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## The place of anthropology in the philosophy of education

### Abstract

The study tries to define the anthropology of dialogue as a specific way of thinking on human being; it grounds mainly in Tzvetan Todorov's findings. It comments basic theses of Buber, Levinas, Bachtin, Habermas and Todorov while underlining their mutual interpretability as well as similarity. Because of possible significance of this anthropological conception for professional teacher training, it recommends to reserve some space for the anthropology of dialogue in the area of the philosophy of education thus enabling it to come out of the shadow of more influential anthropological conceptions.

**Key words:** *anthropology, dialogu e, philosophy oj education*

Tzvetan T o d o r o v, well-known perhaps mainly among philologists as a French literary scholar, in his remarkable essay called *Spolocny zivot [A corporate life]* (1998) made a journey far behind his disipline onto a territory which he has called "general anthropology". Its place he sees on the dividing line of sodal scdences and philosophy but he uses literary sources as the dedsvive ones.

It is the prospective work he approached to put various initiatives under one roof; those who can be, as analogical and mutually interpretable, identified as one special trend in anthropological thinking, and a distinctive dialogical paradigm which arises "often on the edge of philosophy in dissimilar authors like Martin Buber and Michal Bachtin, Emmanuel Levinas and Jiirgen Habermas" (T o d o r o v, 1998, p. 52). Todorov at the same time has identified himself with this tradition; he not only presents himself as a historian of its ideas but also as its continuator as well as propagator. We have to admit our similar orientation in our attitude to iti the aim of this study is to draw the attention of university workers who are responsible for teacher training to this direction for a while.

There are several reasons for it. The said anthropological trend is understood often as peripheral also in latest surveys of the history of philosophy as

well as of the philosophy of education, "classics" are more emphasized, against those the said trend is specified as opposing; its representatives are not described in one framework (unlike innovatively done by Todorov), they are moreover divided through still almost leakproof barriers, e.g. it is difficult (and we note that not fully meaningful too) to decide whether M. Bachtin is more a philosopher than a literary scholar - T. Todorov is in a similar position. There emerges a question: Which subject community is addressed by their texts? Situation is complicated by the formulation of thoughts through sometimes extreme abstract expressions as well as through the use of various remote and, seemingly, mutually untranslatable vocabularies (Heideggerian gloomy notions of existentialism - E. Levinas; psychoanalytic terminology - J. Lacan; linguistic structuralism - Bachtin; theology - Buber). We may add that a relative newness of this dialogical paradigm is responsible for a life in the shadow of more influential anthropologic conceptions.

An elegant as well as worthy-to-be-followed way of how to lead dialogical anthropology out of the shadow and how to present it as one of the key directions for thoughts on human being was found by Todorov himself in his book *Life in Common*. His "man of letters" approach suffices without a complicated jargon; he interprets mutually analogical thought initiatives, formulates them in a condensed form; his book can be read as a quality introduction into the problems' area. A reader involved in professional teacher training will certainly disclose many reform initiatives in Polish, Czech and Slovak school system to have various points of encounter, an analogical direction, and that they perhaps "swim" in the same lane in frame of which it is possible to exchange applicable argumentation.

The basic thesis, which makes up the spine of a dialogical paradigm on human being, is: "The need that someone notes us is not only one of human motivations; it is the basis of other needs" (T o d o r o v, 1998, p. 26). The need of recognition, honor, and of existence-forming attitude I-you is not involved into an undifferentiated line of other desires - of well-being, power, homage; it is perceived as their ground to be derived of. As Todorov writes: "The most powerful motives of human doing are neither called delight, interest, lust (polemics with influential S. Freud anthropology - author's note) nor generosity, love to humanity, self-sacrifice on the other hand (polemics collectivistic anthropologies - author's note), but yearning for glory and appreciation, shame and guilt trip, worries of honor. deficiency, recognition need, calling for other's look. .." (T o d o r o v, 1998, p. 31).

