

## **ON CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN FAMILY AND SCHOOL**

JAN ADAMKIEWICZ

*Je v dnešní době možná křesťanská výchova? Lze našim dětem zprostředkovat duchovní a mravní hodnoty ve společnosti, která tyto hodnoty stále více postrádá? Neexistuje krásnější povinnost než péče rodičů o děti s cílem "vytvořit člověka", protože člověk – dítě je mnohem cennější než celý vesmír.*

*Klíčová slova: Křesťanská výchova; rodina; škola*

### Introduction

Is Christian education possible nowadays? Is it possible to convey spiritual or moral values to our own children in society, who are more and more devoid of these values? There is no more beautiful duty than a parents' childcare obligation "to build a person", because "a person – a child" is much more valuable than the whole Universe. One theologian used to say: "The most practical issue is to have own ideas in mind in order to introduce them in our lives." By saying that, he wanted to tell us that the "rules of life" are very important for us to build our lives on ideas that we have in mind. We can say that every family has their own "philosophy" on which they base the upbringing of their children. Very often such a "philosophy" is not clear enough or well defined and thought over, but confused and contradicted within itself. Nevertheless, there are some visible dominant interpretations. Such "philosophy" involves a very particular interpretation of life, love, family, marriage... Christian educational goal was formed by the French pedagogue – bishop Dupanloup (+1878): "The goal of education is harmonious Christian life that is to be preparation for eternal life". Therefore, parents ought to mould children's ability to communicate and also help them to reach maturity as a man and a Christian. Parents ought to shape their children's psychological values and moral virtues for they could become "people of dialogue: through: sincerity, openness, trust, respect, politeness, ability to listen, and humility.

### 1. Upbringing in the Concept of John Paul II

The term "upbringing" is the basic one in the field of pedagogy. The concept of upbringing has its origin in ancient Greece, where it was presented mainly by Socrates. Then, it was transferred to the field of Christianity by St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas. Upbringing was described with the use of the metaphor of giving birth. An educator is supposed to help his child to come to this world. Every man carries a certain inner truth and the tutor's task is to help his pupil so that the truth is born in him. The 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries are full of a multitude of pedagogical streams which offer different concepts "in", and at the same time, give many definitions of the term "upbringing" (naturalistic pedagogy, sociological, cultural, humanistic, and also numerous changes of alternative pedagogy and anti-pedagogy, such as for example, emancipating pedagogy, analytically-critical, anti-authoritarian and unauthoritarian one.) In many definitions there appears to be a tendency for determining it as a one-way influence, effecting, formulating, shaping or leading a pupil by an educator. Therefore 'education' has become more a kind of a monologue directed at the pupil, rather than a common discovering of

humanity in a man. The Rev. Zwoliński in “Encyklopedia Nauczania Społecznego” (Social Teaching Encyclopedia) by John Paul II writes “education”-it is an ensemble of manners and processes which help a human being, especially by interaction, to realize someone’s humanity.

The second stream of personal vision of education was initiated by Vatican council II. They paid attention to the complimentary embrace of the whole process that is combined with education with particular consideration for the comprehensive and harmonious development of a person, occurring through common dialogue. Education that is understood in this way includes physical, moral and intellectual dimensions, as well as social and religious ones. Education means gaining a greater maturity visible in increasing responsibility with which young people take their ordered and essential activity while seeking true freedom. Education is gaining both the courage and patience that is needed to overcome all difficulties; it is also a positive and careful sexual education. Education is a suitable social education thanks to which young people would be able to actively join different regions of common life, being available for a dialogue with others in order to help in multiplying common welfare with acknowledgement of moral and religious formation.

Valuing the importance and meaning of human education, John Paul II in his many speeches considers the issue on many aspects, never restricting it only to one single aspect or a measurement. He is perfectly aware of how complex and at the same time hard the process is for educating another person, and especially in the present reality so full of contradictions. The concern is to give to the world and also to all educators the vision of the Church concerning the rivalling educational systems surrounded by ideological chaos.

John Paul II, taking into consideration both the human’s personal point of view and axiological and normative look, but also socio-cultural and religious as well, is creating a pattern and suggesting an educational explanation for the whole of Christian pedagogy. In fact, the pattern has a very universal character, not confined to any ideology or social and political system.

Such a general view of a man is the basis for drawing a concept of the education of an individual.

