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**PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS  
OF EDUCATION – S. HESSEN  
AND F. ZNANIECKI**

**ABSTRACT**

The article analyses the works of F. Znaniecki and S. Hessen in the context of modern philosophical and pedagogical reflections. The author formulates a thesis about the current sense of their considerations for the idea of Europeanism in relation to the education area. The text constitutes an opposition towards one-dimensional, extreme, conservative or nationalistic attitudes, portraying Europeanism as a threat to national traditions. The author places a great role in the concepts of spiritualization and humanization. In this context, he postulates to predicate education on a philosophical ground between universalism and empiricism.

Keywords:

Polish philosophy, F. Znaniecki, S. Hessen.

The idea of Europeanism in the modern sense understands Europe and its culture as common in roots dating back to traditions of Athens, Rome, Jerusalem, overcoming various particularities in favour of basic human values. The idea is possible to be brought to life only with an awakening of inner vital forces; overcoming deathly seeds destructing human souls; bringing human soul back from loneliness; union of human race with bounds of love into a common spirit. In this process, education plays an essential role. As a result, a human may be formed, performing the function of a guide. Only philosophy may constitute the foundation for education in this perception, enabling proper treatment of another human being and a wise use of objects.

Such a concept of education was presented by two thinkers: F. Znaniecki and S. Hessen<sup>1</sup>. The first wrote: “at all times, in all populations, <education> consists of certain actions performed by certain people with the intention to cause, constraint or modify, now or in distant future, some actions of other people; in other words, education is an activity aiming at causing an impact on human actions. All actions with the human being as its subject with the intention to influence human activity, in other words, to cause a reaction, is a social activity, in opposition to, for example, a technical

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<sup>1</sup> Florian Znaniecki (1882–1952) – sociologist, representative philosopher of culture and humanistic sociology. See: Z. Dulczewski: *Florian Znaniecki. Życie i dzieło*, Poznań 1984; idem *O Florianie Znanieckim*, Poznań 2000; *Florian Znaniecki i jego rola w socjologii*, (ed.) A. Kwilecki, Poznań 1975, p. 190; G. Godlewski: *Lekcja kryzysu. Źródła kulturalizmu Floriana Znanieckiego*, Warszawa 1997; E. Hałas: *Klasyczna socjologia kultury. Nowe odczytanie spuścizny Floriana Znanieckiego*, [in:] *Klasyczna socjologia polska i jej współczesna recepcje*, Toruń 2006, p. 135–166; T. Knapik: *Człowiek i wartości. Tematy filozoficzne we wczesnych studiach Floriana Znanieckiego*, Katowice 2006, p. 194 (typescript); W. Mrozek: *Florian Znaniecki, „Chowanna”* 1958, z. 3/4; M. Pacholski: *Florian Znaniecki. Społeczna dynamika kultury*, Warszawa 1977, J. Szacki: *F. Znaniecki*, Warszawa 1986 and *W kręgu filozofii Floriana Znanieckiego*, [in:] *Studia z filozofii polskiej*, Bielsko-Biała 2006, p. 169–206. The article is compatible with the content of the paper elaborated for the conference „Adult Education – trends and issues” organized in September 2, 2013 by the Faculty of Economics and Administration, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic and non-published.

Sergei Hessen (1887–1950) – pedagogue, philosopher, political scientist. See: K. Bochenek, L. Gawor, A. Jedynak, J. Kojkoł: *Filozofia polska okresu międzywojennego. Zarys problematyki*, Gdynia 2013, pp. 199–202, L. Chmaj: *Hessen S., „Chowanna”* 1939, pp. 78–82; of the same author: *Sergiusz Hessen*, [in:] L. Chmaj: *Prądy i kierunki w pedagogice XX w.*, Warszawa 1962, pp. 391; J. Diec: *Koncepcja kultury Sergiusz Hessena*, „Archiwum Filozofii i Myśli społecznej”, 1998, vol. 43, pp. 195–201; A. Folkierska: *Sergiusz Hessenn – pedagog odpowiedzialny*, Warszawa 2005, H. Gajdamowicz: *Antropocentryzm teorii kultury S. Hessena*, „Studia Filozoficzne”, 1983, nr 11-12, pp. 213–220; J. Gajda: *Czołowi przedstawiciele pedagogiki kultury w Polsce okresu dwudziestolecia międzywojennego*, [in:] idem *Pedagogika kultury w zarysie*, Kraków 2006, pp. 43–73; J. Kojkoł: *Polska myśl społeczna o wychowaniu w latach 1900–1950*, Warszawa-Tyczyn 2005, pp. 38–49, H. Malicka: *Sergiusza Hessena pedagogicznej doktryny aspekty personalistyczne*, [in:] *Wychowanie na rozdrożu: personalistyczna filozofia wychowania*, Kraków 1999, pp. 245–251; S. Sztobryn: *Filozofia wychowania S. Hessena*, Łódź 1994 i Warszawa 1997, idem: *Hessen Sergiusz (1887–1950)*, [in:] *Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku*, Warszawa 2003, vol. 2, pp. 192–196.