In context of this incurable need Todorov talks on human constitutive incompleteness. As its outspoken incarnation he considers the fact that independently was noticed by Russian M.M. Bachtin and American G .H. Mead (anthro-

pologist - a representative of so called symbolical interactionism) - namely, that physically we never can see ourselves completely; we need someone else as a "mirror" to establish our self- understanding and thus our existence. Todorov mentions as an apt illustration of this incurable need the idea of a great seclusion lover ].I. Rousseau: "Our most fragile being in relational and collective, and our real I is not complete in us. Such is, after all, human equipment in this life; we never succeed to rejoice over ourselves without someone else's part" (T o d o r o v, 1998, p. 175). A man, unlike animals living in flocks and appreciating contiguity of the same species only, has moreover an inherited bias to like someone looking at him, some identical being, and to affirmatively watch him. Todorov presents phenomenology of this need over a collage of literary works' passages. A short illustrative extract is offered here: "( ... ) no better devil's punishment could be invented than to be thrown into society and remain unnoticed from people who make it up ( ... ) We recognize it through the situation of a foreigner, a marginalized one, or an outcast ( ... ) Poor are those neglected ones who did not succeed to live in the eyes of their fellow-citizens ( ... ) A poor comes in and out in such a way that no one sees it; and he is as unknown in the middle of a crowd as if he lived confined in his hovel ( ... )". "Invisible - such is an Afro-American (or, we can add, a Slovak, Polish or Czech Roma - author's note) in a classical exposition by Ralph Ellison - Understand, I am invisible simply because people do not want to see me ( ... ) Or you often doubt whether you exist at all ( ... ) You take great pains to persuade yourselves that you really exist in a real world ( ... ) you swe ar, you curse and you implore yourself to force them to see you" (T o d o r o v, 1998, p. 76).

The phenomenology of old age is even more illustrative; the old age brings, besides lessening of life strength, the dwindling of existence too. "Through loneliness my death began": Victor Hugo wrote. Existence can fade away earlier than life fades away. The usual givers of appreciation disappear one by one, the sodal being of greybeards is step by step being disconnected for various social nets, hospitals and old people's homes take care of their organs, not of their being, they take very effort to prolong their life, not their existence. "Greybeards die lonely: their existence finished earlier than their life" (T o d o r o v, 1998, p. 77).

If we bear in mind phenomenology of childhood (it interests us most of all) presuming the need of appreciation is not only one of many child needs but their queen, we can proceed symmetrically - a child's life begins earlier than its existence (relationally understood), its existence does not begin and grows stronger until it bit by bit enters sodal network. The keys from this process are hold by the relational persons - parents, teachers, and peers. Existence is not necessarily a parallel process; it means it can, for instance, not begin, temporarily stop, and function with various deficits and so on. The need of recognition

can gain quite paradox appearances that make it really difficult to "read" the original motive. "Let us consider a school class. A child can draw teacher's attention on itself through its being the best. But what happens when that fails, when the child considers it to be a clearly impassable way? At that time there appears another possibility how to also successfully draw both teacher's and friends' attention: it provocatively disturbs preventing others to listen too, and in this way since it did not become the best pupil, it will be the worst one ( ... ) Instead of official appreciation, another is permissible to be reached ( ... ) This strategy, close to Dostoyevsky's man from "underground" who better accepts others' reprehensions than to suffer of their indifference, is very common in life, not in the classroom only; it aptly clarifies the "extravagant" behavior as well as "hysterical" situations in everyday human cohabitation" (Todorov, 1998, p. 118). The pupil-troublemaker, quite familiar type for teachers, is therefore interpreted within dialogical paradigm setting as a solution of existential deficit, a specific regard-claim, a strengthening of existence feeling even through admonitions and punishments.

In the presented considerations a very important role is played by the notion of existence that associates us with Heidegger's as well as Sartre's "my being": lonely, anxious, worrying being to death. We have to add that the strategy of the notion use by Levinas, Buber, Bachtin as well as Todorov is profoundly different. It is possible to demonstrate right at this anthropological notion that we approach an absolutely different (new) way of thinking about human being.

