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Topicality of John Paul II's Pedagogical Message

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to outline the sources and aspects of the time-surpassing topicality of the Pope's vision of integral education apparent in his anthropological, permeated with faith, reflection on man. In his vision, the internal perception conditions the integral education of man. The research confirms the thesis that the Pope's pedagogy assumes an "adequate anthropology" and opens the human heart to the objective order of truth, including truth about Christ as "the centre of the universe and of history" (*Redemptor hominis*, 1) and to the fundamental truth about man. The Pope's pedagogy with its anthropological grounding is topical due to the fact that it offers, contemporary times permitting, a complete vision of human education. This vision goes against the culture of lost faith, dehumanisation, nihilism, and existential cynicism, and also against axiological relativism. In this vision, science, technology, art, peace, justice, God, true religion, nature, grace, faith, hope and love are not in complementary distribution, but complement each other. The timeless source of the topical quality of the Pope's pedagogical message appears to reside in the compatibility and completeness of the human image it provides. It investigates the complex matter of education and the individual story of shaping personalities of outstanding individuals. With due respect and unanticipated amazement, it also provides an outline of the Catholic interpretation of education and the human condition.

Keywords

John Paul II, education, essence of education, integrality, newness, clarity, topical quality, methodology, concreteness, communality, topicality, theological and anthropological sources

Looking back on the interesting research on integral education according to John Paul II, I would like to outline only a few arguments to support the topical and objective value as well as the relevance of the Pope's pedagogical message¹. First of all, I am going to consider the ways of understanding the issue of education in its integral, innovative and human aspects. Next, I am going to trace the theological and anthropological sources of the topicality of the Pope's message. Then, I am going to demonstrate the arguments in favour of the methodical value of the Pope's teachings. Finally, I am going to draw attention to the hopes this message offers to contemporary educators.

I. The Pope's understanding of the concept of education

In John Paul II's, and even earlier in Cardinal Karol Wojtyła's teaching, education, apart from its pedagogical, sociological and psychological aspects, also assumes an ontological aspect. It should be investigated at an anthropological, axiological and theological level. According to John Paul II, the essence of education is "to become ever more fully man, to enable him to "be" more, not only to "have" more, so that, through all he "has", through all he "possesses", man may become more fully capable of "being" man. If this is to come about, man must learn how to "be more" not only "with others" but also "for others"². Education thus defined is crucial to the development of one's own attitude towards oneself, towards God and also towards the development of human and social attitudes. It draws on the two-thousand-year-old tradition of the Church and on the general call to sanctity.

It should be noticed that the Pope's concept of "becoming more fully man" through education does not emerge from the theory of education. John Paul II was not an education theoretician but a theologian and a philosopher. That concept appears in the homily delivered at the Mass for the families, at Braga, Portugal, on May 15 1982. To develop the meaning of that concept, the Pope explains that "man, being a human from the very moment of conception, gradually learns how

¹ This article contains a selection of arguments gathered in the author's original research published in an extensive postdoctoral monograph (477 pages) *Integralne wychowanie w myśli Jana Pawła II*, Lublin 2004. It also refers to some of the arguments presented in the article *Atrakcyjność pedagogicznego przesłania Jana Pawła II*, „Roczniki teologiczne” (2006), Vol. LIII, Nr. 10.

² Jan Paweł II, *W imię przyszłości kultury*. Przemówienie w UNESCO Paryż 2 June 1980, in: *Wiara i kultura*, Rzym–Lublin 1988, p. 58-59; see also Jan Paweł II, *Teologia kultury. Wybór tekstów*, in: *Poznać człowieka w Chrystusie Jan Paweł II o godności ludzkiej*, Częstochowa 1983, p. 203.

to be human – and this fundamental knowledge is identified as education”. The future of man, family and all mankind depends on education. Following John Paul II’s line of thinking, this article attempts to outline the essential dimensions of the “humanising function of education”. These dimensions are concealed in the answer to the following questions: what are the aims of education and what is the crux of the educational matter understood as the right and duty of parents? In trying to answer such questions, it must be emphasised that the word “educate” has a broad range of meaning. The crucial one, however, is “growing up in the fullness of humanity, in the fullness of life”. Man has received that fullness from God in Christ, through the mediation of the Holy Spirit. In this aspect, education goes back to the truth of the beginning and accounts for the human destiny to participate in the glory of the risen Son of Mary and the teachings of the Pope take the form of a living pedagogy of faith that binds Man with God and with people in the person of Jesus Christ.