The concept of one’s upbringing in the view of John Paul II is faithful to the truth about a person, about its dignity and inimitability, about its spiritual and material unity, about its constant becoming into the natural and supernatural sphere. As John Paul II writes, the formation of a man starts already in the mother’s womb and lasts through the whole family life. In this case, it is about the work that gives the human and Christian form of one’s soul, name, heart, conscience and responsibility for oneself and other people.

Assuming the anthropological point of view, which is deeply embedded in Christian individualism, the Pope clearly stresses: “Upbringing serves to civilize a man, which has a particular meaning. A man, being a man from the first moment in the mother’s womb, gradually learns how to be a man – and this essential idea identifies with the idea of upbringing. The man constitutes the future of their family and the whole of humanity – however, the future of the man is inseparably connected with upbringing.”<sup>1</sup>

John Paul II treats a man with definite care and respect. A man has dignity in terms of a goal, not a means. These are strong words concerning the issue: “A man is such a right (...) that cannot be treated like an object of use; therefore the proper reference of a standard value is merely love.”

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<sup>1</sup> *Homily during the Mass for families in Portugal*, 15. 05. 1982. In: *Rodzina w nauczaniu Jana Pawła II. Antologia wypowiedzi*. Kraków 1990.

Man's dignity spreads and concerns every single individual, including the handicapped – physically or mentally. John Paul II writes: “a new man, since the conception and birth, is destined for full expression of their humanity – for its fulfilment. The idea concerns everyone – including chronically ill and mentally retarded. To be a man is man's fundamental vocation: to be a man to measure the gift they received. To measure the talent which is humanity itself, and then to measure all the talents that they were endowed with.”

Undoubtedly, we have to agree with the Pope's statement saying that upbringing has to be considered in terms of creativity. Every man is different; therefore every man has to be treated in an individual way. It is impossible to open every man's soul and heart with the same means and methods. For that reason, when an educator wants to bring up other people, he has to become a creator, and not a craftsman. John Paul II said: “Upbringing is creation in terms of the human – you can bring up a man – an animal is only trained (...). Everything that is naturally composed in a man being educated is a material for educators, the material for which their love ought to reach. In addition, everything that God gives belong to the whole of that material, as it is about the supernatural case, that is to say-grace. The Pope doesn't leave the act of education, which is in a way constant creation of personality, fully and only to parents, but He also takes part in it himself”.

In education the constant presence of rules and obligations is necessary, and they should be complemented with a specified value system. The analysis of K. Wojtyła's philosophical texts concentrated on how a man makes it possible to show basic values and norms for which you can formulate the fundamental rules of education. They are: value of welfare and truth, and also value and dignity of person. In the light of these actions we must assume that education is to insert a man into a world of basic values which are: freedom, responsibility and love. Education for freedom is at the same time education for responsibility: “a man is responsible for his deeds because he is in possession of an ability that responds to value with will. The process of a subject and its value arises, and in combination with it responsibility for the subject is brought according to its value”.

## 2. Education vs Value

The fundamental values in humanism, as in Christianity, are:

- Truth-it is valuable because of the difficulty of its gaining,
- Good – is a motive, a goal for all to aim for, its reading should be connected with every single man's individual effort.
- Love-means a creative decision of trust in another man.

A compromise conditioning peoples' life in relative harmony is also a humanistic value.

Rev. doc. Marek Drzewiecki claims that “*values are principles and rules of behaviour which enable a pupil full development and also protect him from harming himself and others*”.

One crucial element of responsible education is supporting the pupil in discovering, realizing and respecting fundamental values that consider the particular ranges of human life. It is obvious that only some methods of behaviour lead a man to self-development and happiness.

All other ways lead to crisis and suffering. This fact introduces the empirical issue of values. In terms of upbringing, values can be described as all the goals, principles, and behaviour confirmed by everyday experience which enable the pupil to develop and achieve permanent satisfaction of life. Therefore, the true values do not result from ideological assumptions or groundless tradition, but from the analysis of experience related to growth and upbringing of a man. They are subject to empirical revision as much as behaviour, being in contradiction to these values leads to disturbance in development, as well as to harm ourselves and others.

A responsible and realistic educator is aware that every man, especially a one in the stage of growing, is able to harm himself and disturb his own development. Therefore, every pupil needs a certain set of principles called values. These kinds of principles are favourable for the pupil's growth and at the same time, they protect them from faults. The need of upbringing in the sphere of values is very obvious. That is to help pupils to discover and respect basic values. However, it is not an easy and spontaneous process. An educator is aware that there is no such thing as a neutral upbringing, as far as world-view and values are concerned. An educator is also aware that to adopt a certain set of values in a given pedagogical system does not result merely from a logical analysis of previous educational experience, but also concerns the concept of man, which a pedagogue accepts, consciously or not.