According to Bachtin, "the other" is the ontological condition of an existence of every "I"; for Buber the basic expressions are not single words but pairs of words - out of which the key position is held by the pair I - You. In this way, the object of existential analysis is both changed and enlarged. For Bachtin, the subject inside, its I itself, is a dialogue, a relation of the I to the other; not only communication is dialogical but also the ground of consciousness, the ground of human life itself. Similar Levinas' conception is characterized as the "philosophy of encounter": These findings gave a ground to build on for so called relaxation psychoanalysis which was developed in opposition to S. Freud's individual "classical" psychoanalysis that claims the libido does not primarily look for delight but for an object - in fact, for another subject. That one becomes the target of human activity and there is no more any reason to call it "libido"; more adequate seems it to be Buberine (Buber's) "You" or Bachtinine (Bachtin's) "the other".

If we understand the two dimensions of child's education - personalization and socialization - on the background of this anthropology, they do not appear basically conflicting any longer (opposed to how S. Freud understood them). Humanistic, personality centered pedagogy takes every effort to involve, in a

similar intention, both aspects within the frame of personal and social education in such a way that they do not stand against one another (Kosovli, 1998, p. 8). It must specify itself against very influential anthropological paradigm which explains human relationships mainly through the category of fight.

Classical philosophers focused the period of childhood when a child starts to fight rivals. Beginning with Hobbes over Hegel to Nietzsche, all of them exalted fight to a constructive feature of human society. Alexandre Kojève summarized Hegel's conception in a bombastic stylization: "A man was born, and through his first fight to enthrone the Lord and the Slave, history begins" (Todorov, 1998, p. 34). Human history is nothing else but a development of the relationship among lords and slaves; this predication dominated in our countries for a long time and it remained in the "folk" everyday anthropology until now. Everyday life is viewed by a multitude of people in our region as a fight; they approach and live it as such, of course, hoping in a victory.

Todorov's polemics with this anthropology proves that such victory cannot be reached, and the "post of a Lord is but a blind alley of existence" (Todorov, 1998, p. 33). In an interesting way he interprets a famous passage of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* dedicated to the dialectics of the lord and slave. This interpretation presents fight motivated by appreciation. One of the fighters came out of the quarrel as victor; the other was defeated becoming a slave or a servant. But through that he denied his specifically human position. The victor "is immediately frustrated: sure, he reached appreciation but it was not the appreciation of another man, that is, not that one he longed for. His desire is tragic in its essence: he either gets no appreciation because he is defeated, or he gets it, but it is worthless since it is an appreciation by an overpoweringly. The lord is appreciated by someone whom he does not honor" (Todorov, 1998, p. 33). The victory does not satisfy because it cannot be crowned by appreciation, admiration. It results in a community of frustrated victors as well as of even more frustrated losers.

Such "assault" understanding of life in common is not a former eastern block countries specialty (it crystallized there around the category of class combat); it was promoted and enforced by such persons as Hegel, Nietzsche or Freud. Todorov points even deeper into the history of thinking to "non-social traditions": e.g. the Stoic ideal according to which a contact with others is "a burden that is to get rid of; the appreciation of others is a guilty vanity only that would never a sage accede; a sage longs for autarchy, for self-support" (Todorov, 1998, p. 10). The influence of stoicism on Christianity is known enough. Levinas sets a mirror to a certain Christian tradition (out of Judaism which is more "social" in this way). He points to the medieval ideal of monkish autarchy, celibacy as well as collective seclusion - in opposition to it, accord-

ing to the more "social" Jewish tradition, for example, a believer must answer a question before the gate in heaven: "Did you fulfil your duty to have children?" (Storig, 1993, p. 449). This tradition is carried on by a renaissance figure, humanist Michel de Montaigne addressing people the following advice: "Let us do so that our satisfaction depends on us, let us remove all fetters binding us with the other, let us win ourselves to live alone and happy at the same time" (Todorov, 1998, p. 10).