activity, wanting to cause a material change, from a cognitive activity, aiming at finding or justifying a truth”<sup>2</sup>.

F. Znaniecki only underlined the fact that the effect of educational actions is not supposed to be “shaping a timeless and spaceless human being in general” but an empirical human being, who lives in certain social conditions determined by time and space, and who has to adapt to these conditions in order to exist physically and mentally. In his opinion, every generation wants to mould the next one according to its own patterns, but education is never as effective as to prevent pupils from diverging from these patterns. F. Znaniecki calls this process with the term of general individualization. It happens because “a higher mental development of civilized societies members, broadening of social and cultural horizons [...] allows them to realize faster changes acting on societies. This imposes an obvious conclusion that the state of a society fulfilling its function will be different than at the moment when the next generation will take place of the current one. There emerges a problem – should we prepare pupils for the future state of their society or for the current one? With this problem comes another one. Future is seen as considerably undescribed, possible to determine by purposeful human action”<sup>3</sup>.

F. Znaniecki postulated education of humans capable of coping with changing civilization. It will be possible only under the condition of spiritualization of modern civilization, especially by providing it with a humanistic character.

Humanism was for him a wide philosophic movement in which notions of value and activity came to the fore. Human being as creator of culture and values may stand before absolutes from now on. The practical and theoretical reasons, as symptoms of human activity, criticize all previous axioms. “It is possible in the nearest future – wrote F. Znaniecki – that the widest human mass will participate more actively than before, in art, knowledge, religion, selfless social life. If such masses support creators, a development of such areas of culture is possible of which even classical Greece or Renaissance Italy may have only a slight imagination. It is possible that completely new areas of spiritual culture, impossible to predict nowadays, will

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<sup>2</sup> F. Znaniecki: *Socjologia wychowania*, Warszawa 1973, p. 3 (first edition in two volumes 1928–1930). See: F. Znaniecki: *Kierownictwo a zwolennictwo we współpracy twórczej*, „Kultura i Wychowanie”, 1934, nr 4, pp. 277–294.

<sup>3</sup> F. Znaniecki: *Socjologia...*, ed. cit., p. 74. Of the same author: *Humanizm i poznanie*, Warszawa 1912; *Cultural Sciences. Their Origin Development*, Warszawa 1971; *Znaczenie rozwoju świata i człowieka*, „Świat i Człowiek”, 1913, vol. IV.

rise, just as Palaeolithic people could not predict that mathematics, sociology, symphonic music and modern drama, nations, countries and religions would come into being. As it isn't possible to participate in spiritual culture as in material culture – as a tool or user – one has to be a performer, not a producer, and come closer to the creator's level through one's product, so the growing contribution of masses into developing culture means general progress of people as cultural entities, popularizing ideals of humanism and, as they come true, creating greater ideals"<sup>4</sup>.

“For Znaniecki – according J. Szczepanski – the problem comes down to using mechanisms which permitted contemporary societies to create <pervert> people, distant from <civilization norms>, which means: not adapting to current conditions or deviating from norms accepted by the society”<sup>5</sup>. He meant especially “hypermoral” people, doing more and better than the personal pattern requires, enriching the socio-cultural system with their creativity or inscribing new meaning to their role.

