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ETHICAL IDENTITY AS A TASK OF EDUCATION. IN SEARCH OF MODERN TOOLS OF PEDAGOGICAL DISCOURSE

Abstract: The article presents a philosophical analysis of the ethical identity of man as an exercise for today's education. It consists of four parts. The first part focuses on the definition of ethical identity and its comparison with cultural identities. The other parts deal with the problem of cultural identities as a bearer of values, relevant to the consumer culture, such as change, visibility and predictability. Discussing these three values in the context of human moral actions allows a formulation of a conclusion about the need to focus education on ethical identity and to support these activities with humanistic education (in the field of philosophy, in particular). Furthermore, the article justifies that the very term "ethical identity", if interpreted on the basis of classical metaphysics, can be an effective tool for pedagogical discourse. Therefore, attention is paid to the following key philosophical concepts: substantial unity of human being, man as the subject of human acts and freedom as a moral force.

Keywords: ethical identity; metaphysics; personalism; freedom; consumer culture.

Let me begin with a brief explanation of the term contained in the title, "ethical identity". For the purpose of this article we are going to use the term "ethical identity" as the most profound identity of man as a person because of its link to the thinking in values. Due to the educational and didactic challenges that are emerging today, I see in this term a modern pedagogical tool used to underline the human identity of a person in general. I will try to elucidate this term further in the article. Therefore, the relationship between the re-evaluations, observable today, and the deepening dehumanization of culture will be the subject of my analysis. The sign of changes, taking place not only on the ideological level but most of all in human consciousness, is the depreciation of ethical identity as crucial for people living their own humanity, and thus also for the quality of social relations.

Ethical identity and cultural identities

As man lives in an environment of values (i.e. in culture), to some extent he shapes himself according to the patterns that culture, in particular, his contemporary culture suggests to him. In people's development, therefore, there is an inevitable tension between what flows to them from the outside and what, in some sense, constitutes their "inner self". In other words, everyone experiences the need to integrate attractive "images" of humanity, certain identities proposed by culture, with a deep desire to keep their own identity.

In contrast to "incoming" cultural identities, ethical identity has a strong internal conditioning and is expressed in a person's natural, moral experience of reality that has specific dynamics (Łobocki 2002; Buksik 1997). This identity can be considered unique to every human being as a subject of moral actions with a strong setting in normative (ethical) thinking, which per Paul Ricoeur, is connected with the question, "How to live well?" (Ricoeur, 1992). It is not about the comfort in life, but about reaching a perspective, in which other persons and the quality of social life are important. Referring to the philosophy of Gabriel Marcel, it can be expressed as the perspective of the dominance of "being" over "having" (moving from a thinking oriented on having to a thinking oriented on existence) (Marcel, 1949). Again, in classical ethics, this perspective is expressed in directing the spiritual development of man toward *optimum potentiae*, i.e., the state of virtue (Krapiec, 1991; Jaroszyński & Anderson, 2003; MacIntyre, 2007). The point is that man should behave as a human being, that is, according to the norm of his human, intelligent nature.

It can be assumed, then, that ethical identity derives from the distinction between goodness and moral evil in particular living conditions. It is a sign of what Tadeusz Ślipko (2003) referred to as the essential identity (or species identity) of man because it holds moral structures. Therefore, the very term "ethical identity" seems to be a convenient pedagogical tool for expressing the core of the existential identity of man as a human being in the educational context. In the anthropological records, ethical identity manifests itself in action, in acts of decision making and in the readiness to accept responsibility for one's actions; it is subjected to constant self-assertion in the human effort of recognizing the good one is to do. While at a low level of moral development it will be underdeveloped and even marginalized, in a mature person it will become an identity embracing "incoming identities".

The presence of "incoming identities" in the context of shaping a human being is, as mentioned before, something natural due to the social nature of human existence and life in an environment of values, that is, in culture. The point is, however, to make in a person transition from the automatic acceptance of cultural patterns to the development of self-awareness as well as to independent emotional and cognitive actions. Kazimierz Dąbrowski (1989), a psychologist and psychiatrist, describes this process as a positive disintegration, opening the way to self-education.

When applying Kohlberg's theory of structuring individual stages in the moral development, we can presume that it is important to achieve the awareness of the existence of universal moral principles and to recognize them in our own actions, while maintaining an openness to other people's views (the so-called sixth stage of development and its third level, i.e.: pre-conventional) (Łobocki, 2002).

