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## The Philosophical Points of Pedagogical Thinking within European Tradition and Culture

### Abstract

The article describes the importance of philosophy and philosophical anthropology for the development and transformation of educational science. It clarifies the process of forming of man within a historical-cultural and social context, the theory of man and theory of man's picture and it also clarifies the educational theory and praxis. In the second and third part the author talks about changes of specific models of education according to the European tradition and on the other hand she also talks about the essence of education which is permanent and constant. At the end of the paper the author specifies five bases of the contemporary model of education in an integrating Europe.

**Keywords:** *philosophy, philosophical anthropology, educational sciences, European tradition, anthropological, axiological, model of education, integrating Europe*

### Introduction

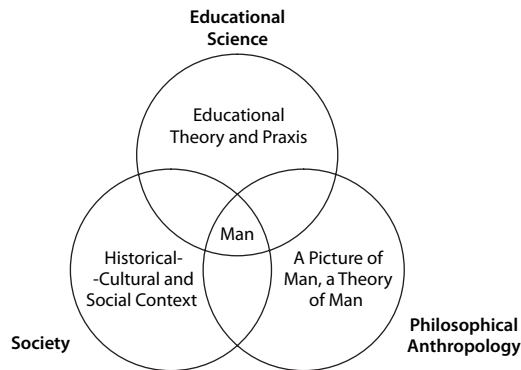
Several of the contemporary authors, who deal with a problem of education, agree with the fact that the phenomenon of education needs to elaborate the philosophical-anthropological points. E.g. Polish author, Władysław Cichoń (1996, p. 172), says, a well- reasoned theory of education “*demands Philosophical Science about man as a base. This science became substantial not only for philosophers but also for those who research other areas, for creators of culture and art and for teachers and educators*”. Czech author Jiří Pelikán (1995, p. 44) writes that “*without finding the fundamental philosophical points in the understanding of man it is not possible to solve the problem of their trend of education in accordance with the mission*

of man in this world. The arrangement of man and their education in a wider world-wide context and world's development, especially in the European thinking, is necessary". German author Wolfgang Brezinka (1978, 1992) considers the philosophical aspects as a necessity for the theory and praxis of education.

## 1. Signification of philosophy and philosophical anthropology for educational science

The subject and the object of educational sciences is man. Man is a homogenous element in the whole history of education because man is the one who educates and who is educated. This is the reason why every educational conception and educational praxis, too, is influenced by understanding of the world, by the place of man in it, by the role of man in nature and society and by the understanding of the reason for human existence. The educator Kučerová (1992, p. 9) says that the reality of education has "a total anthropological disposition".

**Scheme 1: Man – Society, Educational Science and Philosophical Anthropology**



The phenomenon of man is an object of the research of many sciences and social sciences. All of them research a certain dimension of man or man's demonstrations. But none of them has crossed the border of the question "Who is man?". To answer this question means to reveal a secret of the essence and the reason for human existence. It was and it is an object of philosophy and later it also became an object of philosophical anthropology which is understood as an autonomous area of philosophical reflection. It is particularly philosophical anthropology which should be offering the answer to the question of the connection between man in a certain historical period and the phenomenon of education.

Educational science should be in harmony with the results of the philosophical knowledge of man. This implies that the educational questions should precede the anthropological questions. A new assignment of the pedagogical science is to deduce the essence of education from the definition of the essence of man and to point out an aim, method and content in accordance with the aim and the essence of human life. To apply the philosophical-anthropological point of view in the educational science means to research man as a human being whose essence includes a necessity of education and also a potentiality of education. (Kučerová, 1996, p. 17) Educational science does not have to and also cannot create a theory of man. To save its internal dynamics and progress, it must follow the results of the research and theory of man from philosophical science. (Cichoń, p. 173)

## **2. The transformation of pedagogical thinking in the European tradition**

In the ancient times, the Middle Ages and at the beginning of the modern period education was in harmony with the so-called anthropological axioms of man – *animal rationale*, *imago Dei* and *ego cogito*.

Man as an *animal rationale* – intelligent animal and man as a being created as a picture of God – *imago Dei* present two different versions of the understanding of man in the history of philosophical thinking. A dialogue between these different interpretations provides a specific style of the understanding of the phenomenon of man. These two versions of metaphysical thinking serve as a ground for European culture. Although they were formed independently and in different historical periods, one of them in the ancient Greece and the other in Judaism and later in Christianity, they had influenced each other very much. They both are a history of the metaphysical understanding of man, in which the questions of searching for its essence dominate. This metaphysical view of man is significant in the understanding of education – education in both these traditions implicitly contained the religious and ethic aspect.

The modern period brought a different understanding and a different picture of man. The modern period with its crisis of metaphysics and its development of sciences made man with their *ratio* convinced that they are able to explain and change the world. This change of thinking was accompanied by the autonomy of particular science disciplines (the educational science, too). It created many heterogeneous conceptions of education. The possibility and the reality of autonomy caused a danger of illusion about creation of education as such, education “about

itself". Therefore, education lost its metaphysical anchor and by means of its particular conceptions got into different extremes.