We may call them rebels who revolt against norms regulating their social roles, especially against social functions imposed on them by normal environment. Rebeliousness may concern factual tasks or moral rules, individual or collective activity. It may take the form of an open opposition to requirements of the environment; tacit reversal from such requirements or performing them only apparently. Humans of such personality do not see the necessities concerning them nor do they feel the need to adapt to objective orders. Instead, they try to break down from constraints and live freely.

Rebeliousness of “a hyper normal pervert” does not concern, according to F. Znaniecki, the problem of an individual, subjective adaptation to a given order, but to the problem of an objective importance of the order itself. He wrote: “he cares generally not about what he has to do in relation to a ready order, whether to adapt like normal people or revolt, but about what is objectively to do in this order, whether to preserve it like normal people or change it”<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, p. 33.

<sup>5</sup> J. Szczepański: *Introduction* to F. Znaniecki: *Ludzie terażniejsi a cywilizacja przyszłości*, Warszawa – Lwów 1934, p. XX. See: F. Znaniecki: *The Social Role of the Man of Knowledge*, Warszawa 1984, pp. 441–478. Cf. my analysis in the book J. Kojkoł: *Polska myśl filozoficzna...*, ed. cit., pp. 31–37.

<sup>6</sup> F. Znaniecki: *Ludzie terażniejsi...*, ed. cit., p. 325.

In the learning process, people must arise whose creativity and independence will not be oriented against the order and will not break the norms; for whom creativity would be normal cultural activity in accordance with an objective reality; independent people. A new type of normality must arise, based not on behaviour of an existing culture and adapting to it, but on creating new culture and “personal independence in an environment of independent people”.

Florian Znaniecki’s anthropocentric philosophy of values was a reaction to idealism and naturalism. It was supposed to give a theoretical foundation to humanistic sciences. Anthropocentrism was linked to aspiration of defence of humanism and culture as an entity from subjectivism and scepticism. Znaniecki’s term of “value” aimed at showing the essence of humanistic sciences, according to which reality is a world of values, in other words, reality being the domain of human creativity. Values are primal facts of human experience, impossible to ascribe to any other scientific category. They are always described by relation to the current moment, they have a meaning only when they are realized in the present, although they last outside the moment of realization. We can say – they last in culture, but it is the human who makes them real. Such an approach to education, values, humans and culture is characteristic for Znaniecki and Hessen’s activity.

Basic thesis of the latter, especially concerning philosophical aspects of education may be found in his “Basics of pedagogy” as well as in his work “Contradictions and unity of education”<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> About S. Hessen: Ł. Kabzińska: *Hessen Sergiusz(1887–1950)*, [in:] *Historia wychowania. Słownik biograficzny*, Olsztyn 1994, pp. 57–58; Z. Kuderowicz: *Sergiusz Hessen a przełom antypozytywistyczny*, „*Studia Filozoficzne*” 1969, nr 4, pp. 161–164; B. Nawroczyński: *Hessen Sergiusz (1887–1950)*, [in:] *Polski Słownik biograficzny*, Wrocław-Warszawa 1961, vol. IX/4, pp. 487–488; T. Nowacki: *Introduction*, [in:] S. Hessen: *Filozofia – kultura – wychowanie*, Wrocław 1973, pp. V – XXXVI; W. Okoń: *Sergiusz Hessen jako człowiek i uczyony*, [in:] S. Hessen: *Dzieła wybrane*, Warszawa 1997, pp. 11–58; idem: *Hessen Sergiusz*, [in:] W. Okoń: *Nowy Słownik Pedagogiczny*, Warszawa 1996, pp. 91–92; idem: *Sergiusz Hessen o filozofii wychowania*, „*Kwartalnik Pedagogiczny*”, 1990, nr 3, pp. 23–34; H. Rotkiewicz (ed.): *Filozofia wychowania Sergiusza Hessena*, Warszawa 1997, pp. 223; S. Sztobryn: *Filozofia wychowania...*, ed. cit., p. 201; idem: *Dialektyka swobody i przymusu w pedagogice S. Hessena*, „*Studia Filozoficzne*”, 1983, nr 11–12, pp. 203–212; A. Walicki: *Słowo wstępne*, [in:] S. Hessen: *Studia z filozofii kultury*, Warszawa 1968, pp. 5–46; S. Wołoszyn: *Podstawy pedagogiki personalistycznej w ujęciu Sergiusza Hessena*, [in:] S. Wołoszyn (ed.): *Źródła do dziejów wychowania i myśli pedagogicznej*, Warszawa 1966, vol. 3, p. 22.

