

Cultural reminiscences of upbringing in light of the question of the affirmation of the subject's development

KLAUDIA WĘC*

Politechnika Krakowska

The article discusses the issues of youth activation understood as an educational activity. The basis of the text is a humanistic understanding of the existence of the subject and his sense of existential meaning, generating the need to undertake individual strategies of coping with development. The ontological and epistemological dimension of the text is built on the tools of the psychoanalytical interpretation of Jacques Lacan.

KEYWORDS: culture, subject, activity, upbringing, psychoanalysis

Kulturowe reminiscencje wychowania w świetle zagadnienia afirmacji rozwoju podmiotu

W artykule omówiono problematykę aktywizacji młodzieży rozumianej jako działalność edukacyjna. Podstawą tekstu jest humanistyczne rozumienie istnienia podmiotu i jego poczucia egzystencjalnego znaczenia, generujące potrzebę podejmowania indywidualnych strategii radzenia sobie z rozwojem. Wymiar ontologiczny i epistemologiczny tekstu budowany jest w oparciu o narzędzia interpretacji psychoanalizy Jacques'a Lacana.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: kultura, podmiot, aktywność, wychowanie, psychoanaliza

The rootedness of pedagogy in the humanities and the perspective of the cognitive field defined by the discourse of psychoanalysis allow us to outline a research horizon leading to an understanding of the cultural phenomena formulating pedagogical knowledge and determining the expectations from both the subject (pupil) and the *Other* (educator) (Węc 2012). The role and task of the pedagogue are undeniably determined in their duty to the responsibility for the subject who is "entrusted" to the possession of pedagogical action or educational activity in the educational space, limited by the functionalism of the system and its structures. Thus, pedagogical consciousness should be determined by the paradigm of thinking of the subject as being, being immersed in its existence through

cultural anchoring. In this sense, philosophical knowledge, which has always determined the source of thinking about education, reminds educators of what is obvious to humanists, and what we can find in the essays of Barbara Skarga, who sensitizes us to the fact that “*at the root of our culture, the main question has become the question about being, about its essence, as well as about what belongs to it as being. From this question arose the next one – about the types of being, giving the opportunity to develop the sciences (also pedagogical – author’s note)*” (Skarga 2017, p. 11).

1. Between the structure of the educational process and the symbolic act of education

The quotation allows us to illustrate that before every action of the system and limitation of the structure, there is concern for the subject and his existence rooted in the horizon of his chosen existence – regardless of the adopted worldview. It is also a concern for the language of pedagogy, which will determine current educational activities. In this sense, the question becomes important: How do we understand upbringing and the education emerging from its sources – so that the subject educates without reducing it at the same time? Undoubtedly, we find such inspirations in the pedagogical discourse of many excellent pedagogues sensitive to the humanistic ideas of subjectivity. Therefore, we can assume that the value of pedagogical action is hidden in the initiatory structure of education and the symbolism of the educational act that escapes any rationalization, remaining outside social and educational functionality. At the same time, it is a metaphor for broadly understood pedagogical activity, in which language determines the leading role in understanding what education can be.

Following the philosophical rootedness activated here, we cannot fail to notice that from the perspective of educational teleological assumptions, we expect the subject to become a thinking being (*homo psychologicus*), which can be limited to a reactive being (*homo behavior*), which seems to have mastered reality and at the same time becomes a communicative being (*homo communicativus*) – in a word, ordinary *homo faber* and *homo universus* identifying itself with being only by generating its existential certainty. A dream and at the same time a pedagogical illusion is the learning (*homo educandus/ homo eruditus*) and acting being (*homo agens-institutionalist*) (Chmielewski 2011, p. 26), recognizing the principle of hierarchical existence (*homo hierarchicus*) based on the social being (*homo sociologicus*). Meanwhile, the place where the subject finds his desire is and always will be a mystery to the *Other* (Węc 2015). In Lacan’s conception, desire can be grasped only through the discourse of *the Unconscious*, which ontically is that which escapes all rationality and functionality. We are therefore close to the „symbolic man” of Ernst Cassirer, represented by a speaking being (*homo loquens*), or as we could ironically say, a talking being (*homo loquax*) related to a being indulging in Heidegger’s „talk” (*Gereden*) devoid of meaning (Cassirer 1997). We cannot omit in this linguistic charade Agamben’s excluded being (*homo sacer*) showing the subject existing as (non)existing for the *Other* (Agamben 2008). The exclusion of the subject for any reason leads to the constitution of an identity that threatens itself and the *Other*, which we experience as educators, among others, through the increasingly alienating subject, which we would like to activate, but which does not allow itself to be active (Węc 2018). The significance of the conceptual representations mentioned here is important in the matter of language insofar as the effort of interpretation shifts the emphasis from a simple analysis of concepts to the problematic understanding of the hermeneutic perspective as an alternative