A teacher, which would be to tell this advice to pupils in a class, would have found himself in a difficult situation. Against the need of appreciation he would offer them one of the well-tried palliatives - a means to diminish pains that does not remove the source of disease. The specialists in human soul even invented apt expressions for similar means - compensation (Adler), sedatives (Freud), and balsams (Sartre), defensive mechanisms (Anna Freud). However, as long as mutual school life looks like a boxing match or a knight tournament in which some are eliminated in their battle for school marks while others are placed on the victory rostrum (and all together are frustrated thanks to the unsatisfied need of appreciation), a teacher would equip them with a quite useful tool for life-battle.

If we imagine the evaluation of pupils in school as a steady, institutionalized state of appreciation distribution to small fighters which are to be ready for a hard, competing world of job, in which they will be divided into the winners and losers based on individual performance, then we have to consider the ever prevailing single way of evaluation in today's school as the only possible and right one.

However, if the mutual life in school is motivated through different regulative idea, e. g. the idea of a life-dialogue (Todorov considers its paradigm to be the relationship of a mother and child, child's claim of a glimpse and mother's answer - a behavior that developmentally precedes peer scrimmages), we better have to look for alternative models of evaluation. In this spirit, for instance, Kosova refused the traditional model of evaluation as representing "pedagogic menace of a child" (Kosova, 2002, p. 10), e.g. through its "constant menace of a child in school; it can cause enmities as well as distrust to teacher, it does not provide a pupil with feeling of success, appreciation and value (Kosova, 2002, p. 9); since it evaluates "immediate performance only neglecting other, especially emotional characteristics of child doing, or of human values (help, teamwork)" (Kosova, 2002, p. 10). If we understand distribution of appreciation not as one of possible "fight" results but as an integral part of any dialogue, or, freely formulated in Kant's categories, as an *a priori* condition of any encounter of a man with another man, the said critique must be familiar to us: the syndrome of an unsuccessful pupil in a broad anthropological perspective

represents a similar matter as the syndrome of a greybeard or the syndrome of a marginalized group member (for instance Roma) which also is signed by the deficit of appreciation that endangers existence.

If the need of appreciation is a basic (not "superstructural") need of a child, equal to e.g. the need of food, its basic minimal satisfaction should not be conditioned by school performances. During appreciation distribution we should better base on the argumentations of so called theory of righteousness according to which ethical norms are to be valid only upon the condition that they are favorable for all those participating - and out of this point of view we should again look at the evaluation system in today's school.

As a part of broader considerations concerning the evaluation of pupils there is a question what type of society we prepare them for. In this sense the idea by J. Habermas describing the change of paradigm from a society of work to a society of communication is interesting; he criticizes "the reduction of self-producing act of mankind into work" (Horsler, 1995, p. 11), and later he composes his famous discourse (dialogue) ethics counterparts of two types of doing: strategic, success-centered with no respect to all involved people's agreement, and communicative, understanding-centered that tries to coordinate one's own plans with plans of others. The basic theme of his discourse ethics is: Communicative doing deserves normative priority before strategic doing (Aznabacher, 1994, p. 231). He does not derive from performance either ethically higher estimated communicative doing that implied dialogues or appreciation distribution; he understands them as a self-evident condition and a necessary part of communication. Like for Bachtin, Buber or Levinas, in Habermas' theory of communicative doing, "the aspect of creation of interpersonal relations is central" (Horsler, 1995, p. 25).