This pedagogy of faith consists of the levels of education specific to the teachings of the Pope. They include personal, moral, social, cultural and religious education. The essential directions of such an education defined through its aims and tasks combine the formation of ethical thinking, faithfulness to God, to conscience, to principles and to people, wisdom, truth, freedom, goodness, sanctity, happiness, conversion, hope, love, responsibility and belonging. It should be added that this list is open-ended.

The Pope’s understanding of education focuses on the specific nature of growing up in humanity with an awareness of “who one is and who one should be”. Awareness that is formed in such a way accounts for the strength of Man, his ideal and what leads to it. The simplest path to the fulfilment of the ideal of being Man is discovering the truth about one’s own self, about one’s own vocation and about the world and living in this truth regardless of the circumstances. The contents of education refer to the ontological grounding of human person and include: self-cognition, reasonability, freedom, perpetration, shame, guilt and sin, love and death, self-reliance, self-possession, self-determination and independence. John Paul II awakens the awareness of being a person and points at the needs inscribed in the human heart from the very beginning. These needs are: love, truth, goodness, beauty and happiness.

The above comments and remarks bring us to the conclusion that John Paul II’s teachings refer to the universal and integral education of man who lives in any part of the globe and in any conditions. It is through the analysis of important features of this education that we become aware of what Man John Paul II wants to educate.

1. The ideal of integral education: Topicality of life

The ideal of integral education comprises topicality of life that consists in being attracted to truth, goodness and beauty that spring from the living and present God manifested in the person of Jesus Christ. It is Him that John Paul II considers to be the source, the foundation and the ultimate moral authority and thus emphasises the value of belonging and faithfulness to God. It is through belonging to God and through submitting oneself to God, who out of nothing makes man come into existence, that John Paul II perceives reality including human sin and inadequacy. For this reason, the education he suggests teaches not only virtue i.e. justice, a habit difficult to obtain, but also teaches the pain of sin, simplicity of the heart, and building our own life and our neighbours' life on the certainty that, regardless of the situation and circumstances, God loves man with compassionate love. This education is based on a tribute to the great work of God, a personal relation to Him and everything that comes from Him. What John Paul II says touches the human heart and corresponds with it. Pondering on human life and all its elements, the Holy Father appeals for chastity and humility of thoughts. Giving the message of faith, hope and love, the Pope teaches us how to defeat the negative, how to live with others, how to love in order to taste community and thus to find fulfilment for eternity.

He treats his listeners, regardless of their age, as witnesses and confidants to truth. He expects his listeners to learn the normative power of truth and to experience the love of God by submitting themselves to Him, so that they start emanating the truth and love they have come to know.

A different way of dealing with the issue of education focused on purpose is the belief that "fully educated man, man capable of educating himself and others makes man fully matured in all his dimensions and his potentials". Bearing in mind the Pope's attitude to tackling the issue of education belonging to *cultura animi* understood as growing up in all dimensions and potentials it should be noted that it must teach man to get to know reality and educate him in a way that makes him become man in his entirety of existence and interpersonal relationships. At the same time, "man cannot fully complete himself, cannot fully realise his humanity if his life does not include a supernatural dimension of his own existence in the world and his relationship with God³. It happens so because the true meaning of human education is revealed by the eternal Word of the Father "who by becoming

³ Jan Paweł II, *W dziele kultury Bóg zawarł przymierze z człowiekiem*. Przemówienie do świata kultury, Rio de Janeiro, 1 July 1980, in: *Jan Paweł II Wiara i kultura*, p. 85.

man revealed to man the authentic and integral greatness of his humanity, that is, being a child of God⁴.