It should be noted, however, that the problem of internal human development today requires that the teacher take also philosophical considerations into account, because of the issue of ethical human identity I will try to justify this in more detail later in my analysis. However, it has to be emphasized that only philosophy, and only in metaphysical optics, makes it possible to explain that internalization, interesting to a teacher, should be developing towards the integration of both "incoming values" and the values proper to the human being in his/her existence. It should also be added that until this integration is effectuated, the ability of self-aligning remains dormant. The moment when a human being discovers the sense of his own dignity, and thus creates an internal measure to assess the cultural matrix of values imposed on him by the social environment, gives rise to an internal development and creative entry into the world of values. Self-awareness of the decision-making self in a situation of confronting the reality of culture opens up a significant personal experience, defined in philosophy as the experience of one's own transcendence against the world of nature and society (Krapiec, 1998). This experience will begin to bear fruit in spiritual development by gradually embracing identities coming from the outside (from culture) within the ethical identity. As Karol Wojtyła (1986, p. 176) writes, the point is "that the value of a person takes the lead in the whole experience".

What axiological matrix is proposed to contemporary man? We live in a culture of abundance. I will not be mistaken if I say that its two flagship values are production and consumption. How do they stigmatize our identity? By demanding that we are useful. This utility has obviously different versions. I want to zero in on three of them: the requirement of change, the requirement of visibility and the requirement of predictability. Their domination introduces dangerous reappraisals in the field of human moral behaviour. Therefore, counteracting them in the field of education is an important challenge for contemporary pedagogy. I believe that action to activate ethical identity can be one of the ways to realize modern paideia. For this reason, the category of ethical identity in the pedagogical discourse acquires additional explanatory qualities. I hope that this will be made clearer by the analysis of the three cultural imperatives.

Ethical identity and the imperative of change

The requirement of change promotes the readiness to accept new roles, to experiment with them, and to try all propositions. The temptation of thousands of opportunities opening before us at the beginning of creative work on oneself gives

the promise of satiety as a goal. Still, without embedding these possibilities into the personal experience of transcendence of the self, they will become signs of existential compulsion. The search will turn into an endless pursuit, and the goal will turn into a torment of unfulfillment. Such a scenario is not a mere fantasy. Let us note that modern technologies open up many opportunities for people to pursue their passions, or allow them to effectively protect their lives and health. Nevertheless, they can lead to exorbitant desires. Psychologists draw our attention to a new phenomenon known as discomfort associated with the feeling that something escapes me, that my choice was not accurate, or that I missed something (FOMO or fear of missing out syndrome) (Conlin et al. 2016). It is likely that if this condition lasts longer (if it is more than a temporary dejection), it may lead to a serious affliction, the inability to feel happy.

At this point, it is worth referring to metaphysical anthropology, ignored in pedagogical considerations for years. In the description of the human fact it points out that in the existential experience of the self as the “I” that constitutes the centre from which various “my” acts emanate, we deal not only with the immanence of “me” in what is “mine”, but also with the impossibility of reducing “me” to what is “mine” (treated either individually or as a sum of what I have) (Krapiec, 1998). Therefore, searching for the answer to the question, “who am I?”, requires that man reflect about himself and the very fact that he is. In inner experience, the self manifests itself not only as “possessing”, but primarily as “existing”.

Of course, it is only in this reflection focused on existence and highlighted by the metaphysical question about being that the teleological perspective of human existence with a genuine domain of freedom are clearly revealed. It allows our short-term choices to retain the feature of contingency. The source of freedom in the choice of the goods lies in the discovery of deficiency (non-absoluteness) in the objects that we may desire as good (the metaphysical term good “with lack” is significant here) (Krapiec, 2008). Possible pedagogical activities geared toward introducing this perspective into the thinking of modern man involve the action for shaping an ethical (normative) identity. The need to develop efficiency in perceiving what we gain through the prism of the dignity of person is our current challenge.

