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MYTHOLOGICAL NARRATIVE AND THE ISSUE OF COMMON SPACE AS A GOAL OF EDUCATION

Summary: The aim of the analysis is to emphasize the importance of philosophical justifications that underlie the foundations of pedagogical activity that makes a person ready to live in a community. In contemporary culture, the domain of values, of great importance for personal development and social integration, turns out to be the most problematic. It is often left at the junction of what is rational and irrational, although more attention is paid to rationality in everyday life. The dynamically changing socio-cultural context, affecting the educational processes, urges us to look for the principle of legitimacy for the axionormative sphere. One of the proposals of contemporary humanities is to involve the category of myth as a guarantee of preserving of values essential to culture. That's why the article deal with the problem of the validity of standards of conduct in view of the use of the explicative category of myth. In this way, I would like to appeal for values that are significant in making a person ready to build relationships with others, and which, due to the progressive individualization of social space, can seem unobvious. The article consists of two parts. In the first one I will take up the goal of social education. I will undertake, therefore, an attempt to interpret the “common space” term as: (1) culture, (2) the moral efficiency of the individual, (3) cultural heritage and (4) the ultimate goal of life. This part will refer to the theory of social education of the Polish pedagogue Jacek Woroniecki. The second part will deal with the issue of the theoretical justification of “common space” as a value in the post-enlightenment culture which introduces the mythological narrative into the pedagogical argumentation. In this part I will critically refer to the views of Wolfgang Brezinka, a German scholar.

Keywords: social education, social values, social virtues, heritage, culture, transcendence, myth

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Taking up the issue of “common space” as a goal of educational activities, I would like to speak up for the values that are significant in making a person ready to build relationships with another human being, and which, due to the progressive individualization of social space, can seem unobvious. First of all, I will place the issue of common space in the educational perspective at the center of the discussion. Then I will go to the theoretical justification of the space as a value.

1. Common space as a goal of educational activities

Guided by the meanings of the Latin word *domus* (house), I will draw attention to four clues in the interpretation of the “common space” important from the perspective of pedagogy due to the complexity of the process of social education. I can see permanent educational postulates in them. Reading them in the context of specific civilization conditions obviously only directs the educational work towards specific goals. I will try to interpret the postulates and provide some examples of the current goals of upbringing, using the thoughts of the Polish pedagogue Jacek Woroniecki OP (1878–1949), a figure significant for Polish culture.

Woroniecki, rector of the Catholic University of Lublin and a professor at the Collegium Angelicum in Rome, drew a lot from the philosophies of antiquity and the Middle Ages, in particular the thoughts of Thomas Aquinas, in his pedagogical work. He was critical both in relation to the collectivist and individualistic concepts of social relations. That is why today, when the concepts are still alive and social life is marked by many disturbing phenomena, his theory of social education deserves attention.

Woroniecki did not put community above individuals. According to him, the sense of the existence of society basically boils down to enabling people to develop personally, but the relationship between a person and the community played a key role in education. He clarified that, despite the fact that it was natural for a human to be a member of a community, the naturalness was not synonymous with the “readiness” of the relationships². On the contrary, naturalness only means that the environment of people is the only environment of growth for man, while working out the shape and climate of this environment – say, creating a kind of “common space” – is entrusted to the man himself. He is its builder and user. He co-creates it, creates it himself and interacts with other creator-users.

² Jacek Woroniecki, *Wychowanie społeczne i praca społeczna* (Warszawa: Księgarnia “Biblioteka rodzinna” 1921).

1.1. Common space as culture

What content is hidden within the house symbol? The Latin word *domus*, above all, means something that is a human residence (e.g. a building), as well as a place for an animal (e.g. a nest, a burrow). The environment for the birth and maturation of a person can in this case be called culture as common space. Placing a foster child in the “nest of culture” – i.e. in the four spheres of developmental impact (cognition, morality, creativity and religiosity) – determines his spiritual growth and determines the direction of further development. The ability to discover and assimilate values is associated with a human ontical structure in which the material factor has a significant share. The spiritual (values) makes is present “in” and “thanks to” the human body³. Therefore, culture has a material and spiritual dimension.

The cultural development of man is determined by the human natural predisposition to exploring the world and creative action, and above all to loving. Love, as an attitude engaging reason and will, most fully expresses our attitude towards other people. Hence, the maturation “to love” and “in the space of love” can be considered as the basic postulate of education, which never loses its relevance. It illustrates the social nature of education, and in particular that the development requires the help of society, that man can not be left alone⁴.