way of expressing oneself through language. For the purposes of pedagogy, psychoanalysis reaches maturity when its practice is based on Althusser's notion of structure, which shows the domination of the *significant* over the subject through a complicated dialectical mechanism that constitutes the desire of the subject (Kropiwnicki 2009, p. 277). It is therefore a potential type of cultural persuasion, bringing to the pedagogical discourse a new field of inspiration for reflection and pedagogical practice as a task in the educational space. Symbolic gain, revealed through language and hermeneutical interpretations, shows the boundary between the recovery of subjective integrity in the psychoanalytic generation of lack, constituting the subject in the desire that sets a strategy to prevent the disintegration of the subject, leading to its complete abolition, but also to prevent its exclusion.

2. The dispute over „culture as a source of suffering” of the subject and the Other in the face of a potential conflict of generations

The framework of these considerations is also determined by the question of how we understand the conditions of a changing socio-cultural reality. This question sets the perspective of a significant pedagogical dispute about the change in the conditions of the subject's existence. In a word, speaking about the dynamics of socio-cultural changes, we find ourselves in the space of a certain structurally determined knowledge or (non)knowledge anchored in the conditions of our worldview, ideology close to us, or personal experience. The probable consequence of the presented state of affairs for the subject and the *Other* is the potential impossibility of finding oneself in a common area aimed at the same action. The difficulty arises especially when there is an attempt to question the unpopular master-student dyad, widely criticized by the supporters of anti-authoritarianism, which in educational reality is the basis of the assumed or expected educational relationship. The problem that appears in the space of educational influence lies in the fact that, on the one hand, we have the task of searching for some functional value of educational activities, and on the other hand, we face the dilemma of subjective and existential ontological indeterminacy.

The reflections conducted here are also guided by the thought about the universality of certain categories, which in the horizon of thinking about the subject only change the interpretative context regarding the assumed impact of cultural and social changes. I am guided by the conviction that intergenerational conflict is an attribute that fits into the perspective of hermeneutical thinking about upbringing and socialization. In this sense, the sometimes alleged „*increasing tendency over the years to relativize moral norms and the associated increase in moral permissiveness, which results in consent to antisocial behavior of young people, is a permanent and psychologically temporal process concerning every generation*” (Świda-Ziembra 2002, p. 442). Thus, even universal moral norms for each generation necessarily assume a different meaning. This is also about limiting the idealization of the past, which represents subjective sentiment towards what was – assuming that what will be the future becomes the result of the relativization of universals by the next generation.

There is no doubt that in the hermeneutical perspective of the researcher's consciousness, one should be guided by the assumption that knowledge about the subject should not become a testimony to the triumph of unambiguity over the hermeneutic attitude of „*circling around the whole and between the details tied together*” (Witkowski 2007, p. 4). In this sense, when creating a project of a research attitude covering various humanistic tropes, it is worth taking into account the presumption that „*the opposite limiting the field of action of truth is not*

falsehood, but lack of meaning" (Witkowski 2007, p. 5). It is worth remembering that cultural and social changes occur at a pace and scope that is difficult to accept and understand by each subsequent generation. However, one cannot see in this the permissiveness of young people, because, first, we created the conditions of being-in-the-world ourselves, and second, knowledge about the constitution of the subject and the acquisition of identity should be obvious to educators. Actually, the problem highlighted here concerns the dynamics of (non) coping with socio-cultural changes by the generation responsible for socialization, upbringing and the organization of the educational space of young people. This is, of course, a painful experience, but from the perspective of the professionalization of the pedagogical profession, this experience requires symbolization and a certain rationalization, so as not to create areas of insoluble conflicts leading to identity crises of all participants in this dispute. Things are not made easier by the fact that we are dealing with a generation that has not experienced war and is able to enjoy freedom from the moment it was born. However, we have no insight into the understanding of freedom by people for whom it is obvious. It is also significant that this is a generation brought up by parents who had to fight for freedom and the process of emancipation was not necessarily launched in their life cycle. Probably in their relationship with their children they did not defend the limits of their freedom and independence, which is why the feeling of disappointment is so telling. Certainly, the difference in experience does not facilitate intergenerational understanding, but neither can it generate claims of giving up freedom, demanding the abandonment of emancipatory aspirations and ultimately forcing submission to the ideas of parents generating a vision of their children's lives, because no generation has consented to this.