In view of such a formulation of the concept of education, special emphasis is placed on: the fact that “being man” and everything man “owns” and “possesses”, that is, what man has been somehow “given to and inflicted upon”, what man is responsible for. That which has been given to and inflicted upon man is his own humanity and desire for progress towards “a more human world” and “a more human life”. The nature of these expressions is not only descriptive but also postulative which is confirmed by the use of the adverb “more”. Regardless of its specific content this extremely broad notion carries, it should be stressed that the vision of the new world and education depends on the accepted concept of man. The term “more human world” referred to education appears in the teachings of John Paul II in such contexts that clearly correspond to the conciliar messages. Frequently, it is a call for “complete truth about man”⁵ who fulfils himself through “true”⁶, „integral”⁷ and „entire development”⁸. However, the purpose and culmination of such a development is above all man who is its active subject⁹. Nevertheless, in order for the development to correspond to human nature its definition must contain human aspiration to truth, morality and also contain the relationship of man and God. It must take into account human transcendence¹⁰. As already mentioned above, no wonder, then, that the Pope’s vision of education is conditioned by the necessity for the ultimate truth about man and the necessity of the correct and realistic understanding of such truth. At the same time, the ultimate truth is not subject to idealisation. It is expressed in decoding the ontological status of man as person – the highest form of being immersively conditioned by nature: accidentality, fragility, insufficiency, and finally sinfulness. Integral vision of human education cannot ignore such elements in his nature; they, on the one hand, are the source of being educated and, on the other, hinder his fulfilment.

⁴ *Gratissimam sane*. List do Rodzin z okazji Roku Rodziny, in: *Wybór listów Ojca Świętego Jana Pawła II*, P. Słabek, J. Jękot (Eds.), Kraków 1997, Vol. 1, p. 310.

⁵ Cf. Jan Paweł II, Encyklika *Centesimus Annus* 41, in: *Encykliki Ojca Świętego Jana Pawła II*, Kraków 1996.

⁶ Jan Paweł II, Encyklika *Sollicitudo rei socialis* 9; 35; 42; also *Centesimus Annus* 29, in: *Encykliki Ojca Świętego Jana Pawła II*., also: Jan Paweł II, Posynodalna adhortacja apostolska *Christifideles laici* 42, in: *Adhortacje Ojca Świętego Jana Pawła II*, Vol. I, Kraków 1996.

⁷ *Christifideles laici* 32.

⁸ *Christifideles laici* 28; 32.

⁹ cf. Jan Paweł II, Encyklika *Laborem exercens* 18.

¹⁰ Jan Paweł II, Adhortacja apostolska *Familiaris consortio* 6; cf. also: *Sollicitudo rei socialis* 28; 33 and *Centesimus Annus* 29.

For John Paul II, authentic education is integral in its form and content. First, it requires recognition of human being in which both corporeality and spirituality regardless of their mutual connection are not reducible to each other.

The completion of such education assumes reflection on one's own experience and fondness for objective truth. Especially, it refers to a younger man who needs education for his harmonious growth. In reference to young people John Paul II speaks about "an art of positive education that demonstrates goodness of proper and engaging experiences, enchanting with nobleness and beauty". Furthermore, it is "an art of helping young people in their "internal development". It happens through waking their internal freedom and through "overcoming external conditioning and formalisms. The essence of this art is "winning the hearts of young people in order to make them enthusiastic about goodness setting right what has gone wrong, and preparing them for their future tasks through diligent work over their character"¹¹. The "winning of the hearts" takes place through being constantly available for young people, through sincere sympathy and ability to dialogue: to speak to and to listen to.

2. Education as "an art of reciprocal «offering»" and "creativity about the most personal subject"

Defining education as an "art", John Paul II points out that education – one of the types of human activity – is a conscious and intentional activity taking place between the educator and the educatee and, above all, it consists in "reciprocal offering". It requires a special attitude on the part of the educator and the whole education team and calls for adequate means and measures based on the convictions of faith and reason. In his Letter to Families *Gratissimam sane* published to celebrate the Year of the Family, John Paul II says that education is: "a reciprocal «offering» on the part of both parents: together they communicate their own mature humanity to the newborn child, who gives them in turn the newness and freshness of the humanity which it has brought into the world. This is the case even when children are born with mental or physical disabilities. Here, the situation of the children can enhance the very special courage needed to raise them. This is the manifestation of humanity that can be educative in a very special way"¹².