It turns out that the most essential issue is to understand and define the term “*value*” itself. Regardless of any difficulties in defining the term “*value*”, its existence is certain, just as certain as is the existence of the real world. Undoubtedly, values give shape to our lives. An educator ought to try to recognize properly, read, and eventually assess the particular behaviour of pupils. An educator-parent has to cooperate with a pupil-child in terms of valuation. It is possible because values exist irrespective of us. It would be hard to bring up someone in an effective, intelligent and responsible way if objective values were not applied.

In the language of philosophy, the term “*value*” means something positive, but also negative. Axiologists use the term in relation to health, justice, goodness, as well as to illness, ugliness or untruthfulness. Therefore, ethical values are divided into positive and negative.

### 3. Josh McDowell on Building the Bond – Love in Family

Josh McDowell talked about building the family bond, friendship with the child and building love during his lecture in Warsaw in 2001. He emphasized that parents' emotional negligence, and especially a fathers', has a destructive influence on the development of a child. He claims that a code of behaviour introduced by parents and teachers, but without any personal relations, leads to disobedience. Unwanted behaviour of a young man may be changed with the help of personal bonds. How to build them? Answering the question the author gives 6 steps to build the bonds:

The first step – AFFIRMATION; in other words – *happy confirmation for the feelings of the child*. “*Enjoy together with ones in high spirits, be sad together with blue ones*”. The author wants to say: let's enjoy together with the child or let's cry when it does, so we must confirm its way of feeling.

- The second step – ACCEPTANCE; *it gives to the child sense of safety, without any preconditions*.
- The third step – APPRECIATING; *if we appreciate our child then it feels the sense of what it does*. Appreciating gives the child self-esteem. It feels that it is doing something with sense.
- The fourth step – AVAILABILITY; *thanks to this, we communicate the child's importance for us, as for a parent or a teacher. When we are available our child sees its importance, but when we don't have any time for the child, it feels unimportant for mum and dad or a teacher*.
- The fifth step – FEELING-TOGETHER; *we inform the child we love it*. When we show our feelings the child knows that it's loved, because the child all the time needs lots of love. When it feels unloved by its parents, it will be seeking it among its peers.
- The sixth step – READINESS FOR SQUARING UP; *we confirm our children's responsibility*. We introduce to the child clear rules, and then we square up with it. In this way they can feel they are responsible.

The author says that we must remember that our children grow up fast and one day they won't be two years old anymore. Therefore they will not always want to sit on our knees and ask questions. Such a period will occur in our life, and then we will want to speak with our children; and want them to ask us for a piece of advice, or we'll try to do something together. So, if nowadays we find some free time for the child, it will find some time for us in the future; if we now show it that we love it, it will show its love to us then; if we listen to it now, it will want to listen to us one day, too. No matter how old we are, we can always change that which doesn't build the family bonds. It's never too late to change the relationship with our child. But the older our child, is the more difficult it will be for us to change it.

#### 4. Education at School

After the social breakthrough that occurred in Poland in 1989, there were also changes in Polish schools which started to open up to the pedagogical trends that are common in Western Europe and North America. Especially in the field of lay humanistic pedagogy where the most promoted representative is the American pedagogue and psychologist, Carl Rogers. He assumes that human nature is absolutely good, and the pupil is an internally harmonious and peaceable person.<sup>2</sup> As a result of this kind of assumption, the highest value is spontaneity and self-fulfilment according to the criteria every pupil describes as subjective. In this vision there are no objective values, nor objective criteria of development. The highest principle of development is to spontaneously follow the pupil's own corporeality and emotions.

Whereas, in the light of obvious experience, the pedagogues-humanists' belief about the inner harmony and peace ability of a pupil seems to be an equally attractive, naïve and dangerous utopia.

However, in Polish schools we can observe the uncritical perception of this kind of humanistic vision of education. Marxist education that led to pupils' submission to collective good is now being replaced by individual education, which means their submission to their own body, emotions, subjective beliefs and egoistic tendency. In this way it becomes an ideal, which is the most dangerous thing for education. Elementary experience, conscience, social bonds, love, responsibility, and even fundamental moral principles are not important in the field of humanistic pedagogy. If it was possible to achieve happiness and development, all the people brought up in this way would be happy. Whereas, this is exactly the concept of education that led to a great crisis of a contemporary man.