Love is in a way the element of man. Woroniecki's words show that the realization of our various natural abilities requires a climate of love, because it is already at the very source of our existence. Love (including kindness – its basic form) determines authentic solidarity in favor of action towards the real common good, i.e. personal development of man⁵. Meanwhile, it is hard not to notice that the implementation of this postulate is in crisis today. This is confirmed by the socio-political reality, and I mean not only the lack of dialogue among politicians, but the aggression among ordinary people. The crisis is also indicated by other phenomena, such as people's sense of loneliness, an increase in the number of suicides and mental disorders. *The Social Letter of the Polish Episcopate* (14.03.2019) addressing the issue of the social order for the common good was an expression of concern for the situation in Poland⁶. It recalled, among others, the teaching of the Church about the need to unite around the necessary things, leaving freedom in doubt and building order on the foundation of love (KDK, No. 92).

Today there is a constant war of words in the public space. As a confirmation, we can recall the relatively new sociological phenomena of “call-out culture”, “cancel culture” (a specific ostracism in social media), or, as the experience of

³ Idem, *Katolicka etyka wychowawcza* (Lublin: RW KUL 1986), vol.1, 194–195.

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ Ibidem, vol. 2–2, 58–68.

⁶ <https://ekai.pl/dokumenty/o-lad-spoleczny-dla-wspolnego-dobra-list-spoleczny-episkopatu-polski/> (access: 15.07.2019).

American academic life shows, difficulties in conducting free discussion at leading universities on issues that could affect the obviousness of approved ideology⁷. It is impossible to get the impression that we are dealing with social exclusion, although, paradoxically, in social actions, involving mainly young people, it is about the idea of tolerance and respect for people.

In Woroniecki's concept we will find a theoretical explanation of what kindness (*amor benevolentiae*) is, generating social solidarity. It has a spiritual dimension, i.e. it exceeds instinctive desires. As a counterweight, let us note that postulates proposed in the progressivist ideology assume understanding human happiness as satisfying instincts. Meanwhile, according to the pedagogue, kindness requires a mental knowledge of goods unknowable to the senses. The key is to recognize in the other person the same nature and personal dignity associated with it⁸. "Necessary things" (universal human rights) emerge from a philosophical analysis of human nature issues that are a good able to connect the community.

Let us add that the postulate of building a culture of kindness must be understood today in the perspective of the ongoing processes of secularization. Nowadays, especially in Europe, the prevailing liberal ideology perceives religion as an element of not so much the social but the private life of an individual, while antagonizing the idea of progress and Christianity. Woroniecki perceived this issue differently. First of all, he opposed the treatment of religion as an area detached from other spiritual spheres of personal life, i.e. from morality (good), knowledge (truth) or creativity (beauty). His concept of upbringing aimed at integrating all spheres of culture in man. He argued that personal life requires the unity of faith and morals, because faith was realized in the social space⁹. Kindness to another human being, he explained, radiates from the relationship of the believer and God, it is mediated in him¹⁰. I will quote two fragments on this subject, referring to social life:

Sometimes, for example in political fights, it will be necessary to publicly stigmatize dangerous behavior for the common good. All this should be done in moderation, which should be guarded by the love of one's neighbor, without hatred or envy, and above all guarding against breaking the boundaries of truth¹¹.

⁷ <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/14/opinion/call-out-social-justice.html> (access: 11.07.2019); <https://time.com/4800813/battle-berkeley-free-speech/> (access: 11.07.2019); <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/11/the-new-intolerance-of-student-activism-at-yale/414810/> (access: 11.07.2019); <https://quilllette.com/2017/06/08/evergreen-state-battle-modernity/> (access: 11.07.2019); <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/09/the-coddling-of-the-american-mind/399356/> (access: 11.07.2019); <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/jun/15/torn-apart-the-vicious-war-over-young-adult-books> (access: 11.07.2019).

⁸ Woroniecki, *Katolicka...*, vol. 2-1, 200.

⁹ Idem, *Pełnia modlitwy* (Poznań: "W drodze" 1982), 45, 114; idem, *U podstaw kultury katolickiej* (Lublin: FSViIEN 2002), 66-67.

¹⁰ Idem, *Katolicka...*, vol. 2-1, 216.

¹¹ Ibidem, vol. 2-1, 331.

Christian love of one's neighbor is capable of establishing such friendships and sympathies between people that would not have arisen without it, it is capable of easing even deep unfriendliness and antipathy, and bringing about the beginnings of agreement in their place. Where there is strong discord between the innate relationships of parental love and contradictory dispositions that make an agreement and intercourse difficult, only the virtue of love can bring higher order unity, because it is supernatural, born in God and returning to God¹².