In a similar way Tzvetan Todorov deals with the problem of the goals that society features for its development (and, of course, out of those it derives the goals of education and training). He asserts that hidden anthropological conceptions "are also behind the claims the goals of existence to be the development of an individual (self-realization) on one hand; or the development of society on the other hand, although individual's advantages are made victims in its development. (The same problem is reflected by the theory of personal and social education already in its name - author's note.) But these two variants of human ideal are both participating in the same conception of man which presents him antagonistically in relation to social environment where choice becomes inevitability: either an individual or society. It therefore is always necessary to come back to what we have already said; there is no in advance constituted I, like any inherited capital to be either wasted through distribution among others or to be squeamishly hidden into one's own fitting room and use it according to one's

own will. The I exists only in relationships with others as well as through them ( ... ) The goal of existence cannot be the first or the other, more of self or more of society, but, in "miraculous moments": to explain it in Saint-Exupéry words, certain quality of human relations" (Todorov, 1998, p. 176). Based on this argumentation, if we find a fitting synonym for the theory of personal and social education, we could experimentally use for example the name "the theory of education centered in human relations":

As we consider the following considerations to be essential, we dare quote longer once again: "While scientific theories do not reflect hedonistic principle of maximal pleasure or utilitarian ideal of maximal well-being for maximum of people - not because the one or the other is amoral but because they poorly involve real human experience - these principles and ideals, covered by anonymous cliché or by evident necessities, permanently fill our social life and militantly direct our political (and also pedagogical - author's note) endeavors. If the final goal of political forces in any country is to only reach maximal consumption as well as maximal production, if the question as to what influence will have these successes on interpersonal relations is not raised, there threatens a cruel awake: we cannot venture to hide the essential. If we consider that the goal of human desire is not pleasure but the relationship among people, it helps us reconcile with situations that would look displeasing measured by different criteria, and at the same time to act in such a way that the life of society improves more persistently and widely" (Todorov, 1998, p. 177). If we want to take seriously this important call applying it under our conditions, in the conditions of countries that find themselves at the door of the European Union, we have to try to equip young generation with necessary competencies in order not only that they hold competencies to reach desired salaries but also that they are able to reach certain quality in human relationships. Thus we can save them from a "cruel awake": from a "status without You" - which as a root of psychic disorder and disease is identified by e.g. psychosomatic medicine of V. von Weizsäcker (Storig, 1993, p. 439). Since the said dialogical anthropology thematizes this matter especially urgently, it should find its place in study programs of pedagogic faculties, for example within the province of the philosophy of education - it is the basic intention of our contribution. The supporting constellation, which could representatively introduce it, might mainly be the foursome suggested by Todorov: Buber, Bakhtin, Habermas, and Levinas.

The content of their anthropological conceptions could be centered on mutual thesis: Human existence is not endangered by material shortage only; it is profoundly endangered also by certain forms of communication. Buber characterizes them as a tendency of relations such as I - You, into which both sides put the fullness of their being, and their examples are great friendships



and loves, to fall into less desired as well as non-adequate relations such as 1- It; these are characterized by similar relations typical for human relation to things; from within their frame we look at another man "from a distance as well as coldly like at a thing, a piece of the surrounding world, like a part of causal chains" (S t o r i g, 1993, p. 439). Levinas speaks in a similar way on "openness for the other": whom we must not neglect in his dissimilarity through our "self-serving thinking"; his dissimilarity deserves attention and answer. "Whoever creates a finished picture of the other, he degrades him to be a thing - which can be removed from the way in case of necessity" (S t o r i g, 1993, p. 449). Both continue to develop well-known thesis of the philosophy of existentialism saying that a man as a subject is not given us in the same way as the thing-being; it can be analyzed, disintegrated, and observed. However, to a man we speak, relate to him as an existence but in dialogue only. Levinas in his philosophy of encounter adds that the relation the other need not and should not be ontological in its nature (it is the relation of I to a thing, to an object as well as to the Other which is understood as being only, not as existence). A typical effort in an ontological relation is to appropriate, to identify (e.g. in school evaluations), that is to deny distinctiveness of The other which thus becomes a completed, foreign, and monological word. The act of existence as well as knowledge is then an act of violence towards another being; it is a war (Levinas understands it as an ontological status which in its best can be relieved to "commercium": to any kind of armistice.). This kind of relation crosses a "non-violent face resistance" of The other, ontological violence can experience a breakdown through it when it hears its demand for attention and answer; that means to convert this relation to an ethical one, to recognize The other as existence, not as being. The ethical relation is more essential than the ontological one; it is no longer a relation of being but a relation of language. A relation without violence is therefore possible in a talk, in a dialogue. Ethics is "optics" which helps this condition "see". For Levinas, not ontology but ethics is the first philosophy. We will not paraphrase Levinas' extreme abstract philosophical argumentation any longer; we better bring forward the reception and development of his philosophy in our countries - in Poland, J. Tischner's philosophy of solidarity comes out of it, its echo can be heard in the way how we built ethical grounds of our society after 1989 in Czechoslovak Federative Republic as well as in the successive states (V. Havel: *Dopisy Olze*) (N i d a R l i m e l i n, 2001, p. 272).