In this situation, the pedagogues-personalists' task is to give children double educational support. The first mission is to expose false beliefs and attitudes in relation to the sphere of values. The second mission is the consequent promotion of real values; values that are confirmed by empirical knowledge and experience. Exposure of the misinterpretations and attitudes in the axiological sphere is to reveal that well-known previous 'values' are not, in fact, values. It also means restoration of the appropriate position to the values in the hierarchy which are secondary, but nowadays shown as absolute ones.

Here are some fundamental truths being the material value for the pupil and the process of upbringing:

- to be a human means to being gifted with intelligence and freedom, and at the same time to be in danger of other humans and oneself;
- the human being can commit evil which he doesn't want more easily than the welfare which he longs for;

<sup>2</sup> ROGERS, C.: *On Becoming a Person*. Boston 1961.

- the human may control his freedom in such an immature way that he is going to lose it;
- there are precisely known and described ways of behaviour which lead the human to his development and love, and also precisely documented ways of behaviour leading him to aggression, mental disorders, addictions, depression, suicides;
- the human being is able to cheat himself to such a degree that for this reason he dies.

The attitude of the particular ward to love, truth and also to other basic values mainly depends on the quality of his family bonds and relations. In the family the child builds bonds which later become the patterns for all mutual relations between people. Also in the family the child learns how to perceive both itself and the world, in other words, it's putting "spectacles" up that are helpful in the interpretation of later information and experiences. Mostly it depends on the family situation how realistically the ward will understand itself and the world as well (truth), and also how serious will be his attitude to himself and other people (love).

Education is to help man in discovering himself, the sense of his life, the world of values, and to improve him to act in agreement with discovered truth.

Thus in the process of education an adult is needed to be the authority – the educator who will show the aim, values and the direction to gain them-with own example, with own life and attitude. The base of the upbringing process should be welfare of the ward as a person. The educator, parents, institutions and other persons who have influence on the process of education of parents, teachers, catechists, educating institutions making upbringing projects, the media, journalists, Members of Parliament, local societies creating the law, etc. They all have a duty to help the ward to become a better person. Social expectations mustn't be in contradiction with the education for becoming a better man. The good of each and every person should be the common good. In this case, there is no conflict between social life and the education of an individual.

An educator-personalist is aware of the fact that the formation of the axiological sphere is performed not only through official conversation. Most often it is realized in an unnoticeable way from the outer world due to the atmosphere between an educator and a pupil, to common acts, to rules of reacting to conflicts and difficulties, to ways of communicating. The most effective way of bringing up a pupil in the sphere of values is to fascinate the pupil with a life full of love, truth, freedom, responsibility, holiness, and fidelity to own vocation. In order to bring up a pupil in the axiological sphere, an educator has to set an example. It is very useful to apply the method of God, who is the best educator ever. In the first place He explains the reasons why certain principles are valuable: you should cherish the holy day so that you and your family could rest. You should cherish your mother and father so that you could live long and be successful. Through the history of salvation God assures us that respect for these values is always our profit and leads us to achieve complete joy.

## 5. Integral Aspect of Education

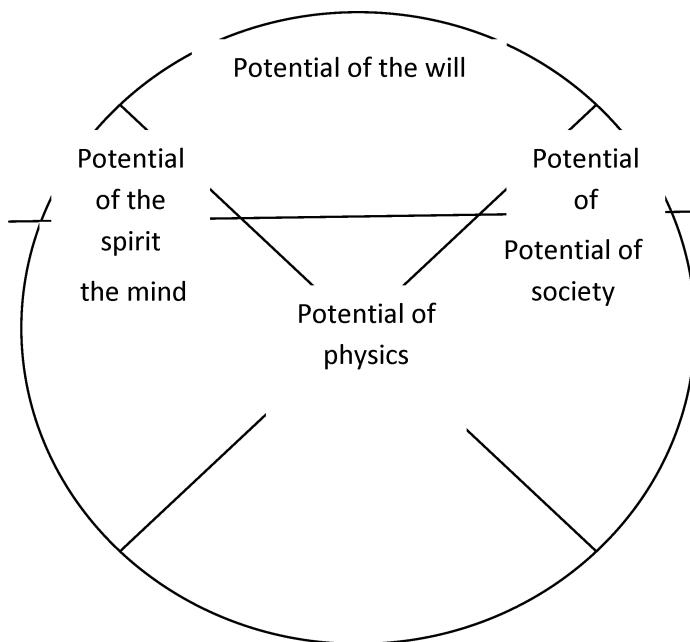
Maritain and Guardini claim that the need of religious education (potential of the spirit) results from the fact that "*a man is necessarily turned towards God.*" The *necessity* is the need of explaining to a man the meaning of life, suffering and death. Guardini adds that the relationship to God, being a necessity, is something that cannot be fulfilled merely by a man's deeds. That is why any discussion about religious education is wrong, because if we reject God, we do not have any possibility to give answer to all the existential problems of a man. There is no neutral education, for there is always an assumption concerning certain values. Religious education helps a man to find answers to basic questions concerning the existence of a man, and the transcendence towards God.