For many contemporary Europeans, the words can already sound incomprehensible. In the meantime, they show how much educationally demanding the postulate of Christian formation is and how it interacts with the postulate of integral cultural education. Culture, as the field of social activities, finds its deepest meaning in the culture of the human interior – in the ethical identity of man.

The whole series of characterological features from the key cardinal virtues is according to Woroniecki the construction of the moral life of man. Due to the ongoing corrosion of human relationships, I will pay attention to only three: gentleness, language control and courage¹³. Gentleness provides the man with the possibility to control anger. Thanks to it, a violent emotional reaction to the harm suffered does not determine any retaliatory action. In our time, when there is so much hate on the web agora, the capability of developing a decision that is adequate to the situation and a skillful management of anger is one of the most important educational goals. There is a similar demand for civil courage, because the philosophy of “slack” and “pleasure” has blurred the moral sensitivity. The ability to apologize the other person for the evil done and the readiness to forgive seem to be deficient goods. It is also difficult not to notice how much evil there is in social life that has its source in the lack of language control. Woroniecki notices that insults, slanders, mockery take away the worship of people, and ordinary gossip, take away even something more valuable, namely – they destroy friendship between people¹⁴. The discipline of our judgments and statements about other people requires, in his opinion, to master the pride and faults that come from it: conceit, envy, vanity, faint-heartedness¹⁵. All harming the other man with speech, and in particular telling untruth, is contrary to the purpose for which the word is, i.e. to communicate the truth we have learned¹⁶.

Woroniecki is not naïve and he knows that our perception and utterances often mark the subjective view of matters related to our temperament, inclinations and flaws. Such deviations from the truth, while they are committed unconsciously, are not a lie. The antidote is not simply bringing up. On the other

¹² Ibidem, 217.

¹³ Ibidem, 384–385, 435.

¹⁴ Ibidem, vol. 2–2, 332.

¹⁵ Ibidem, 328.

¹⁶ Ibidem, 324.

hand, this issue is different when, as under the influence of the philosophy of the Enlightenment, the key values of “common space” – truth, goodness, beauty, sanctity – have been subjected to deliberate subjectification. In social practice, the rigor of law or contract, not conscience shaped in accordance with objective values, has become a safeguard for all abuses.

1.2. Common space as a community of people

The second meaning of the word *domus* refers to the reality of the family, household, group of students or supporters – in a word, to the community, people connected by mutual dependencies. The foundation of the “house-community” is there in the personal activities of people (rational and free) due to the good they have chosen and their expression is the social order. Changes in this respect in the historical perspective can be called civilizational changes. Recognition of the transformation data for progressive questions raises the question of the assessment criterion. We are happy to see them in human development. According to Woroniecki, first of all, development in the moral sphere should be considered. The prism of social life creates a convenient perspective for its evaluation. National and state communities can in particular be the activating environment of growth, requiring the crossing of family ties or particular interests.

Today, the dissolution of social bonds is seen. This is accompanied by the growing degree of difficulty in identifying the essence of the common good. Many authors emphasize that global capitalism, abandoned to itself, aims at dehumanizing the world, because consumption becomes the supreme value¹⁷. International corporations disorganize old social structures and break up the state organization. Sociologists call it retribalisation, that is, a return to tribal structures¹⁸.

For this reason, the social character is becoming a desirable trait of character as the goal of education. How to understand them in the era of individualism? Above all, it concerns the recognition of the delicate boundary between caring for one’s own good and selfishness that disposes to being in the community. Woroniecki used the term “desire for the good of society” that he combined with another, *iustitia legalis*, meaning the kind of justice – virtue forgotten in the 20th century, according to him. Forgotten, because present in classic ethics, and eliminated in the post-reformation era, when thinking about justice was narrowed only to honesty and the resolution of goods¹⁹. In contraposition to it Woroniecki

¹⁷ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained to Children* (London: Turnaround 1992); Herbert Marcuse, *One-Demensional Man. Study in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press 1991); Leszek Kołakowski, „Samozatrucie otwartego społeczeństwa”, in: idem, *Czy diabeł może być zbawiony i 27 innych kazań* (Londyn: Aneks 1984), 206–216.

¹⁸ Kazimierz Krzysztofek, Marek Szczepański, *Zrozumieć rozwój. Od społeczeństw tradycyjnych do informacyjnych* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego 2005), 293.