Restoring pedagogy to its metaphysical foundation that confirms the ontical (internal) dignity of man is important, since the philosophy, originating from contemporary sociology and cultural description, uses the concept of liquid, dispersed and performative identity, meaning a subjectivity without the subject. Although it is hard to deny that what we identify with stems from our experience at various stages of life, and the process of looking for values is marked by smaller or greater dynamics, but man, according to classical philosophy, is not just “occurring”. For example, Aristotle, observing the constant change and movement of the world, proposed the concept of being as composed of substance and its properties. What is variable (properties) is contingent, while what is permanent (substance), guarantees a living identity. The philosopher noted in book VII of *Metaphysics*:

There are several senses in which a thing is said to 'be' [...]; for in one sense the 'being' meant is 'what a thing is' or a 'this', and in another sense it means a quality or quantity or one of the other things that are predicated as these are. While 'being' has all these senses, obviously that which 'is' primarily is the 'what', which indicates the substance of the thing. For when we say of what quality a thing is, we say that it is good or bad, not that it is three cubits long or that it is a man; but when we say what it is, we do not say 'white' or 'hot' or 'three cubits long', but 'a man' or a 'god'. (Aristotle, 7, 1028 a, 10-20)¹

It is worth adding that the nature of substance is known by its properties manifesting mainly in action. Substance is the reason of being and the subject of properties (or accidents). Commenting on Aristotle's text, Mieczysław A. Krąpiec (1978, p. 308) states that if we want to define the nature of human substance, we have to look at human actions, and then, we will assign the most characteristic features of the human actions, different from all other beings, to human substance.

The Boethius' educational definition, which was derived from the ancient philosophical tradition, viewed the person as "an individual substance of a rational nature". Under the influence of Christianity, the dignity of man was associated with his existence as a person. This value was significantly emphasized by some contemporary philosophical trends referring to the philosophy of the subject, or by Thomism. It should be remembered, however, that along with the development of the classical philosophical tradition, from modernity onwards, we may observe a certain "psychologization" of philosophical anthropology that perceives it as a non-autonomous discipline, embedded in the study of psychology or in natural sciences.

The introduction of psychological thinking into philosophy effectively eliminated the concept of substance from anthropology (D. Hume). Trying to define a human being, scientists ever more willingly resorted to the category of subject, subjectivity, self-awareness, awareness, and psychism. Under the influence of the development of psychology in the twentieth century, the inner tensions of man, his desires, drives, and conflicts were put in the centre of anthropological reflection. It is also worth noting that sociology, which currently enjoys prestige, influences the paradigm of humanistic research on man.

The consequence of anthropology being dominated by psychology and sociology marks the image of man passed on to education. The subject began to be described as a relation to something external and was no longer the centre of an existential experience. This fact had an impact on the understanding of the subject identity itself, which began to be perceived as a task (W. Welsch), and even as a false construct that needs to be eliminated (J. Butler). Writing about the identity model as performative (being fashionable today), Ewa Partyga argues that the twentieth century thinking about subjective identity is permeated by the idea of identity as

1 Retrieved from <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/metaphysics.7.vii.html> (accessed 22.11.2018).

a task or project that can be determined in many ways, but is always implemented (and this is what distinguishes it from older identity projects) within a culture that is a culture of risk, devoid of indisputable points of orientation; and the experience that must somehow be turned into a formula of subjective identity is the experience of non-substantiality (Partyga, 2008, p. 71). Therefore, human identity counts as an event devoid of ontical permanence.

I will stress further that contemporary, globalized culture is perceived as a multiplicity of egalitarian narratives and that imagination has been elevated to the rank of a man's creative and cognitive abilities, which in the social message is additionally conducive to eliminating the rational factor from human action: the truth about good becomes subject to subjectivization. It is already a cliché to state that contemporary man, acting morally, is supposed to stick to his opinions, without a reference to objective values, claiming that what I like is good. Aesthetic competence has become an effective alternative to morality, which results in a deepening indifference to values (coolness effect) (Welsch, 2005).

The separation of philosophy from its metaphysical foundation (which I have tried to present in a nutshell) had a significant impact on the interpretation of a human fact. From the perspective of pedagogical implications, this can be called a kind of cultural experiment. When we agree that the meaning of human life is a matter of any story-myth, and that human dignity is something that we get from the outside, we inevitably go towards the objectification of man. Man is a value, not because he is, but because he has something that is in relation to something else. It encourages man to live in suspense and ad hoc, avoid commitments and build deeper relationships. Zygmunt Bauman depicts the modern people's demeanour using the following metaphors: man-stroller, man-tourist, man-wanderer, and man-player (Bauman 1995). Education inspired by these ideas has already managed to create non-ethical thinking in contemporary people – full of transiency and irony.