Spiritual culture was for Hessen a group of values constituting the foundation for its every other expression. Culture in a wider sense is an activity oriented at accomplishing values requiring constant development and movement from men. In such a way, the structure of values becomes heterogeneous, it undergoes hierarchization. Culture itself is gradable. It becomes so in the process of dialectic tensions which, by overcoming states hindering human progress, make an individual rise to a higher level of spiritual culture. According to Hessen, “nowadays, in the area of culture, we distinguish a higher level with science, art, religion, morality, in other words – all those more >internal<, as if >spiritual< values, which Plato considered philosophy. From this higher layer of >enlightenment<, we distinguish >nationality< as a temporary layer of statehood and law, different in turn from economy and technology, understanding >civilization< as a lower level of culture, more external or material. Admittedly, contrary to Plato, we do not think that every layer of culture has its representative in a distinct social class, but quite the opposite –that every man taking part in economic and civic life of the society has a right to be a part of education”<sup>8</sup>.

In the human world, culture seems to be an educational instance, in contrast to teaching and upbringing which become processes enabling access to culture. According to I. Wojnar: “culture is both the content and the result of education, in other words, education becomes culture’s vector, it awakens the need to learn and feel the beauty, it develops creativity, it makes sensitive to values, it teaches critical thinking. Culture is simultaneously an impulse, it penetrates the meaning and ways of pedagogical actions. Education and culture are then interrelated: education enlightens, culture differentiates, being at the same time the result of teaching, thanks to which a constant progress of culture is possible. The cultural development of education fosters progress of creative forces of an individual”<sup>9</sup>.

In the process of education, human beings become a part of the hierarchy of the world, which gains a multi-faceted feature. S. Hessen claims that an individual lives on four planes of being, corresponding to four layers of education. Humans function in it as psychophysical organism, social en-

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<sup>8</sup> S. Hessen,; *Podstawy pedagogiki*, Warszawa 1931, p. 15. Cf. J. Diec: *Koncepcja...*, ed. cit., p. 197.

<sup>9</sup> I. Wojnar: *Koncepcja kształcenia ogólnego w myśli Sergiusza Hessena*, [in:] H. Rotkiewicz (ed.): *Filozofia wychowania...*, ed. cit., p. 59.

tity, personality included in a cultural tradition and as a “member of spiritual kingdom”<sup>10</sup>.

Biological life is the lowest of four mentioned layers. Its analysis shows that the purpose of education is a psychophysical development of a human organism. Biological foundations of education are displayed in care and training both of men and animals, although human education is considerably different from training animals. Hessen writes: “for animals, training serves solely biological purposes – adapting the specimen to its biosphere, preserving of its offspring. On the other hand, human >training< serves social purposes exactly because social being comes along biological being and humans can even alter or distort it [...] Only men can train animals in such a way that the training starts to serve not biological, but social human purposes”<sup>11</sup>.

Nurturance, care and training constitute the whole education on the biological level, where some needs and instincts caused by organic processes emerge and are fulfilled. According to S. Hessen, in reality at this stage the individual becomes a part of a species, enabling extension of the human species and its perfectioning. A certain type of immortality is achieved in this way, being the result of love treated as a symptom of pursuit of immortality. It is evidently the lowest level on immortality scale, just as sexual love is the lowest form of love. “Immortality gained in this process is an immortality of recreation, where nothing new is created” – concludes Hessen<sup>12</sup>.

On the biological level, opinions, attitudes, ways of conscious behaviour making tradition which continuity is a social phenomenon are not transmitted by the old generation to the new one. In this context, Hessen claims that there is a second layer above the biological one – the layer of social being, where an individual is included into the collective social life, where he learns traditions and recreates them. Education as a social process outreaches “care and training”. Its purpose becomes forming an individual into a member of a social group. “This forming builds up on care and training as its

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<sup>10</sup> S. Hessen: *O sprzecznościach i jedności wychowania*, Lwów – Warszawa 1939, p. 236.