¹⁹ Ibidem, 2–2, 75; Woroniecki, *Wychowanie...*, 11, 13.

pointed out that apart from the internal honesty of the human being and just access to goods, it is necessary to develop in a foster child readiness to cooperate for the common good of the given community (efficiency of social action). He perceived the object of such virtue in the social welfare protected by law²⁰. A socialized person, in his opinion, obeys the law and does not act to the detriment of community. Woroniecki was at the forefront of his duties to the state, and further to smaller territorial, corporate and family communities. A citizen's obligations to the state include, in his opinion: the duty to work, to serve with one's own property (taxes) and life (service in defense of the independence of the fatherland). He regarded conscientious paying of taxes as the most difficult school of socialization and a patriotic attitude.

It follows from his considerations that the common space does not arise as a result of accidental actions of individuals or their obedience to someone's orders. The actual social order is the fruit of reorienting an individual's thinking from individual to social²¹. "Common space" is a union of persons, sovereign entities. The source of internal power and cohesiveness of community, e.g. the state, is therefore according to Woroniecki dependent on the character of individuals, which does not want to be remembered today. The pedagogue emphasized that the democratic system requires not only the political elaboration of citizens, but also their kindness towards the common good. Without it, democracy is a demagogic phrase, and the rights granted to a wide range of society a pure illusion²². Only a moral person is free, i.e. strong enough "to sacrifice himself for the services of society, and not to let it swallow and destroy him"²³. The virtue of *iustitia legalis* works in us in favor of the balance (in this sense, it conceals the most perfect pattern of moral life). Is it possible to defend the dimension of spiritual development of man at relativism?

1.3. Common space as a heritage

The third meaning, which is guided by the word *domus*, is the homeland, the country, the motherland, the place of origin, the inhabited area. In the metaphorical sense that I want to invoke, it is cultural heritage – traces that we can follow, that we can blur, lose or regain. This is, among other things, the customs given to us as a code of socially acceptable behavior. "House-heritage" is a reservoir of values important for the community, as proposed by previous generations. It is hard not to notice that the "house" understood in this way does not have to be an oasis of humanism. Heritage conceals ambivalence.

²⁰ Idem, *Katolicka...*, vol. 2–2, 84.

²¹ Idem, *Wychowanie...*, 18.

²² Ibidem, 14, 29; idem, *Katolicka...*, vol. 2–2, 84.

²³ Ibidem, vol. 1, 384.

For Woroniecki it was obvious that the capital of tradition determines the being of a given community, that nations that have reached a significant degree of development respect their ancestors and remember their history, culture, language, customs²⁴. We owe life, physical and spiritual, not only to parents, but to the community in which we grow, including the past generations. The family alone would not be able to lead us to full development. The energy of it would focus on keeping us alive and satisfying the basic physical needs. The community, on the other hand, is a depository of the heritage that brings its members into the world of values. An example that can not be invoked here is the national community merged with national heritage, pursuing common goals, caring for the common good, the importance of individual citizens and its own statehood²⁵.

As heritage is about the identity of the nation and its members, the integration of multinational and multicultural communities that we are dealing with today due to globalization and migration of population calls for great prudence. On the one hand, the widest dimension of the common space needs to be based on the values referring to the essence of human life and a clear legitimization of the adopted axiology, and on the other hand it requires the necessary caution in correcting and criticizing the customs proper to the communities subject to integration. A violent moral change breaks the community and exposes the average person to confusion in the field of values. Nevertheless, too much attachment to the customs of the past is harmful to the moral life of the individual and is even a sign of the backwardness of the cultural community²⁶. It is important to be able to assess which of the customs is important for the benefit of the person, and which, being of a secondary nature, can be removed²⁷.

Customs are not something unchanged, and not everything in them seems worthy of continuing. A custom can be depraving, which is why it requires moral consideration. It is also required by the one that is currently being shaped, e.g. we are dealing today with customs stimulated by the development of technology and means of communication. Let us recall again the moralities of “call-out culture”, “cancel culture”, permitting ostracism and denunciation in the public forum. They make us realize the need to initiate discussions about moral values from a perspective beyond the dictate of Enlightenment rationalism.

Moral anarchy not only disintegrates communities, but threatens with objectifying man and losing the sovereignty of national communities²⁸. The moral principles and the customs expressing them do not only order the individual life of a person, but also social relations. Education for civic attitudes, crucial for

²⁴ Ibidem, vol. 2–2, 125–126.