While thinking about changing this state of affairs, one should bear in mind that the cultural climate of our time is not only resistant to shaping ethical (normative) thinking, but also even eliminates it as unnecessary burden in acting effectively. Let us also draw attention to the lack of public trust in institutions that have been responsible so far for knowing the truth. Not only the media, but also the so-called experts have lost their credibility, due to their possible connections with the world of politics and economy. Even science is valued mainly for its usefulness. The truth ceased to be an “interesting” criterion, organizing the hierarchy of values of modern man. Social networking websites have taught their users to assess something emotionally through the so-called “likes”. The internet agora, while offering anonymity, absolves one from responsibility.

The imperative of change, a kind of present-day stigma, gives human identity the trait of instability and volatility that should be corrected in educational activities. Therefore, precious values arising from the spirit of contemporary culture such as

the opportunity to pursue one's own life path, encouragement for multidisciplinary approach and constant personal development, openness and availability of social space for each participant, require taking an ethical perspective into consideration as well. I fathom the answer to this need by incorporating the category of "ethical identity" into the educational discourse, in line with metaphysical anthropology, i.e. with the understanding of man as a substantial unity.

Ethical identity and the imperative of visibility

The disappearance of ethical thinking, i.e. thinking oriented towards the truth about the good, signals notably the absence of the category – "decent" / "indecent" in the axiological narrative. It is significant that sociologists write about a specific atrophy of shame (Czykwin, 2003). It is hard not to notice that modernity, trying to build culture on a comfortable foundation of post-truth, gets rid of the problem of moral discomfort. We note that experiencing one's own value, instead of heading towards the discovery of one's subjectivity in fulfilling moral acts, ends either in learning one's own psychology or begins to resemble mercantile activities.

When developing educational tasks in relation to this state, on the one hand one can point out, the need for a clear practical message, where the perception of feelings does not replace moral consciousness, psychological comfort or peace of conscience, and on the other hand, the need to counteract all forms of marketization of human relations and man himself. The first of these issues requires a specific "self-reflection" of pedagogy itself. Its clear focus on psychology and sociology resulted in isolation from philosophy and reflection on morality as the axis of a person's life. It is good to remember that the essence of pedagogical work is to introduce values into the world, though not like a guide to a museum tour, but to effectively inspire man to an inner effort to shape his own ethical identity. In this process, psychotherapy may be helpful, but only as part of it. It will not replace pedagogical activities.

The other issue, which is of interest to us, is related to the axiological matrix oriented towards utility, which – without a moral context – distorts the human perception of one's social reality and self-perception. A person, living in market culture focused on gaining and possessing, starts to succumb to it by wanting to be seen, as if attracting the attention of buyers at a marketplace. The ability to stand out from others, competitiveness and effective self-promotion become a value. The factor that stimulates this way of thinking is the progressive mediatisation of communication. In this connection, people talk about the dangers arising from the lack of privacy and even about the new form of control over the individual, especially on the Web. Media exhibitionism implies an impulse to build an external identity; it thus encourages people to experience their own values as a correlate: I am, as far as I can be seen, if I have been noticed. The "visibility requirement", like the "change requirement" discussed earlier, stigmatizes people today and, therefore, requires a pedagogical response.

“Being in the eyes of others” is obviously one of the phenomena of life in the community; Aristotle (*Rethoric*, II, 6, 1384 a, 35–1384 b)² and Thomas Aquinas (*Sth.*, 2-2, q. 144, a. 3c) wrote about it. Today, through the use of new technologies and under the pressure of gaining external identity, “being in the eyes of others” has received a new twist. The internet helped to build a vast group of references and transferred the stage of the presentation of “I” to private realm. A “personal” computer has become an effective tool of building one’s own image shared with other people. The problem of shaping the character as a way of internal development and a kind of qualification necessary for assuming social roles responsibly has become unimportant. Thus, the essential quality these thinkers referred to when they pointed out that other people are a kind of mirror for our actions was lost. The philosophers had in mind the worthy (moral) behaviour of man, whereas the acts of media promotion of one’s own image that we are dealing with today have a purely utilitarian quality. Their aim is not personal development, but the narcissistic concentration of man on himself (e.g.: Deber, 2000; Fromm, 1955).