Habermans thinks quite similarly. As a regulative idea, in his ethics of discourse he introduces the notion of "ideallinguistic situation": or "non-violent communication" from which position the real ongoing discourses, dialogues are appraised.

Bachtin, coming out of first of all from literature and excited by polyphony as well as by Dostoyevsky's novels, reached the same outcomes through a different way. He refused the idea of "a man whatsoever" which governed for a long time in the history of culture, and let us add, in pedagogic imaginations as well. According to him, a Philosophy of literature speaking in the name of the I or of The other can be called monologism, and monologism is a denial of equality of mind in relation to truth (Voropaj, 2002, p. 662). For Bachtin, truth is eventrelational and it arises on the point of encounter of different minds. Bachtin shows the openness of mind, the fact that it cannot be fixed to only one. The ontological condition of the existence of every I are relational persons as well as "a dialogue" with them.

In many respects analogical to Bachtin's position of a literary scholar and philosopher (or e.g. to the relation of writer Dostoyevsky to his figures) is the model of humanistic evaluation of pupils in school (Kosová, 2002) which "dialogically" combines evaluation with self-evaluation, preferring word (which can be a question or answer in the dialogue teacher - pupil, "in a talk"), to a number of a mark (which does not hold these intentions, expressing - using the language of Levinas more the relation to being than to existence of The other, which predominantly is "an ontological" relation of being - wars as "ethical" relation of "a talk" - dialogue; or - using Buber's vocabulary - through which a teacher looks at a pupil "from distance" and "coldly" as if it is a thing).

The book by Tzvetan Todorov *Life in Common* (original printed in France 1995, Slovak translation in 1998), through its summarizing, developing and demarcating the "multi-stream" and hard-to-be-grasped dialogic anthropological thinking can mean a very valuable navigational tool for the philosophy of education.

At the same time, in our view this is one of the key books on human being recently published. Since it came to existence (like many Bachtin's works) in a broadly understood literary science frame, or more correctly in a very expansive culture studies' scope (which came originally out through an application of literary analysis techniques to other areas of culture and that programmatically do not honor interdisciplinary boundaries), it is not by chance that in Slovakia it was published by the "literary" publishing house Slovenský spisovateľ so that it can happen that it remains unnoticed by experts from different areas. That would be a great loss especially in regard to the philosophy of education. Our main intention was to help the featured book overcome the boundaries of social sciences whose discerning logics, by the way, gets weaker, and to enable both T. Todorov and his predecessors standing behind author's back and which are "dialogically" present in his (and in our) testimony, that they are heard in the area of professional teacher training as well. This commentary, aiming to make



the transfer of dialogical findings to philosophy of education easier through an exposition of possible points of encounter as well as of inner relationship of various initiatives in general anthropology and pedagogy) was written in hope that the opening of a broad supranational Polish - Czech - Slovak dialog area is an exceptional opportunity to lead the dialogical anthropology out of the shadow of classical anthropological conceptions.

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