²⁵ Idem, *Quaestio disputata de natione et statu civili – O narodzie i państwie*, transl. Rafał Maliszewski (Lublin: FSVIEN 2004), 21, 43–44.

²⁶ Idem, *Katolicka...*, vol. 1, 244.

²⁷ Ibidem, 246; idem, *Quaestio...*, 56–57.

²⁸ Ibidem, 33–40, 61.

Western democracy, associated with moral education, and its shape was influenced by the Christian heritage, both Protestant and Catholic²⁹. As an example, let us quote Woroniecki's speech devoted to the role of the Christian virtue of humbleness in shaping international relations. He described it as an "active and creative" power, as it is oriented towards goodness, that is, what is God's in other human being, e.g., the humble praise willingly³⁰. In international relations, humility allows us to look at the good of other nations and free ourselves from the narrowness and thus fosters the building of supranational unity³¹.

The Christian formation, at least in principle, should work to consolidate human relationships. However, Christian heritage is being questioned today. The assessment is made without the actual evangelical values, mainly through the prism of colonialism and imperialism, which led European countries in the name of their particular interests³². Perhaps the appreciation of the Christian foundation of democracy is still ahead of us? Comparative research would certainly be a step towards such an assessment. One can ask for example what educational values, supporting the democratization of life and civic attitudes, are brought in by other religious communities than the Christian. Obviously, the research should take into account the perspective of democratic customs, which have respect towards religious freedom.

1.4. Common space as the social awareness of Transcendence

The fourth meaning of the word *domus*, treated as a cognitive trail in the matter of social education, indicates the ultimate perspective of human life. *Domus saxea* (stone house) is a tomb; *domus Tartareae* (underground land of the dead) is the destination of human final migration. "House-end" in its symbolism conceals content that, if admitted to the social consciousness, is a cipher to assessing the model of humanism, civilization or cultural change. It is about the values that describe human life. Omitting the issue of the end (as rationally indefinable) has consequences for the axiology that unites the community. How does it look today? Progressive secularization and materialism and consumerism that determine the rhythm of contemporary culture, divert the human eyes from the final things. In the hierarchy of values, the privileged place begins with utility and efficiency, and the meaning of life is the accumulation of goods. Is this enough?

Woroniecki responds as follows:

²⁹ Idem, *U podstaw kultury...*, 55–70; Bogusław Milerski, *Wartości kulturowe protestantyzmu*, http://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/Content/8985/Wartosci_kulturowe_Protestantyzmu.pdf (access: 12.07.2019).

³⁰ Woroniecki, *Katolicka...*, vol. 2–2, 13–14.

³¹ Ibidem, 17.

³² George Weigel, *The Cube and the Cathedral. Europa, America Without God* (Leominster: Gracewing 2005).

When we look at individual, even the greatest undertakings of our life, such as: a great trip, choosing a profession, starting a family by marriage, organizing an industrial or commercial enterprise, etc., it's easy to see that what guides them is not the completely ultimate goal. With regard to the various activities by which we achieve it, it presents itself as something supreme, that those aim at and from which they get the unity of direction³³.

In the further passage of the text, he concludes:

We see that none of the goods that are the motives and the object of our deeds in mortality, can be the ultimate goal, regulating our entire moral behavior, because none of them satisfies the conditions of good whose possession could give us true, perfect, total and lasting happiness, available for everyone³⁴.

In the final argument, Woroniecki asks us a question about the source of our existence. He reaches for Thomistic metaphysics and theology to develop the question of the contingency of human existence and its ontic dependence on God³⁵.

The optics of "possession" calls for reference to existential optics as an ontically primal. Recalling this relation makes the man aware of the free nature of his own existence and discovers the sense of disinterested action for other people or community. Thinking about yourself as a correlate of what we have, even if it is about acquiring spiritual goods, directs us to profit³⁶. The re-concentration of the relationship of possession, therefore, threatens to bring a person to the correlate of things that he/she owns, to its objectification, and thus to falsifying its value. If a person is perceived as the one who "has" something, he becomes "a man with something", and this "something" opens up the material rather than the subjective optics in interpersonal relations. We begin to be perceived by the state of our possession. A community that loses an existential perspective faces the problem of the very value of human life. The permissibility of abortion or euthanasia is one of the signals confirming that this dangerous process continues. How can we then save the model of humanism that protects our identity as people? In which direction should philosophical argumentation go?