In line with this revaluation, the replacement of what is internal with outwardness, I would like to invoke the aforementioned problem of the atrophy (and even the tabooing) of shame. Philosophy has long portrayed shame as a phenomenon deeply connected with the way we exist, separate, yet open to others. On the one hand, shame is supposed to protect our privacy (“property”), that is our corporeality, psyche, spirituality, and on the other hand, such protected privacy is to be “introduced” to the outside world. It is emphasized that shame is connected with moral perfection and, if ethical thinking absorbs it, shame can become, as Wojtyła (1986, p. 166) points it out, a reliable moral force of the person.

Max Scheler (2003, p. 21) wrote that shame occurs when what is spiritual loses itself in what is external, and in consequence it results either from biology or from factual references, in which man gets entangled. In Wojtyła’s opinion (1986, pp. 156–157), shame does not have to refer only to moral wrongdoing. He perceives shame as simply the desire to hide anything that, as intimate and private, should stay inside the person, and claims that experiencing shame confirms the existence of man’s spiritual sphere. He believes that the experience of shame needs the inner life of the person as the area where it is disclosed, and says, “Only a person can be ashamed, because only a person can by his very nature escape subjection to being used” (Wojtyła, 1986, p. 159).

The social acceptance of shamelessly flaunting the most shocking moral issues or sharing intimate details of your life, observed at present, is a sign of an unapt experiencing of one’s own dignity, which has an impact on the durability and quality of people’s social relationships and subjects them to dehumanization. The skilful pedagogy of shame is therefore seen as an important part of the task to awaken the will to build an ethical identity in modern man (Boużyk, 2016).

2 Retrieved from <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/a/aristotle/a8rh/book2.html> (accessed 22.12.2018).

It is not about psychologizing this need, and thus entering the path of therapy that is often necessary for a specific person, but about encouraging reliable moral assessments that take into account the full ontological context of human existence. The efficiency of formulating such assessments is a part of the process of acquiring moral competences through which man obtains internal freedom: he “inhabits” his home, that is, he has an ethical identity.

Acknowledging the need to act for ethical identity requires from pedagogy not only a distance from the fashionable “I” performance, but also the courage to return to the metaphysical concept of the subject as an ontological self that reveals the being of the person. Krąpiec (1998, pp. 409–410) explains that the experience of internal dynamics is basically the experience of constituting one’s self as a disposition centre in relation to the external objects that are somehow useful for us and in connection with which we create our own hierarchies of values. He calls this dimension of the self phenomenological and stresses that it is formed in us from the beginning of life. It grows from childhood to maturity, and in old age, with the loss of vitality, it weakens. However, Krąpiec (1998, pp. 409–410) draws attention to the fact that the sense of decisiveness and individuality associated with the self should not be equated with our ontological self. Similarly, he notes, personality, i.e. the ordering of spiritual acts specific to a given person, due to the criterion adopted in action, cannot be treated as a final explanation of one’s being. As we all know, the personality profile of a person can change as a result of internal experiences and of the selection of a new criterion.

Let us note that today’s popular concept of constructing one’s own cultural identity brings man only near this kind of experience. Meanwhile, the awareness of being the centre of all of his psychological experiences is viewed by Krąpiec (1998, pp. 409–410) as a psychological category, and thus as a symptom of a normally functioning psyche that feels how all acts flow from it and concern it. However, he considers a subject as a metaphysical category. At the same time, he has no hesitation to point out errors that he believes have crept into the interpretation of the human experience of subjectivity. He emphasizes that the immediacy of the experience of subjectivity from the existential perspective (as we feel agents of our actions) does not directly amount to knowledge of our own nature. The knowledge of the content of this “I” requires a philosophical analysis of acts described as “mine”, and thus, both spiritual and purely physiological acts. He also notes that Hume made a very basic mistake when he denied subjectivity to the “I” because he could not read the authentic content of that “I” anywhere in the analysis of ideas or relations between ideas. He was forced to recognize the human “self” as another psychological habit (Krąpiec 1998, p. 411).