<sup>11</sup> S. Hessen: *Pedagog*, [in:] S. Hessen: *Filozofia-kultura-wychowanie*, ed. cit., p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> S. Hessen: *O sprzecznościach...*, ed. cit., p. 215; also T. W. Nowacki: *U podstaw twórczości Sergiusza Hessa*, [in:] *Filozofia wychowania...*, ed. cit., p. 27. Cf. my analysis in the book J. Kojkoł: *Polska myśl społeczna...*, ed. cit., pp. 38–49.

basis, using all kinds of means impossible to bring down to automatic acts or a chain of conditioned reflexes as for example: suggestion, emulation, competition, penalty, awards, etc. These are all means of an external influence of a group to an individual, and while this pressure may be more or less mild, it always remains a pressure. Thanks to these means of external pressure, a social group forms the young generation in the way required by social needs of this group. It aims at reproducing itself in young individuals”<sup>13</sup>. The basic rule of forming is power, because the teacher-student relation is an authority relation. Power is the factor on the social level which brings individuals together into social groups. Its manifestation is a constraint felt by individuals as something defining it from outside, constituting at the same time its micro- and macro-world.

S. Hessen understands pressure put by “cultural values” on an individual in a different way. They require a creative effort, consent of the conscience, voluntary suspense of the will. “They require not only imitation and submission, but overcoming tradition, whether it is linguistic, scientific or artistic. Tradition itself, to which an individual should be >accustomed< is an open community, differentiating it from social group [...] By being impersonal, spiritual community is not impossible to penetrate. Individuals are personalities, adapting to spiritual tradition but also overcoming it, so that the pressure characterising spiritual community is bound to freedom”<sup>14</sup>.

In the third layer of being, humans are introduced to culture, tied to the process of making values real. In consequence, both spiritual and material cultures are forms. A dialectic tension between pressure and freedom is a characteristic feature of spiritual life and of layer of education outreaching social area of forming. Along with developing culture, power pressure becomes spiritual. According to Hessen, we deal with the process of living values constituting personality.

In such a way, a hessenian human being crosses the third layer of being and imperceptibly reaches the highest level of blessed being. It is a state where an objective good reigns, as in Kant’s kingdom of ends or in Cieszkowski’s Kingdom of God. T. W. Nowacki rightly pointed to the fact that according to Hessen, Kingdom of God is a “being existing outside time and permanently affecting human life. It is made of rays of beauty, goodness,

<sup>13</sup> S. Hessen: *Pedagog*, [in:] *Filozofia-kultura...*, ed. cit., p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> S. Hessen: *O sprzecznościach...*, ed. cit., p. 216.



truth and love, acting on all levels of being, from biological, through social, to cultural and spiritual”<sup>15</sup>. A metaphysical factor appears, which is a spiritual element hidden in men, awoken in answer to the call of idea-value. By determining human seeking of values, it imposes their accomplishment, by creating the need of values. It requires from teachers the ability to open students’ souls, animating all their internal powers, being the source of creativity. “Human souls concentrated around such a teacher become not only a community or an association, but a true spiritual community in a higher and more noble meaning than the one which realizes itself only in the task of the same work [...]”<sup>16</sup>.

This type of forming a human being is leadership connected to love which develops all vital forces in every “member of a spiritual community”. The purpose of education becomes gaining “true, personal immortality” in the process of bringing to life an absolute spiritual community, in other words, of spiritualization of the world. The highest spiritual form of love is meant here, being the source and manifestation of leadership. Love in this sense cannot be taught, it is a “gift of mercy” in the kingdom of spirits. “Where love managed to overcome [...] impermeability of every single soul, to free it from enclosing in itself and tear it from dull loneliness, where every member of community is truly a purpose in itself, independent not for himself, but for his neighbours – it is where the last traces of mechanism will disappear. Death has been deprived of its sting and immortality is shown in all its glory of >resurrection<”<sup>17</sup>.