Summing up this part of the considerations, it should be noted that the four-dimensional "common space" described above should be on the axiological map that is included in contemporary pedagogy. The indicated four traces in the interpretation of it revealed such educational postulates as the integrity of upbringing, moral foundations of social order, prudent use of cultural heritage and the need for social awareness of Transcendence. What remains to be considered

³³ Woroniecki, *Katolicka...*, vol. 1, 67.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, 74.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, 71–96.

³⁶ Maria M. Boużyk, *Wychowanie otwarte na religię. Polska Szkoła Filozofii Klasycznej o roli religii w wychowaniu* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo UKSW 2013), 178.

is the question of the epistemological justification of the value described this way. In the theory of education developed by Woroniecki, we find references to metaphysical realism and epistemology of Peripatetic philosophy. Woroniecki wrote in accordance with the spirit of criticism of Enlightenment rationalism, revealing its consequences for educational activities – above all, he was concerned with the threats stemming from the subjectivization and relativism of values. How else can one get out of the narrow frames of rationalism that Enlightenment imposed? At this point, we get to the issue of a mythological narrative as an acceptable form of argumentation in post-enlightenment culture.

2. The category of myth and the theory of education

As I mentioned, defining the epistemological foundations of education oriented on the common space is to clarify the issue of the legitimacy of values and norms, and in particular – to involve of the category of myth in this process. This method of justification can be seen, among others, in the vision of Wolfgang Brezinka, a German philosopher and pedagogue³⁷. Accepting as a fact the extremely individualized perception of the world by modern people, he rightly points to the dangers that result from leaving man to himself in the matter of recognizing values. He lists, among others, a tendency to marginalize the choices of good and evil, the perception of happiness as material prosperity, or the rise of egoism and nihilism resulting in the disintegration of the community. Brezinka uses his diagnosis to formulate the postulate, that the myth be accepted within the scope of a “broader horizon of thinking”, treated as a convenient and safe – while non-verifiable – means of axiological communication. According to the German researcher, in educational practice, this means a reference to tradition: in it a person has to seek the hints of his moral choices. The author’s statement that: “We are here thrown back on the message, on tradition” seems to be the expression of the idea of integral upbringing.

Brezinka sees his concept as opposed to the concepts that he considers to be harmful, either because of false scientist reductionism or of openly sanctioning of axiological fluidity in the realm of human maturation. Myth as a principle regulating the sphere of parental and educational interactions also allows for mythologizing individual values, which organize social life. As an example, Brezinka mentions the myth of the nation and considers it to be significant for setting up educational strategies in a globalized world. Justifying it, he points to the need for a humanistically oriented, open upbringing that takes into account – in the case of Europeans – a European identity, but with “sensitivity” to other cultures, so as to seek a meta-space of understanding. Discussing with Brezinka, I will ask: does

³⁷ Wolfgang Brezinka, *Education and Pedagogy in Cultural Change* (London: Taylor and Francis Ltd. 2017).

the perception of the nation as a mythical category in the field of pedagogy significantly affect the formulation of the concept of patriotic education? If it is assumed that the *raison d'être* of the nation is a social contract, not a social nature of man, can we call patriotism a virtue at all? Can therefore patriotism mean a real moral transformation of a man, his moral perfection? Moreover, what is the meaning of national dignity, guilt and responsibility and character? What does it mean that the nation is the subject of these experiences, attitudes or any activities? Is it or is not? What is the point of discussing about national virtues and vices?

In the sphere of the theory of education, as Brezinka claims, the category of myth acquires the importance of the principle governing the co-operation of the scientific (rationalist) way of thinking with religious and philosophical education entrusted with safeguarding the common good and axiological orientation³⁸. Meanwhile, in the sphere of practice, we deal with a set of various useful myths, and therefore, with reducing the education to introduction into socially meaningful narratives, e.g. on the subject of the transcendental direction of human life, some loads of nuggets of wisdom hidden in the cultural heritage or the social meaning of religion and the principles of conduct.

Literature about the myth in its cognitive function is huge and Brezinka follows the trail of many contemporary researchers, applying their solutions in the field of pedagogy. I would be polemic with him and other philosophical concepts which claimed that the myth is inseparably connected with the structure of human consciousness and is the only justification for the hierarchy of values. The myth is a kind of metaphorical cognition but it can be indicated the rationality of it: in some sense the myth expressed man's journey towards the contemplation of the truth, which brings human fulfilment³⁹. Thus it should be distinguished between the issue of purely cognitive activity ("informing oneself about reality") and the problem of rationality in a wider sense. The rationality of myth derives from the fact that the myth is created by man. It thus should be looked at as part of cognitive life of man, which includes three areas of culture: contemplative, moral and productive.