Another interpretational mistake that Krąpiec (1998, p. 412) believes had an influence on the contemporary philosophical interpretations of subjectivity was made by Scheler who regarded the spirit’s being as merely a function. According to Krąpiec (1998, p. 414), the relation of the subjective “I” to the acts of “mine” that

I fulfil can be interpreted in line with a person's relation to nature, as it is in classical philosophy. The scholar argues that this self-existing "I", conscious in the acts of "mine" (both spiritual and carnal), is nothing else but the sought-for person, about whom St. Thomas said that this is a proper and proportionate existence for a given individual nature. Let us emphasize that a person in Krąpiec's interpretation is becoming the ultimate form of being, because the degree of subjectivity, i.e., being in and for him, is the most perfect in it. He stresses that subjectivity manifests itself mostly in the field of morality, when "I capture my own agency" in the act of the decision (Krąpiec 1998, p. 413). Given their intangible nature, these acts, as well as acts of intellectual cognition, acts of love and creativity are – according to the philosopher – the basis for conducting metaphysical analyses of the being-structure of man as a compound of the soul and body, but also a permanent, substantive, subject perfecting himself in his activities.

Concluding this part of the analysis, I want to emphasize that metaphysical anthropology not only gives education the opportunity to distance itself from the concept of a liquid identity, but also strongly argues for the thesis that too much emphasis on what is external (i.a. the requirement of "being visible", hidden in the matrix of utility) demands a pedagogical response in the form of actions focused on the innate value of a person, e.g. through the aforementioned work for shame as a moral force in a person. For this reason, I consider it sensible to include the category of "ethical identity" as a correlation of the metaphysical category of the subject into the educational reflection.

Ethical identity and the imperative of predictability

As we are moving on to the discussion of predictability, the last of the three stigmata of modernity (announced by me as the requirements of a utility-oriented culture), I want to point out that this imperative exposes people to objectification even more than the previous two. While the imperative of visibility gives the impression of stimulating the effort of "building" oneself and the imperative of change can be an effective camouflage of apparent internal development, the imperative of predictability openly conflicts with freedom understood as a moral experience. Although predictability in itself is simply the guarantee of greater effectiveness, nevertheless, in relation to the management of people (regarded in business terminology as "human capital"), it may tempt to shun freedom. Without one's own ethical identity, man will easily become part of the machine of production and consumption where he will unwittingly change freedom into availability, and he will reduce the experience of decision-making to choosing forms of pleasure and entertainment. From the psychological point of view, this inevitably raises the question of whether or not human (community) development stops at the time of childhood (Fromm, 1955).

As I have mentioned, achieving an ethical identity is associated with the effort – of working on one’s own character and requires a sense of freedom. Meanwhile, many facilities that we can use freely are not conducive to such efforts, and the scope of interference with a person’s privacy may dangerously violate his subjectivity. As early as in childhood, people are forced into the paradigm of “steerability”. They learn to live under the pressure of their parents’ expectations, who want their children to benefit optimally from a rich educational offer. Citing Carl Honoré (2008) we could state that childhood is too valuable to entrust it to children themselves. Unfortunately, the reality of professional work, which a child enters after graduating from schools, does not foster search for his own ethical identity. Sociologists write about the specifics of today’s corporate culture, in which the source of rights and norms is confined to the views of managers and owners, and where the absolute loyalty to the company and identification with it create the foundation for the functioning of its employees (Krzysztofek & Szczepański, 2005, p. 293).

Independent thinking about values is thwarted by the standardization of education and the focus on professional qualifications, important in social policy. Let me quote here a thought formulated in the 1940s by philosopher Jacques Maritain (1962), who, considering professionalism as a new feature of university education, said that the focus on “expertism” makes universities vocational schools. It can also be added that this is a denial of the university’s mission, which is fulfilled in broadening the horizons of human thinking to a dimension of selflessness. Nowadays, university programs must follow such a bureaucratic framework ensure a “quality product” from the “university’s assembly line” will meet expectations of business. Predictability locked within the framework of qualifications, strictly determined by the European Union requirements, translates into a common opinion about the “power” of the earned diploma. A contemporary man lets himself be convinced that all that is important in his life has to be acquired through the coursework.

However, morality cannot be locked in the theoretical paradigm. It organizes itself on the basis of practical knowledge and requires consent for unpredictability. Human decision-making originates precisely from existential uncertainty that creates a moral environment. Obviously, theoretical knowledge about morality may help shape ethical thinking (I will come back to this topic later in the text), but it will not replace the experience of morality as a key experience of one’s own subjectivity. Symptoms of the danger of stigmatizing this experience and examples of the attempts to “lock” it into a textbook can be found even in the organization of academic teaching, when in the course syllabi a lecturer is to define the social competences that a student should acquire during the lecture or in a laboratory. The fallacy of this message lies in strengthening the young person’s belief that by attending classes, taking exams, and gaining the required ECTS credits, he acquires key life skills in society. Clearly, this has nothing to do with the development

of phronetic knowledge towards the virtue of prudence, as the ancient or medieval philosophers have exhaustively discussed; nor is it related to freedom as a moral experience.