3. The psychoanalytic dimension of thinking and human development, or the trap of the hermeneutical circle

These are not new conflicts, and already at the beginning of the last century, Sigmund Freud raised this topic, exposing himself to criticism for presenting culture as a source of suffering for man. Participation in culture brings with it the potential to create subjective crises precisely because of the inadequacy of the expectations of successive generations. In his essay *Cultural Sexual Morality and Modern Nervousness*, written in 1908, we can learn about the account of one patient complaining that: *„In our family we all got nervous, because each of us wanted to be someone better than his background would suggest”* (Freud 1998, p. 8). Freud, as a practicing physician, goes on to note that this recurring situation *„often leads the doctor to reflect and observe that the children of those fathers who become nervous, who, coming from simple and healthy rural life relations, as descendants of strict but strong families, go to a big city as conquerors and make them that their children in a short time climb to a high cultural level. Above all, however, it was the doctors themselves who announced in a loud voice that there was a connection between „growing nervousness” and contemporary cultural life”* (Freud 1998, p. 8).

As we can conclude from reading Freud's writings further, it is precisely the inadequacy of the requirements and the excess of expectations placed on the subject that is a threat to him. Instead of the expected success as a reward for his actions, the subject loses self-confidence and, falling into the trap of alienation, resigns from activity also by escaping into illness. Unfortunately, Freud's clinical experience is reflected in the reality we know. Apart from the permanence and repetition of intergenerational conflict, the subject is too often unable to meet the demands of the culture represented by the *Other*. Paradoxically, this is

what marked the social revolution brought about by Freud's theory of sexuality. A theory that still worries part of society, despite the fact that a child from birth is a drive entity that libidinally maintains life activity.

I use this example because the theory of sexuality concerns broadly understood human activity, biologically determined and culturally sublimated activity, which is still educationally troublesome. From the very beginning, Freud was aware that he had disturbed the symbolic order of the then intellectual elites cultivating the traditions of the patriarchal family. In 1927, in his essay *The Future of a Certain Delusion*, Freud, dealing clinically with the guilt of his patients, considered it to be the most important problem in the development of culture. His clinical work strengthened his belief that progress in culture is paid for by losing happiness, which is associated with increased feelings of guilt. At the same time, analysing the problems of the young generation suffering the effects of the upbringing of a patriarchal society, he wrote: „*The fact that today's upbringing hides from a young man what role sexuality will play in his life is not the only accusation that can be made against him. Modern upbringing also sins by not preparing a young man for the aggression of which he is to become. By releasing young people into life with such a very wrong psychological orientation, education proceeds no differently than when people equipped with summer clothes and maps of lakes in northern Italy set off on a polar expedition. There is a clear abuse of ethical requirements in this, and yet their severity would not be undermined too much if it were said: „This is how people are supposed to be if they want to be happy themselves and if they want to make others happy; But you have to reckon with the fact that people are not like that at all.“ Instead, pedagogy makes young people believe that since everyone else follows ethical rules, they are happy – in the same way, ethical requirements are justified to be as they are.*” (Freud 1998, p. 218). Freud's words, written almost a century ago, remain relevant and equally symptomatic, because they show where we are still stuck in social and cultural development.

4. Between the affirmation of parental authority and the operation of symbolic law

Today's ongoing intergenerational conflict is flourishing through what we can call the nuance of the authority affirmed by us and the operation of the law symptomatically represented by the concept of parental authority. This is superbly described in Bernard Stiegler's book, *Shocks. Stupidity and knowledge in the twentieth century* (Stiegler 2017).

Following Freud, the author considers the issue of identification, separation, alienation of the subject and sublimation of the drive structurally necessary as a condition for the subject to gain maturity and autonomy. This also means breaking with childhood activity on the way to maturity by triggering intergenerational conflict, which is structurally necessary in the process of becoming an adult. In this sense, the recognition and acceptance of the intergenerational difference becomes a necessity” (Stiegler 2017, p. 21).

Zygmunt Bauman speaks in a similar tone to the German psychoanalyst, arguing that cultural requirements trigger in the subject the fear of the risk of imperfection resulting in social stigma resulting from non-compliance with principles considered socially desirable. In his reflections, he introduces the category of the society of activity and possibilities, effectively replacing Freud's discipline society today, in which the social activity of the subject was limited mainly by gender. The actions of the subject today have been transformed into the compulsion of externally directed activity. However, the fear of losing social significance

becomes a threat when one ceases to cultivate this activity. As a result, supposedly „emancipated” individuals discover that they are unable to cope with the hardships of a completely individualized life. Bauman argues that „forced activists, tormented by the awareness of their shortcoming, have little choice. They were squeezed between the supposed infinity of available options and temptations, the immensity of the demands placed on an autonomous, powerful, strong-willed, stubborn, and relentless pursuit of self-development. [...] However, this new faith has done little to alleviate the devastating insecurity of an openly precarious existence or to lessen the pains of self-criticism and self-condemnation caused by the individual's inability to halt, let alone reverse the progressive degradation.” (Bauman 2016, pp. 70-71) Ultimately, he comes to the conclusion that depression is a meaningful disease of the *society of activity*, the causes of which lie not in an excess of responsibilities and duties, but becomes the imperative to be active, setting a new principle in the society of postmodern work.