According to Aristotle, the myth is rational since it expresses the understanding of reality in its basic principles (as identical, non-contradictory, rational and purposeful), although it is not acknowledged by the philosopher as a cognition *sensu stricto*, i.e. as "informing oneself about being", but as something belonging to the field of art. For the criterion of myth creative activity is not the truth itself, but beauty. In the material aspect, the *raison d'être* of the myth is the cognitive content expressed in a language, and in the formal aspect – the idea, or thought

³⁸ Ibidem, 32.

³⁹ Maria M. Boużyk, "Między językiem przenośni a dosłownością", *Bobolanum* 2 (1999), 453–478; eadem, "Dlaczego mit? Kilka uwag w świetle filozofii klasycznej", in: *Tożsamość w ezoterycznych nurtach kultury*, ed. Agata Świerżowska, Izabela Trzcińska (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Libron 2016), 9–26.

of the creator. Aristotle wrote that the myth had its origin in the bewilderment by the world and the experience of the lack, or deficit of knowledge, which is complemented by the myth creator. The rationality of myth rests on a spontaneous cognition embodying the aforementioned basic understanding of reality, which shapes human thinking and which is known in philosophy as the issue of principles of being and knowing. I called this concept of the myth metaphysical one and opposed it to the cultural concept (which claimed that the myth is inseparably connected with the structure of human consciousness).

The conviction that culture, education included, naturally need a myth, seems to be too controversial for me to support. According to such thinkers as R. Otto, M. Eliade, P. Tillich, it is the myth that introduces man into the secret of existence in a vivid and dramatic form; the myth unveils the sacred and brings man closer to transcendence. Owing to the fact that in the history of myth-related research, the myth was frequently assigned a compensating and regulating function (cf. F. Boas, B. Malinowski, L. Levy-Bruhl, E. Cassirer, H. Bergson, M. Eliade, P. Ricoeur), the conclusions pertaining to its fundamental role for culture and humans attempting to discover their identity were not absent from the discussions conducted by contemporary humanists. The myth is to be conducive to social harmony, mental equilibrium; it is to sanction law, rites, as well as to set the scope for morality, to sustain tradition and development of culture⁴⁰.

Not denying the function of the myth thus defined, I emphasize that owing to its subjectivity and ambiguity, the myth cannot be the only answer to basic existential questions, especially when it has to provide a justification for the hierarchy of values and determine the ultimate purpose of human life. I do not thus question the presence of the myth as such. I only discuss the dichotomous division of human cognition into the unambiguous (scientific) and ambiguous (mythological). Although we are not always able to give our cognition the formula of explicitness, I think that the myth, being a story that touches our imagination, does not remain the only alternative. We frequently refer to the metaphor when we enter new and vague research areas. It, however, does not thoroughly satisfy human cognitive aspirations. When given the possibility of exploring real ontic relationships, the metaphor is not necessary. A possible recourse to the category of myth in the theory of education exposes it to irrationality by mythologizing values, for example, the value of the common space. (Post)modern society is an open society, oriented towards social relations. Values cannot, therefore, be imposed. But is bringing them in from the sphere of privacy via the authority of myth constitutes a sufficient incentive for moral conduct and social relations?

Myth and science are treated as autonomous realities: they are governed by separate rules, create specific languages, and their co-existence,

⁴⁰ Kees W. Bolle, "Myth. An Overview", in: *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. M. Eliade, vol. 10 (New York: Macmillan 1987), 261–273.

according to researchers, indeed provides culture with the right balance. Myth is meant to satisfy the need for meaning, protect personal values, and guarantee existential beliefs and spiritual space. According to anthropologist Karen Armstrong, a modern man should become a participant in the myth, because only such an involvement is able to transform him⁴¹. Only by entering the myth, agreeing to a certain “dose” of irrationalism in one’s life, a person can legitimately start living with values and relieve the feeling of loneliness, a nagging sign of the functioning of post-industrial societies. Myth is needed because it serves as the key to saving humanity: thanks to it material relations are transformed into personal ones. Armstrong’s encouragement to learn the myth concerns the educational activities. We are witnesses of the transition to a re-practice of the myth.

On a final note, I want to explain that the contemporary tendencies to perceive culture in terms of irrationality are intellectually rooted in philosophical solutions, such as agnosticism, individualism, and voluntarism. However, the expression of these tendencies is the social acceptance of thinking in terms of a myth in existential issues, the sources of the myth should be sought in the inner structure of the person and in the cultural climate of the epoch. The power of myth always works at the interface between two vectors: subjective and cultural. The unveiling of these vectors can be helpful for analysing the issue of common space, through the highlighting of the problem of legitimization of values.