Undoubtedly, education has to be integrated as far as all domains are concerned. One-track education will always be harmful to a pupil. It is necessary to keep the balance in all domains of education.

In upbringing we follow the golden rule of behaviour given by Christ: “So always treat others as you would like them to treat you.”(Mt,7,12).

The fundamental reason for the family’s existence and that which it is like is its members’ welfare. Sharon Wegscheider-Cruse together with her husband had a need to create a bright picture of a healthy, well-functioning person, and thereby a picture of the family. Then Sharon and Don started to develop the model of the ‘concept of a person as a whole’. They both consider the model effective; as the starting-point for work with families, but in the centre of that model there is a man as an individual.

They use the model to appraise the problems concerning both the individual and the family. It is also a valuable tool which helps a man- ‘a client’ to understand themselves. Sharon believes that a single person is composed of six dimensions:



The circle model of a persona a whole

If we say that a human being possesses those six abilities, thereby the human- the model shows the person geometrically as a whole, in the form of a circle, which has been accepted by myth and dream researchers as the symbol of fullness and integral whole for many years. This model is composed of six separate, but equivalent parts. When one of them is incomplete or disabled, the whole circle loses its integrity. To keep the model balanced it was limited to the *structure of the person*. It doesn’t show the structure in action. In fact, every one of the dimensions, although shown in the model as separate, remains in dynamic contact with the others, constantly being under their influence and also being influential itself. If we imagine the model as a rotating, “working” wheel, we will be able to easily understand how deformation of any of the parts influences the work of the whole thing. In every situation in our lives, our

feelings and acting result from the interaction of some or all of the potentials. They cooperate with each other with different intensity. Generally, they create a vast diversity of possible relations within a man, with other people, with the environment and finally with the Universe. A working person who lives in the name of *philosophy of success, philosophy of appearance, philosophy of possession and pleasure*, has a few typical symptoms indicating which of the potentials might be neglected.

To verify ourselves is essential if we want to function well in our families or perform any work and at the same time be good. The circle model 'as a whole' is supposed to serve us to identify the spheres that are being neglected in the process of development ourselves. But if you still do not see yourself and your family, and you are still wandering, take the motto of Thomas Gordon: '*Accept all you cannot change*'. There is also a prayer of Gordon:

*Lord, give me courage to change what I can change;  
Give me inner self-control to accept what I cannot change;  
And wisdom so that I can distinguish one from the other.*

## Conclusion

Against the background of preceding considerations you can formulate a definition of upbringing that is proposed by John Paul II, which is also the conclusion of his teaching upon this subject. By John Paul II's own account:

In upbringing the point is,

to let a human become more and more human

- to let him 'be', and not only 'possess' more

-to let him be more and fully human thanks to everything he 'has' and 'possesses', which means, to let him not only 'be' with 'the other', but also 'for the others'.

Upbringing understood in this way has a basic meaning for shaping mutual and social relations.

The pedagogical message in the sphere of upbringing preached by John Paul II is a Christian proclamation of Church that awakens from moral hibernation. It needs consequence in thinking and acting, taking on oneself the effects of one's own action to which every man as the moral person feels obliged. Recalling the whole picture of a person, showing the truth of welfare and values is the evidence of the timeless and supra-governmental vision of papal pedagogy-Christian pedagogy.

## Shrnutí

### Ke křesťanskému vzdělávání v rodině a ve škole

Myšlenky z oblasti výchovy hlášané Janem Pavlem II. Jsou křesťanskou proklamací církve, která se probouzí z morální hibernace. Proto je třeba v myšlení a jednání brát v úvahu následky vlastního jednání, což každý člověk jako morální osobnost cítí jako povinnost. Připomínat celý obraz osoby, ukazovat pravdu dobrých životních podmínek a hodnot je důkazem o nadčasové a nadvládání vizi papežské křesťanské pedagogiky.