who wants constantly broaden its territory of freedom and achieve all their needs in an unlimited way, simultaneously forcing other people to express acceptance for themselves and for everything they do. Less popular is »axiological« conception of the person saying that there is always a necessity to create a definite order of values through crossing themselves in direction of so called basic values, higher and universal, usually in western tradition associated with »humanity«" (Miczka, 2013, p. 152).

The phenomenon of disintegration of human being is the focus of interest for contemporary philosophers and majority of them propose to start the process of shaping of an integral person with close connection between human identity and moral problems. For example Charles Taylor in his fundamental work devoted to sources and character of human subjectivity says that in the era of computer it is necessary to treat identity as moral horizon of a person, which allows them to identify what is important for them and for the group (1989). Other philosophers point out important moments which are needed to build an integral person such as: differentiation between discovering values and creating values, existence of territories of storing values and community of beliefs, shaping conscience and involving the media in the process of shaping receivers who are able to formulate moral judgments and to use freedom in mature way. In philosophical perspective integral man, as a subject of pedagogy of the 21st century, appears to be "someone who can not only adopt achievements of scientific-technological civilization but they also understand them in a wider context - what we can call welfare of man. They can do it because their knowledge about moral good and evil goes beyond the area of scientific cognition, instrumental cognition in relation to human environment. Knowledge about good and evil reveals in conscience. It has been shaped in a specific dialog of generations in which passed rules of behaviour were confirmed in actions" (Kłos, 2005, p.355).

As I have already mentioned, contemporary pedagogy is often not guided by authorities' opinions and it can be assumed, with much probability, that philosophy as academic branch will not be the basic source of inspiration for them to carry out reforms of upbringing and education. The most obvious reference to contemporary education is widely understood ecological attitude including everything that relates to natural environment, its connections and interactions with man and society. Because awareness of existential threat to human race increases. In this context questions about man are asked: about its ontic status, about the essence of being human, and about their future and their further development. Valuating treatment of nature becomes necessity as well as valuating treatment of technique and technology and their influence upon nature (so called axiology of natural environment). Another necessity is taking up the issues of man's attitude towards nature in categories of moral good and evil, of duty and responsibility, and also changing traditional paradigm of thinking and economic activity. In other words, today every education should be first ecologically oriented and its program must be based on technological culture researchers' conclusions. We do not have to agree with, for example, Manuel Castells' definite statement concerning changing pattern of relations between two poles of human existence: nature and culture. But making pedagogical choices one cannot ignore it completely, because it is representative for contemporary science and for the most important ecological orientations. In *The Network Society* the researcher enumerates three eras in history of both poles: the first one, in which nature dominated culture, the second one, in which domination of culture over nature started, the third one in which autonomy of culture in relation to nature (material basis of our existence) confirms (Castells, 2002, pp. 38-49). In his opinion education cannot stay indifferent to knowledge and social organization because they allow to live in cultures thanks to subduing nature to the point in which nature is artificially restored (protected, transformed, reconstructed) as an ideal cultural form. Even if Castells' conviction concerning the birth of new human existence seems to be exaggerated still the phenomenon of critical tension between nature and culture is very important for the processes of shaping integral human being.

Ecological attitude of pedagogy means attempts to understand active cohabitation of man in nature in global and local scale and respecting more and more nature-centred hierarchy of values. It must be based not on creating theoretical visions of the world but on practical methodology connecting the need of protecting and shaping of the environment with the protection of man (cf. inter alios Allen, Hoekstra, 1992, passim). What is more, ecological education must take inspiration from real scientific knowledge and take into account technical competences of people to differentiate distinctly from ecologism, from social-political movements, which are ideologically heterogenic, which popularize slogans about returning of contemporary man to wild nature and fighting with different forms of development

of technical civilization. Of course ecological awareness will efficiently serve to build an integral person when it will be shaped in frames of constant education lasting the whole life.

In the last twenty five years representatives of different sciences more and more often took up the subject which has been presented briefly in my reflections. They notice dangers which threaten man and nature and which come from technological culture. I will present only one example confirming the necessity of immediate shaping of moral aspect of the whole public sphere, which takes into account the conception of integral human being.

Michael Novak, an academic analyst of contemporary politics, postulates to create a branch of knowledge which he calls moral ecology (2004, p. 31). It would be a sum of ideas, narrations, associations, systems of symbols, dominating opinions and practices. In pluralist societies it would be a particular source of moral influences. Novak also thinks that such subordination of public sphere supports choosing by people morally correct actions and is positive for development of civil society. For both an individual, who should be an integral person, who has technical knowledge and uses moral judgment, and for community so called self-government is very important. It manifests in mature use of individual freedom which simply means its reasonable limits. People lack the maturity especially in so called epoch of info-freedom offered by the Internet and virtual realities in which a social movement called cyber-libertarianism develops. It announces possibility of almost total liberation of man out of supervision of the state, of the laws and limits of the physical world.

In other words, moral ecology would not only be an attempt of individual and group subordination of pluralist experiences but it is also an attempt to activate passive and often thoughtless users of soft technology and an attempt to create collectively the law which is morally right. It is of course an utopian conception but it is worth trying to work out positive attitude to moral ecology and first of all to self-government in frames of common, general pedagogy, binding law and various public discourses. As Michael Novak notices it is easier to complete the individual task when we are thought about it by the whole surrounding public ethos, encouraging to take it up and providing numerous examples of its completion or examples of self-destruction because of its incompleteness. That is why we can state that social ecology of freedom will encourage personal freedom or discourage its development (Novak, 1999, p.17).

To sum up my dissertation I would like to pay attention to the fact that processes of re-integrating of a person which could be supported by contemporary pedagogy, in "culture of participation" will be to some extent forms of recomposing through fragmentation. Majority of changes taking place in the contemporary world concern decomposing of former entities and again recomposing, which excludes from new entities some old elements and in return attaches new components. Jerzy Mikołowski-Pomorski developing the thought of Robert Jay Lifton about new forms of particular interpersonal ties (Lifton, 1999, passim), characterizes the phenomenon like that: "Processes of fragmentation burst modern society reaching the end of history. We experience it painfully because the old world that seemed to be safe decomposes into parts and their individual survival seems unlikely. Those fragments create difficult to understand »weird« entities [...] Still human sense of order connects the parts into entities and gives them new character. It is not seen everywhere and not everybody experiences it. But observed phenomena allow to assume that the world which composed itself some time ago decomposes to compose again but in different configuration" (Mikołowski-Pomorski, 2006, p.31). A person in the network faces many new experiences which evoke their disintegration but they can always stay or become again an integral person by an effort to develop their technical abilities and their abilities to value. But if the aim is to be approached, education and upbringing have to be changed.

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