¹¹ Jan Paweł II, List Iuvenum patris Ojca Świętego Jana Pawła II do umiłowanego syna Egidio Viganò przełożonego generalnego Towarzystwa Salezjańskiego w setną rocznicę śmierci św. Jana Bosko, p. 8.

¹² *Gratissimam sane* 309.

Parenthood as the first and essential fact of a reciprocal “offering” opens for the parents a far-reaching perspective. As John Paul II puts it, “to give birth according to the flesh means to set in motion a further «birth», one which is gradual and complex and which continues in the whole process of education”¹³ based on “the principle of subsidiarity”, that is on affirmation of man as man. Parents are the first and most important educators of their own children, and they also possess a fundamental competence in this area: they are educators because they are parents¹⁴, and education “[...] is always the emanation of fatherhood and motherhood. This way it is always connected with the family and with God the Father”¹⁵ who expects man to get to know Him and take Him as example, absolute, personal ideal. The analyses of the Pope’s teachings clearly indicate that being father and mother is a vocation and a destiny to reflect the resemblance to God Himself. He is the power and also help for those who wish to fulfil themselves according to this model. Holy Father teaches us that “one life is not enough for man to grow up and be educated”¹⁶. All other participants of the process of education act in a way in the name of the parents, with their consent and, to some extent, on their recommendation.

The process of education leads to the phase which occurs when man, having reached a certain level of psycho-physical maturity, “begins to educate himself on his own”¹⁷. In the course of time, self-education surpasses the process of education itself. However, self-education still has its roots in it. “An adolescent is exposed to new people and new surroundings, particularly teachers and classmates, who exercise an influence over his life which can be either helpful or harmful”¹⁸.

In contact with the young person being educated, the educator, trying to achieve permanent changes in his attitude, must remember that both of them are “sharers in truth and love, that final goal to which everyone is called by God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit” and that “everyone finds fulfilment through the sincere gift of self”. John Paul II believes that these truths are valid for both the educators and the ones being educated. Bearing in mind that “education is thus a unique process for which the mutual communion of persons has immense importance”, he considers the educator to be a person who “begets” in a spiritual sense.

¹³ *Gratissimam sane* 311.

¹⁴ *Gratissimam sane* 310.

¹⁵ Agli operatori scolastici nel Duomo di Torino – 4 settembre 1989, in: *Pensieri del magistero di Giovanni Paolo II*, 1989, p. 97.

¹⁶ Omelia a Prato, in Piazza Mercatale – 19 marzo 1986, in: *ibid.*, p. 96.

¹⁷ *Gratissimam sane* 310.

¹⁸ *Gratissimam sane* 310.

Long before his pontificate, John Paul II frequently emphasised that “education is a creativity about the most personal subject”¹⁹. Meeting young people of various continents, and addressing them, especially in the Letter of 1985, the Pope declares: “It is a question here of a full and profound human authenticity and of an equal *authenticity of the development of the human personality*, female or male, with all the characteristics which make up the unrepeatable features of this personality, and which at the same time and in different ways have an impact on the life of the community and of the various environments, beginning with the family. Each one of you must in some way contribute to *the richness of these communities*, first of all by means of *what he or she is*”²⁰. John Paul II believes that “from this point of view, *raising children can be considered a genuine apostolate*”. He justifies his opinion with the fact that education thus defined “makes them [the educator and the one being educated] both sharers in truth and love, that final goal to which everyone is called by God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit”²¹. The efforts of the educator may result in success or failure. Both the educator and the one being educated affect each other. They experience mutual exchange of information, of gifts, indicating social communication. In this mutual influence, the influencer is at the same time the donor.