In terms of understanding of man we can mark the end of the 20th century as *the post-modern period*. The French philosopher Lyotard, one of the leaders of this trend, argues that "*the word post-modernism contains the most antagonistic perspectives*". (1993, p. 38) Gál and Marcelli (1991, p. 19) talked about the modern period similarly: "*There is only pluralism of conceptions of the world, pluralism of the truths and relativism of values.*" (cf. Connolly, 1995; Ganthaler, 1995) It is a reaction to society, which despite its high economic development, its high level of information and communication technology, and its wealth is not able to solve problems and does not satisfy the needs of man. Gálik (2003) talks about a descending deviation of culture, in which individualistic and economic values dominate, which are destroying life and spiritual values. The known Czech educationist Skalková (2004) characterizes post-modernism by three features, which are important for the development of educational thinking:

- a. *The post-modern destruction* which appears in scepticism against all general conceptions is oriented against metaphysical thinking. It spreads the radical anti- totalitarian philosophical position – a singleness of events, a variety of effects, a discontinuity, an indeterminedness, a plurality of life's modes, activities and thinking,
- b. *Relativity of rationality* that doubts every conception of rationality and predicts a universal validity and an aspiration for universality,
- c. *Rrelativism of values*, which appears in scepticism of ability to create a criterion theory of truth and in contesting of unified moral universe which would lead to finding reasons for certain truths and positions of values.

### **3. Anthropological-axiological Essence of Education**

The relative and temporary validity of models and versions of education in a particular tradition and historical periods of European thinking shows the diversity and progress of the process of education. On the other hand, inside the process of education it assumes something permanent and constant. It is the essence of education. If this essence were disturbed, the education would lose its mission – culturing of man in all their integrity: in the physical, intellectual and spiritual aspects. According to the historical-philosophical-anthropological analysis of the phenomenon of education in the context of European thinking and culture, we can say education is (Kudláčová, 2003a):

1. *An exclusively human matter.* The importance and frequency of the educational activity in the life of man shows that human life is full of education on the one hand and on the other hand education has no meaning without man.
2. *An integral (universal) function* in human life and in the life of mankind, too.
3. *Positive* in relation to man and human life. It eliminates every destruction which means that education is moral.
4. Education includes a *moment of studiedness and aimness* that leads to the development of personality and to higher values in accordance with the relevant level of evolution of man and society.

It is not possible to separate particular characteristics of the phenomenon of education because they are interconnected. One of the basic features of human nature and anthropological particularity of man is that only man “*is a carrier of a higher principle, a creator of everything which is valuable and meaningful*” (Hartmann, 2002, p. 194) and he has “*an ability to protect the values and to take care of them*” (Cichoń, 1996, p. 164). Only man can be a carrier and a mediator of values, man is the only one who can spread the accepted values and create new ones. Education oriented towards values and deciding on these values helps better development of personality through realization and self-realization and it also helps to achieve the maturity of a person. According to Lomnický (2005), the quality of human life depends on our choice of values. Cichoń (1996) marked this process as one’s own axiological self alive-ness. An individual becomes man – a human being and a carrier of values through the process of education. (Žilínek, 1997, 2003) The anthropological dimension of education is inseparable from the axiological one and vice versa. Education needs to raise its anthropological-axiological points. In connection with this we can talk about self-aliveness of science of education and about finding one’s own identity of education. It is possible only in cooperation with philosophical anthropology (Kudláčková, 2003b, 2005) and new disciplines that are connected with it – e.g. educational anthropology, educational axiology.

#### **4. The Points of the Model of Education in an Integrating Europe**

The process of the genesis of education brings a dynamic tension between overcome and actual forms, which creates space for the creation of new forms. The essence of education which was mentioned above is everlasting. For this reason the essence of education in an integrating Europe cannot be different from the

education in the preceding European tradition and culture. According to us the points of the model of education in integrating Europe are:

1. A new level of the educational environment – *a European educational environment* is rising under the influence of internationalization and informatization. This new educational environment will be created in accordance with national and regional characteristics and institutional structures in a particular European country. Every country will have to define its own identity, aims and priorities of education towards the European educational environment. These will form *a national educational environment*. This process will be similar in particular schools. They will have to define and create their own identity which will be formed by the national educational environment and the specific characteristics of the school. This will form *the educational environment of a school*.
2. European education should be in accordance with its typical European scheme of values and it should help self-development of a European. The material growth of a contemporary European crashes on its limits while spiritual growth has no limits. Unlimited growth of satisfaction of man's needs goes towards destruction and human self-destruction. Kučerová (1996) talks about a necessity of the principle of self-limitation due to self-development. Because man is an intelligent and free human being, their self-development should be limited by responsibility which is shown in an ability to respect definite limits. The right differentiation between self-development and self-limitation depends on the quality of ethic consciousness of a person, on their scheme of values and on the ethic consciousness of society and the values which are emphasized by the society they live in. We can talk about a *cultural-axiological and ethic dimension of education*. It is implicitly included in education although it has its own dynamics.
3. Contemporary young man prefers education in terms of discovering rather than in terms of reception of results and knowledge. The creators of the educational process should realize this trend. In this understanding it can be known as a value which is worth powder and shot. We can talk about *self-consciousness of education* and about education as a value.
4. What is typical of modernism and post-modernism is emptying of values. Contemporary man begins to look for *fixed values and a hierarchy of values*. (Žilínek, 1999; Mistrík, 2003) European education has its own identity and scheme of values. Their revelation and knowledge creates its new image with typical characteristics. At the same time this selfhood defines it, creates identity and makes it able to respect and accept the identity and scheme of values of education in other cultural and sociable context. (Baldwin, 1995; Mistrík, 1999)

5. Man significantly creates the world and history but they cannot decide about good and wrong. As soon as they gave in to the temptation to become the most powerful creature, they caused great disasters. Mature man can accept their ability and their limits, too. It creates their *human dignity* and brings them *a freedom*. The knowledge of their own dignity and self-respect allows them to respect the dignity and value of other human beings. The ability to accept the truth about themselves and their possibilities which are always limited will create a qualitatively new interior (spiritual) dimension of education. This knowledge shows the existence of the limits of science in general.

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