The subjective vector, which aims at recognizing the cognitive value of myth, is associated with the existential situation of a person as a human and the problem of the mystery of existence experienced very individually by each of us. Philosophy emphasizes that people in their rationality and freedom are heterogeneous in relation to the physical and biological world, and manifest their otherness through culture. Simultaneously, philosophy adds that transcending nature in culture-creating activity cannot nullify the necessity that governs matter. Against this background feature the existential fears of human beings and the desire to find surety for their existence, protection against various forms of evil, including death – the greatest evil. Here is also the cognitive space for the worldview and social myths⁴². Can myth today be used to defend the values which are essential for European culture or should contemporary man search for the confirmation of identity in myth?

Bearing in mind the cultural vector, first of all, it should be remembered that modernity shaped its face to a large extent under the influence of the developing science and technology. They dominated the cognitive perspective, the way of thinking and acting. The grave limitation of the area of research application, occurring since the time of the Enlightenment, has created a convenient situation for the polarization of culture, due to the new concept of rationality. On

⁴¹ Karen Armstrong, *A Short Story of Myth* (Edinburgh: Canongate Books Ltd. 2005).

⁴² Leszek Kołakowski, *The Presence of Myth* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2010).

this basis, the human cognitive field began to be perceived as divided into two rather than the three parts, as known in the long-standing tradition of classical philosophy. According to Aristotle, human knowledge spread within the three great fields of culture: contemplative (*theoria*), moral (*praxis* – including religion), and productive (*poiesis*), having its sanctioning in truth. Integral education in these categories included these three spheres. The Enlightenment proposed a distinction in the culture between the rational (in other words: scientific) area and the irrational or non-scientific one. The latter in the approaches of cultural experts began to be perceived as a space reserved for myth. Moral justifications as well as art and religion count as part of it. If the myth becomes a category that introduces values to the culture, the perspective of the ultimate goal, sanctions the behavior of the members of the community and customs, then the orientation of upbringing in such a legitimate “common space” is assumed to have an irrational foundation. Will we be able to save it as a value for future generations with such argumentation?

Narracja mitologiczna a problem wspólnej przestrzeni jako cel edukacji

Streszczenie: Celem analizy jest podkreślenie wagi uzasadnień filozoficznych, które stoją u fundamentów aktywności pedagogicznej przygotowującej człowieka do życia w społeczności. We współczesnej kulturze najbardziej problematyczna okazuje się domena wartości, bardzo ważna dla rozwoju osobistego i integracji społecznej. Często pozostaje ona na styku tego, co racjonalne i irracjonalne, choć w życiu codziennym więcej uwagi przywiązuje się do racjonalności. Dynamicznie zmieniający się kontekst społeczno-kulturowy, wpływający na procesy edukacyjne, nakłania nas do poszukiwania zasady legitymizacji sfery aksjonormatywnej. Jedną z propozycji współczesnej humanistyki jest włączenie kategorii mitu jako gwarancji zachowania wartości istotnych dla kultury. Dlatego w artykule poruszam problem ważności norm postępowania w związku z zastosowaniem eksplikacyjnej kategorii mitu w teorii wychowania. W ten sposób pragnę upomnieć się o wartości, które są znaczące w przygotowaniu młodego człowieka do budowania relacji z drugim człowiekiem, a które w związku z postępującą indywidualizacją przestrzeni społecznej mogą sprawiać wrażenie nieoczywistych. Artykuł składa się z dwóch części. W pierwszej zajmuję się celem wychowania społecznego. Podejmuję w związku z tym próbę interpretacji terminu „przestrzeń wspólna” jako: (1) kultury, (2) sprawności moralnej jednostki, (3) dziedzictwa kulturowego oraz (4) ostatecznego celu życia. W tej części nawiązuję do teorii wychowania społecznego polskiego pedagoga Jacka Woronieckiego. W części drugiej zajmuję się kwestią teoretycznego uzasadnienia „przestrzeni wspólnej” jako wartości w poświeceniowej kulturze, która wprowadza w argumentację pedagogiczną narrację mitologiczną. W tej części odnoszę się krytycznie do poglądów niemieckiego naukowca Wolfganga Brezinki.

Słowa kluczowe: wychowanie społeczne, wartości społeczne, cnoty społeczne, dziedzictwo, kultura, transcendencja, mit

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