3. Reasons for undertaking educational activity

Taking into consideration the reasons for taking up educational activity, their sources correspond to the assumptions of the Pope’s theological anthropology: human internal dissonance resulting from original sin. Furthermore, the reasons also refer to philosophical, social and cultural anthropology. It should be emphasised that in John Paul II’s teaching, the general and broad understanding of culture is specified more precisely with descriptive and normative expressions. The aim of culture focused on integral and harmonious development of man in all his dimensions and capacities²² through the shaping of the individual and through the spiritual shaping of society corresponds to the aim of education and “the utmost and fundamental task of culture in general and every culture is to

¹⁹ K. Wojtyła, *Miłość i odpowiedzialność*, Lublin 1986, p. 54.

²⁰ Jan Paweł II, List apostolski Ojca Świętego Jana Pawła II do młodych całego świata z okazji Międzynarodowego Roku Młodzieży, Rzym 1985, Nr. 7.

²¹ *Gratissimam sane* 308.

²² Jan Paweł II, *W dziele kultury Bóg zawarł przymierze z człowiekiem*. Przemówienie do świata kultury Rio de Janeiro, 1 VII 1980, in: Jan Paweł II, *Wiara i kultura*, p. 69-70.

educate”²³. There is no doubt that the problem of understanding the essence of education presented above appears as complex and multifaceted. Explanation of the complexity of education lies in the complexity of man from whom education takes its beginning and in whom it reaches its apex. John Paul II places education in the range of concepts related to subjective existence, i.e. related to personal status of human being expressed in his aims, freedom, dignity, causality, uniqueness, activity and responsibility.

John Paul II does not define education in one particular way but focuses on its ability to shape man, to improve to perfection every individual human being in all spheres of his life and activity. Hence, it is an education open to the value of the person and general human and Christian values with special attention to goodness, truth and beauty. John Paul II does not depreciate anything, which is of great importance and significance in the integral education of man; he emphasises the moralistic aspect of education. He preaches that for man education is a vocation, task, right and duty, and man is the subject, the author and the receiver of education. The Pope stresses the fact that education always takes place in relation to God and to other people who live in the world and surrounding reality. The area of education and self-education is, above all, inside each man. Education perceived as such, complementing and giving shape to human nature is a necessity and an obligation written in the human vocation to understanding and creating new values inside oneself and around oneself.

II. Topicality of the Pope's pedagogical message – theological and anthropological sources

Having completed years long research on John Paul II's pedagogical message, I have come to the conclusion that the objective value of the Pope's vision of education is, first of all, deeply grounded in the concept of the human person he

²³ Jan Paweł II, *W imię przyszłości kultury* [...], Paryż, 2 VI 1980, in: *Wiara i kultura*, p. 58. For the role of culture in education according to John Paul II's teaching see *inter alii*: W. F. Bednarski, *Kultura w nauczaniu Jana Pawła II*, „Polonia Sacra” (1998) Nr. 2, p. 11-40; L. Dyczewski, *Kultura i praca w nauczaniu Jana Pawła II*, in: *Żeby nie ustala wiara. KUL przed wizytą Ojca Świętego Jana Pawła II*, Lublin 1989, p. 249-269; A. Kaczor, *Koncepcja kultury Jana Pawła II*, „Akcent” (1998) Nr. 3, p. 146-153; A. Kowalski, *Kultura w integralnym rozwoju człowieka w świetle nauczania papieża Jana Pawła II*, in: *Służyć prawdzie i miłości*, Częstochowa 1986, p. 251-268; R. Rybicki, *Pedagogiczne treści w nauczaniu Jana Pawła II*, „Wychowawca” (1995) Nr. 11, p. 5-7; A. Rynio, *Jana Pawła II wizja wychowania*, in: *Pedagogika katolicka. Zagadnienia wybrane*, A. Rynio (Ed.), Stalowa Wola 1999, p. 263-280; Z. Stachowski, *Kultura w ujęciu Jana Pawła II*, in: *Jan Paweł II a wyzwania współczesności*, Warszawa 1991, p. 25-54.