Much had been written about the toxicity of the ideology of consumerism before it spread in Poland, but it is worth recalling that it refers to a social and philosophical doctrine of individualist liberalism that grew on the basis of Rousseau's thinking about community as a community of interests guaranteed by law. At the root of this doctrine lies a special (political rather than moral) perception of the issue of human freedom. While the classics of ethics emphasize that man has a free will he can use in various manners and that social relations are significantly dependent on the moral development of individual members of a community, the Enlightenment's interpretative paradigm asserts that independence is innate and that actions to safeguard the rights of the individual are needed on behalf of a social organization (Krapiec 1999, pp. 187–191). While describing the socio-political consequences of departing from the moral concept of freedom, as in fascism or communism, is beyond the scope of this analysis, I would like to point out that it is worth remembering the historical conditions of the dominant concept of freedom today, when we talk about all the contemporary threats of objectification of human beings, i.e., those resulting from the progressing bureaucratization. Behind the imperative of predictability, present in the idea of profit and the urge to manage people effectively, lies a deeper philosophical problem of the relationship between the individual and the community.

It is also good to recall that in the tradition of peripatetic philosophy – in connection with this problem – the concept of common good has been developed, which includes an extremely valid pedagogical postulate. It is about bringing man up to rational freedom, and therefore, about encouraging the recognition of personal good as a common good, i.e. a good whose character is determined by human nature and which, in the sense of an analogical identity of purpose, can become the reason of action, not only of a particular person but every human person. Krapiec (1999, p. 186) clearly depicts this: binding the human person through this good means “binding from the inside” and not “from the outside” by an unreasonable order, as not accepted in a conscious and free manner by man-person acting through personal acts. Any other way of connecting a person with the community is a way that compromises human nature as a free, potentialised personality. Thus, an order imposed only “from the outside” means moral violence, which by its very nature is immoral.

In classical philosophy, the unity of social being is determined not by a law established by power, as with Rousseau, but with reference to common good, in whose realization there is no contradiction between the individual and society. Krapiec (1999, pp. 190–191), writing about the relationship between man and community, explains various aspects of interdependencies. He also draws attention to the dignity of a person as a criterion that must not be forgotten when human

freedom is dealt with in the sphere of internal development. The philosopher notes that orders can only be directives and will become obligatory provided the human being in his conscience considers himself bound by them, because of the necessary arrangement of being – which, however, must be personally perceived by man.

This “personal perception” is a sign of establishing ethical identity in a person. At the same time, “personal perception” is the guarantee of maintaining internal freedom in relation to what is external to us as moral subjects. Reminding about this correlation is a task for educators. One can also hope that this task will also be performed in unfavourable cultural conditions. The moral domain is a field of such great dynamics that it cannot be destroyed either by the framework of bureaucratic schemes or by the imperative of predictability in managing “human capital”. With our decisions, we constitute ourselves as a source of actions, and these actions not only change the world, but also carve our own personal face. The category “ethical identity”, while sensitizing to the moral dimension of human freedom, may turn out to be a modern tool for education focused on the issue of creating a civil society. In the dimension of Polish social reality, marked by the legacy of communism and subjected to new cultural trends for nearly a quarter of a century, this means, for example, developing a pedagogy directed against passivity that manifests itself in a comfortable attitude that can be expressed in the words “nothing depends on me”, or “this is the historical necessity”. It is a kind of pedagogy of “moral authority”, in which there will be a reference to the actions of people who had the courage to persevere with the truth “against all the odds”. It is worth mentioning that Christian tradition suggests many such models in the form of saints and the blessed – including victims of contemporary totalitarian systems, people shoved to the corner by the so-called civilized world. In Poland’s recent history, we also find many role models, e.g. in the history of “banned soldiers” or “Solidarity”.