We may say that existence in the kingdom of spirits is connected to overcoming by an individual of “all deathly nucleus in his soul and body”. Death in this context is not only the end of biological life, but is our constant companion who awaits us in every moment of our life and with whom we lead a continuous fight. “That is why a true higher immortality is not a substantial and natural immortality of the soul, as according to Hellenic philosophy, but a resurrection of the soul which constantly triumphs over death. An essential teacher, a teacher of godly mercy, is one who can help vital forces against death in his students’ souls at the adequate moment, who can free them from constricting complexes, and, in consequence, to lead them out of loneliness into a lively relation with their fellowmen”<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> T. W. Nowacki: *U podstaw twórczości...*, ed. cit., p. 37.

<sup>16</sup> S. Hessen: *O sprzecznościach...*, ed. cit., p. 225.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem, p. 231.

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem, p. 226.

First of all, in the analysis of Znaniecki and Hessen's thought, it is important to underline Znaniecki's concept of a social system as an entity of a certain structure and internal relations. Nowadays, the most important problem in this conception is the educational relation as a social subsystem. In particular, these considerations may be used to analysing failure in education, in seeking and defining their origins. In the case of S. Hessen, considerations about culture and its hierarchy had similar meaning.

Secondly, a new attempt to read Znaniecki's theory of education as a social process seems essential, which should take into account his objection that the object of a pedagogue's activity is the subject – the student inseparably tied to his teacher. They both form a certain spiritual and social union. Reality they have to face is objectively their common social reality. In the process of education, the teacher and the student, their personalities and the humanistic social reality they are immersed in are equally important. Pedagogical actions and reflections should be equally focused on students and teachers, as well as social conditions in which education takes place. In this context, S. Hessen's thought shows the human being enslaved by the world and his rejection of responsibility for biological and social world. Walls of artificially created needs are for him impossible to demolish.

Thirdly, in Znaniecki and Hessen's considerations, it is important to underline motifs of an activist concept of education. The student is not a passive object of teacher's actions but constitutes an active subject of education. It seems an obvious opinion, but in its truism lies a shallow form which doesn't take the student's individualism, which underestimates relativism of his attitudes and a true social determinism. Znaniecki and Hessen were not advocates of extreme determinism or relativism. They claimed, according to their humanistic conceptions of philosophy of values, that student's individuality is a highest value and cannot be created artificially by other people.

Fourthly, F. Znaniecki underlines the purpose of education. He concludes that the reason of a crisis in education is lack of purposes which could become attractive for students. In order for a society to be able to solve its problems, every member of an organized group has to know how to cooperate with others under a leadership but also know how to be a leader for others. The main purpose of the group should be striving for leaning all its aims at individual members capable to create, cooperate, subordinate to leaders and to lead. In this context, we may consider Hessen's antifundamentalism, in which Western Europe tradition is seen as

a common ground for dialogue. Differences do not lead to rejection resulting from different traditions of purposes of education, but in contrary, they create it.

Finally, the analysis of an educational relation as an independent system, created of constituent elements of a given structure and delimiting its functions is very important. Simultaneously, the process of education is for Znaniecki a creative process and cannot be a mechanic use of certain rules ensuring an identical result each time. Similarly, Hessen's antireductionism "consists in (...) the fact that it does not only reduce the meaning of the term >>human<< into experiences and impressions of a psychophysical organism, which means that the connotation of this term – according to A. Folkierska – comprises also, or even foremost, a spiritual aspect"<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> A. Folkierska: *Sergiusz Hessen – pedagog odpowiedzialny*, Warszawa 2005, p. 259.

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## **FILOZOFICZNE PODSTAWY EDUKACJI – S. HESSEN I F. ZNANIECKI**

### **STRESZCZENIE**

Artykuł analizuje dorobek F. Znanieckiego i S. Hesse-  
na w kontekście współczesnej  
refleksji filozoficzno-pedagogicznej. Autor formułuje tezę o aktualności ich refleksji dla idei europejskości odniesionej do sfery edukacji. Tekst stanowi opozycję wobec jednowymiarowych, skrajnych, konserwatywnych czy nacjonalistycznych stanowisk przedstawiających europejskość jako zagrożenie dla tradycji narodowej. Autor szczególną rolę przypisuje koncepcji uduchowienia i humanizacji. W tym kontekście postuluje oparcie edukacji na gruncie filozoficznym rozpiętym między uniwersalizmem a empiryzmem.

Słowa kluczowe:

Filozofia polska, F. Znaniecki, S. Hessen.