accepted – the concept ingrained in tradition and the Word of God. It reveals – as T. Styczeń writes - “man to man leading him, in the first place, to his own roots, to «the beginning», that is to the moment the glance of creative Love fashioned him in the fullness of being «in the image and likeness of God [...] as man and woman»”²⁴. This concept revealing human to human – as the author quoted above points out – also after “the fall” and at the same time in a historical perspective of redemption and futurologistic vision of total completion after the Resurrection – is permeated by theological anthropology known as “personalism” with its Catholic variety referred to as “Thomism” to which Karol Wojtyła contributed to a significant extent. An example of this contribution is his postdoctoral thesis written in 1951-1953 *Ocena możliwości zbudowania etyki chrześcijańskiej przy założeniach systemu Maksa Schelera*, his two important books: *Miłość i odpowiedzialność* (1st edition: 1960), *Osoba i czyn* (1st edition: Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1968) and a collection of Wednesday catecheses *Mężczyzną i niewiastą stworzył ich* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1981), not to mention his encyclicals, fourteen in number.

To argue in favour of the above thesis on the topical quality of the Pope’s vision of education and its sources, it should be added that John Paul II, in his numerous encyclicals and apostolic letters, in his homilies, messages and speeches delivered during his voyages to a number of countries, always stresses the significance of the “dignity of human person” and presents the “integral vision of man” in his singularity and uniqueness. At the same time, he emphasises that he does not speak about abstract man, but about real man, not about human kind, but about specific, historical man. He speaks about man, “each and every one”. Each and every one who functions in various communities: family, profession, friends, society, within his own nation, within his own specific country, and finally in the international community. The purpose of all these communities and institutions with their traditions, customs and arrangements is to serve precisely such a man.

Tradition is so important here since it is a certain “starting point”, a certain structure of values and meanings to which one is born. Tradition is given (helps to understand and to explain reality) and attributed. If not actualised in the present, it degenerates to traditionalism which John Paul II warns us against.

Referring education to God and describing the educational relation and activity on the salutary grounds makes it possible to complete the holistic picture of such a man and his education. In this vision, sin and the “mystery of iniquity” decide – in accordance with the tradition of the Church – about the necessity of being

²⁴ *Człowieka portret własny*, in: Jan Paweł II. *Mężczyzną i niewiastą stworzył ich. O Jana Pawła teologii ciała*, Lublin 1981, p. 11.

educated, yet, they do not determine man completely. God who through His Son redeems humankind not only is not a rival to man but – as John Paul II teaches – allows him to realise himself in the fullness of His own image and likeness. Man, created image of God, can infinitely transcend himself and is called for transcending the universe²⁵.

The pedagogical message of John Paul II is topical and full of hope because, breaking through the shell of common mentality, it is a Christian message of the Church with her two-thousand-year-old tradition of education. “It is written – as the Pope’s letter *Iuvenum patris* says – by parents and families, by priests and laypersons, by men and women, by monastic institutions and ecclesial movements that educate according to their own charisma and thus extend the divine act of education to reach its culmination in Jesus Christ (nr. 7). Nevertheless, John Paul II himself embodies the Church open to and speaking to people not only through her own high authority whose source is the degree of certainty as to the redemptive role of the deposit of the truth received, but also through the deepest conviction that the transmission of truth is the only chance to save the soul of man in the present-day world which is a matter of “to be or not to be” for the human person.

Another aspect that brings topicality to the Pope’s pedagogy is its sensitivity to different values such as cognitive, aesthetic, moral, social, religious, etc. These values are deciphered, they can be interpreted, but not invented.

A different source of topicality of this message lies in the accepted personal model of education and culture, in creating the aware subject, in bringing back the full picture of man, or in revealing the truth about goodness.

The hope for eternal relevance of this message also lies in the fact that such concepts as man, dignity, person, personality, education, responsibility, society, history or value are perceived through reason and communicated through the heart. And they are the concepts that are in agreement with the Christian tradition, the teachings of the Fathers of the Church and the direct predecessors of John Paul II²⁶.