Conclusion: educational needs

Recognizing the “spirit of culture” is an on-going research task for teachers, while the key to the pedagogy for the “here and now”, and thus the key to fulfill their educational mission, is the ability to pervade a particular matrix of modernity with values that make up a person. Our analysis helps us formulate a proposal regarding the orientation of educational activities towards developing ethical identity in contemporary man and recognizing that the category of “ethical identity” can become a modern tool in educational reflection. Its modernity does not result from the content it conceals, because this content has been extant for a long time in metaphysical reflection. The content consists of three elements: the recognition of man as a substantial unity and as the subject of personal activities, as well as the understanding of freedom in its foundational form, i.e. as a moral force. I recall

the three of them because, as correlates of this category, they constitute an educational tool in relation to the cultural entanglements of modern man and, in this sense, give it the mark of modernity. I have tried to prove it in relation to the three cultural imperatives.

In conclusion, it is worth adding that undertaking educational activities to develop ethical identity requires a reflection on the education that would support them, which is why we should also pay our attention to the need of humanizing education, university education, in particular. Today, the greatest importance is given to the acquisition of the so-called hard professional skills. Enriching them with soft competences, e.g. communicativeness, the ability to cooperate, openness to criticism, general culture or personal culture is deficient. We only deal with the humanization of curricula when education focuses on the issues of the essence of humanity and moral life. Today, the mission of humanistic education may consist in, for example, showing professional competences in the context of integral personal development, and especially, in connection with the moral life of a person, or indicating that soft competences require considering them due to the ethical identity of a person.

I see a task for humanistic education in the activity serving to maintain axiological equilibrium in culture. On the educational level, a critical look at the values that currently dominate culture, such as change, visibility, and predictability discussed here, should be encouraged. “Fashionable” values should necessarily be complemented with a “list of personal values”. The spiritual homeostasis of culture requires that “modern” values should be read in the context of values arising from the truth about human existence. Above all, it should be made clear that human dignity itself calls for an uncompromising questioning of utility as the prime cultural value. It should also be evident that progress is not the goal, but only the result of the perfection of man. Otherwise we will observe the objectification of the person and, as a result, the dehumanization of culture itself. As axiological chaos, resulting from the situation that relativism is often accepted because it is comfortable (does not oblige to anything, does not give rise to conflicts), is growing, we have to make an effort to explain to students that what is useful is not always good and encourage them to justify/support their own moral judgments.

I think that Philosophy education can be particularly important in this respect. For many centuries philosophy owed its privileged position, among other sciences, to a holistic view of reality, the training of critical thinking, and the encouragement of cognitive curiosity. Today, it has been sidelined by applied sciences. However, metaphysical thinking, being a source of European culture, equipped with all the hallmarks of “uselessness”, can still be a tool for recovering contemplative space in man, needed in the process of maturing for freedom. While social sciences or psychology deal with the complex determinants of human functioning in culture, metaphysics explains something more basic, namely the transcendence of man in relation to nature, community and culture. It teaches how to read reality, i.e., how

to learn it, rather than manipulate it. It arouses the need for wisdom that constitutes the foundation for the process of shaping ethical identity.

Translated by Agnieszka Burakowska

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ETYCZNA TOŻSAMOŚĆ JAKO ZADANIE WYCHOWAWCZE I EDUKACYJNE. W POSZUKIWANIU NOWOCZESNYCH NARZĘDZI PEDAGOGICZNEGO DYSKURSU

Streszczenie: Artykuł jest filozoficzną analizą problemu etycznej tożsamości człowieka jako aktualnego zadania wychowawczego i edukacyjnego. Składa się z czterech części. W pierwszej części akcent pada na definicję etycznej tożsamości oraz porównanie etycznej tożsamości z tożsamościami kulturowymi. W częściach 2, 3 i 4 zostaje podjęta kwestia tożsamości kulturowych jako nośników wartości istotnych dla kultury konsumpcji, takich jak zmiana, widzialność i przewidywalność. Omówienie tych trzech wartości w kontekście działań moralnych człowieka pozwala na sformułowanie wniosku o aktualnej potrzebie ukierunkowania wychowania na etyczną tożsamość oraz wsparcia go edukacją humanistyczną (w szczególności z dziedziny filozofii). Cała analiza stwarza także podstawy do

uznania samego terminu „etyczna tożsamość”, o ile zostanie zinterpretowany na gruncie klasycznej metafizyki za skuteczne narzędzie pedagogicznej refleksji. W związku z tym zwraca się uwagę na następujące kluczowe pojęcia filozoficzne: jedność substancjalna ludzkiego bytu, człowiek jako podmiot aktów ludzkich, wolność jako siła moralna.

Słowa kluczowe: etyczna tożsamość; metafizyka; personalizm; wolność; kultura konsumpcji.

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