5. Activity as a cultural phenomenon and educational need, or the future of a certain illusion

The presented analyses of the repressiveness of culture and the social activity arising from it do not inspire optimism. However, these are not isolated positions demanding special reflection on the place of the subject in the world and its social relations. We must not ignore the voices of eminent humanists known for their humanistic sensitivity, showing concern about the human condition and demanding a reformulation of thinking about culture, society and nature. It is difficult to deny that activity has become a cultural phenomenon which, in the perspective of concern for the subject, should constitute such a horizon of thought as not to be deceived by instrumental reason at the service of an ideology. Trying to categorize the types of activity that are particularly significant for the subject in the perspective of Heidegger's being-in-the-world (*Dasein*) adopted at the beginning, I would distinguish developmental activity, language activity, libidinal and drive activity, intellectual activity, and thought activity. Not forgetting the structural linguistic castling and subjective dialectization. Ultimately, it is satisfying to think that the history of the subject's development has always been associated with some kind of activity, and there is no doubt that the dynamics of its occurrence determine the quality of human life and the way in which he changes the world. Such an attitude generates the expectation that the subject, next to activity, will activate responsibility for himself and the *Other*, as well as for the reality around him. It can even be assumed that the discussed considerations concern the subject striving for emancipation and autonomy, at least to the extent that he is not subject to the desire of the *Other*. And only in this situation, when the subject is active and intervenes in the world through special acts that allow him to deconstruct the symbolic universe, he gets a chance to experience the truth about himself, at the same time activating the act that allows him to construct his own reality. In this sense, we refer to the internal activity of the subject, which, through externalized acts, activates the action of the subject. But the activity of the subject outside the developmental dimension also has the dimension of practical activity, which Kant is asking for. In this sense, activity has an objectivist dimension and is meant to mediate this objectivity in the transcendent dimension of his life. At the same time, its task is to consciously interfere and change reality as the implementation of complex early goals.

Conclusion

Cultural change and the longing for action aimed at excluding all lack – including inactivity – have become synonymous with our time, revealing in effect a certain emptiness constituted around the impossibility of expecting activity from the subject who resists interference in his life. Man has been trapped in the trap of being perfect, succumbing to a socially constructed narrative that is supposed to lead to the formatting of identity through the requirement of activity and, above all, creativity. In the educational space, the helplessness of educators is becoming more and more clearly revealed, as they lack the competence to work with a child who resists, but also with an overly active child. Observing the education system from the inside and outside, it can be concluded that, paradoxically, from a certain stage the development of subjective activity is stopped and children are prematurely subjected to the influence of a hidden agenda. As a result, instead of arousing the child's cognitive curiosity and developing his thinking, actions are launched that force the child to adapt to the system. Therefore, the child is not to disturb, he is to follow orders and not to give a voice when he is not asked. This phenomenon was perfectly described by Basil Bernstein, who formulated the concept of invisible pedagogy. What we can say about educators' expectations of the child relates to his external behavior and is conceptualized as being busy. The child should be busy, he should do something. This inner readiness and external being busy are transformed into a „willingness to do something.” From “what the child does” the teacher concludes about the state of his „readiness” manifested in the present activity of the child and foreshadowing his future activities. In a similar way, „being busy” frees them from the teacher, but at the same time introduces them into the realm of a perpetual interactive present. Therefore, a child deprived of an occupation is in invisible pedagogy the equivalent of a child not occupied with reading – in visible pedagogy. This way of organizing the educational space gives the effect of constant supervision over the child and his spontaneity is reduced to compliance with the accepted principles of interpretation, assessment and diagnosis (Bernstein 1990, p. 78). Therefore, when demanding activity from a child, one should start by breaking the passivity to which the child is forced and removing the repressiveness of the educational system. The dynamics of child development, which is well known to us, is based on a structural transition from passivity to activity and from activity to passivity. Therefore, I can only hope that before the pedagogues postulate, the activation of subjects will begin with the dismantling of a system that will either prevent activation or use it for its own purposes.

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