²⁵ Przemówienie na audyencji ogólnej 27 VII 1983, in: Jan Paweł II, *Nauczanie społeczne*, Warszawa 1987, p. 232. Cf. Jan Paweł II, *Powołanie do życia Papieskiej Rady do spraw Kultury*. List do Kardynała Sekretarza Stanu Agostino Casaroli, Rzym, 20 V 1982, in: *Wiara i kultura*, Rzym 1986, p. 162; Jan Paweł II, *Wolność, współdziałanie, uniwersalność, służba człowiekowi – warunkami prawdziwego rozwoju kultury*. Przemówienie do naukowców i przedstawicieli świata uniwersyteckiego, Madryt, 3 XI 1982, in: *Wiara i kultura*, p. 195.

²⁶ By way of reference, it is enough to recommend *Deklaracja o wychowaniu chrześcijańskim Soboru Watykańskiego II* that accepts the truth about the dignity of human person as the foundation for the whole complexity of the educational process.

The Pope's vision of education is also topical due to the fact that it originates from faith to bring hope. It also uncovers the forgotten dimensions of education, especially such as personalism, spirituality, noetics, morality, culture, society and religion. The religious dimension manifests itself as a pedagogy of living faith that deeply connects man and God, man and people in Jesus Christ, the only Lord and Saviour.

III. Topicality of the Pope's pedagogical message – methodical value

As far as this aspect of the topicality of the Pope's message is concerned, it can be assumed that, in analogy to Christian vocation, it appears to be "elementary in transmission", "integral in dimensions", "communal in realisation" and "definite in gesture"²⁷.

Undoubtedly, this message covers the entire complexity of man with all his problems of here and now. It is simple, to the point, and addresses everyone. It contains a simplicity that is able to adjust to everyone's conditions, and its reference to the essential matters helps it reach its purpose and avoid unnecessary difficulties. The Pope's suggestion of education distinguishes crucial constitutive elements and strongly underlines their value. It leads to a general understanding of each situation; furthermore it also develops the ability to judge and to accept the infinite multitude of expressions of value. However, "elementary" does not stand here for "general", but rather for *precise* in the essential elements referring to everyone's experience. This message accounts for the value of each person. Focused on freedom, it assumes awareness and initiative. Initiative is experienced in never-ending gradations which means that the answer can be provided in an indefinite number of ways and at indefinitely different levels. Yet, whatever gesture, whatever action performed for the sake of the promoted ideal is a significant contribution to the development and growth of man assuming patience and lack of indignation at somebody else's goodness. Simultaneously, John Paul II, considering free will and value of each person's act, is convinced that the continuation of the person's *primaeval* engagement consists in the necessity of educational relationship based on not simply preaching ideas, but far more on the common experience and adjustment to the particular ones being educated and

²⁷ These are the expressions referring to Christian calling introduced by Fr. L. Giussani. Cf. *Śladami chrześcijańskiego doświadczenia*, Warszawa–Struga–Kraków 1988, p. 77-101; A. Rynio, *F. Luigi Giussani's Concept of Education – an Outline*, "The Person and the Challenges" 1 (2011) Nr. 2, p. 149-165.

their level of development. The educator, therefore, in order to win the fondness and the trust of the one being educated, must account for his internal disposition and the environment that exerts a considerable influence on the life of a person at the moment.

Next, “integrality” of John Paul II’s pedagogical message, as has already been mentioned before, seems to reside in the complex perception of man as well as in the culture of love which is able to give the meaning to everything. It is considered as a principle and law which is boundary-free and as Catholicity expressed it through the ecumenical and missionary senses, through living for the whole world and understanding the universal views of the Church and the ability to remain faithful to Christian obligations. The Pope’s integral view on education is expressed in the fact that it encompasses the entirety of human life and aims at the critical and systematic awareness of the whole reality so as to make use of it in a most intensive and suitable way: reasonable, free and responsible.

On the other hand, “commonality in realisation” guarantees effectiveness of education based on the cooperation of educating subjects and assumes belonging to a specific place and people, recognising others and also sharing one’s own existence with them, working through which a complete maturity is attained to express itself in the attitude of dedicated love and in the service for the unification and subjectiveness to the authority.

Describing the Pope’s education as “definite in gesture” refers to the Holy Father’s exceptional gift for taking up a courageous and clear educational initiative rooted in the Christian tradition and experience of the Church that, against common mentality often in opposition to or even hostile to Christian ideals, has never been easy. This attitude emerges at the meeting of faith and life, experienced presence, accepted tradition, and criticism offering judgement. It assumes coherence to the ideal, the need for commonality and it protects young person from moral enslavement. It does not permit surrender to the so called public opinion generated by the high and mighty of this world.

IV. The Pope’s vision of education – the hopes it raises

The significance of this vision is so clear, powerful and convincing for the contemporary that it is difficult to overestimate it. The Pope’s concept of education, originating from “adequate anthropology” and being open to the truth of every human “I” that exists here and now, initially defines who man is and what his predispositions and afflictions are. Grounded in nature and experience,

it introduces that which is always true, everywhere, and for everyone. Through communicating the past lived out in the presence, it teaches us to study and observe only that which is noble. It concentrates on the necessity for and the awareness of purpose to which man makes his way and circumstances of life through which he is educated: loving oneself, others, the world, tradition, discovering beauty of nature, aesthetic experiences, cognition – as a means to expressing the need for reason, encounter with oneself in truth, and with people, with nature and with culture of educational environment such as home, school, peers, the Church, nation, movement, or association. The Holy Father emphasises the significance of these elements that constitute Christian personality, especially love of truth, experience of living faith, life of hope in every circumstance, belonging and sharing needs, willingness to change, sacrifice and renounce, developing the attitude willing to correct, forgive and accept another man in his otherness, as well as sense of mission and necessity for appropriately understood ascetic work. John Paul II identifies the need for stronger support of the educational process grounded in the principle of communion and cooperation of all members through the Christian formation in the spirit of humanity and spirituality, he warns us against the temptation to lose faith in the value of goodness that is difficult to achieve, against the temptation to withdraw into one's own world, and against the temptation to accept mediocrity. He offers, however, a transparent model of education based on the Holy Gospel. In his model, there is no room for actual mistakes that offer a threat to education, however, there is room for the Pope's "*pedagogia parentis*" which clearly indicates the mistakes of the contemporary reductionist pedagogical theories. John Paul II describes the main dimensions and spheres of "all-encompassing" education open to truth, religion and reason and he wants to equip his listeners with the ability to discover one's own human experience and with a sound humanistic culture. He does that by setting young people a number of tasks connected to their versatile personal development and formation that account for the potentials of the mind, will, and heart. Meeting young people, he points out to the enormous dignity of man, the experience of human transcendence, the power of faith and "truth about goodness". He reveals the values of the legacy of the past and explains the articles of faith and the evangelical values.

It is evident in his teaching that education has its individual and social dimension. It is human, moral, religious, social, cultural, civic, sexual, Christian, Catholic and evangelical. It is education to faith and love. This final dimension is extremely important as the logic of love is stronger than the simple logic of syllogisms, which the saint and the blessed have given evidence to with their own lives. Their lives

prove the truth that sanctity is not abstract, but it is self-actualising and possible to achieve in this life. Perhaps, that is why, John Paul II, who was so very much concerned about culture and education, paid so much attention to the beatification and the canonisation of people who are pedagogically topical.

Another reason for the timeless significance of the Pope's pedagogical message is the fact that it wakes us up from the moral slumber, requires consequence in thinking and supporting truth, love and the value of human experience in its various dimensions. Love everyone – with no exception – each and every man. What is more, the Pope's pedagogy, answering the question set in the Catechism: "Why do we live in this world", respectively describes the past, teaches constructive experience of the present and encourages criticism of all bestowed reality. Searching for truth and accepting authority, he points at Jesus Christ as brother and friend, and by educating the human heart according to God's plan, he helps us overcome weakness, fear, discouragement to "put out into the deep" of love, bearing in mind that "a drop of sanctity means a lot more than an ocean of genius"²⁸.

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²⁸ Gouud, as cited in: B. Biela, *Wyflyń na głębię miłości*, Katowice 2001, p. 7.

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