

Moral Basics of Education in European Cultural-Spiritual Territory

Abstract

The study works up three aspects of creation of the fundamental level for moral-evolution context of education. Culture and moral phenomenon cannot be investigated in isolation from the development, with no regard to broader links, by neglecting their complex and human character. There are more than just one point of view to regard Europe. I have decided to focus on ethical/educational interests. I have characterized Europe as a multicultural – value community, its identity, cultural awareness, the complementary relation between culture and morality. I emphasized and developed humanistic ideas of education and the ethical dimension of education.

Key words: *European culture, European values, culture and morality, culture and spiritual life, culture and freedom, humanity and morality, new continental and global ethics, humanistic ideals of education, new dimension of human ideals' application.*

1. Culture and morality – the phenomena decisive for a human being's development

The global theory of man as a being, who, due to culture, has received his/her human dimension, has been developed by many philosophers since the Ancient times. They have emphasized the basic processes within which mankind lives and develops by creating cultural values. Culture is an agent on the basis of which we can speak about the human world and about culture.

Originally the world culture implied cultivation, or cultivation carries the respect for improvement. Even in culture, the element of evaluation enters the foreground

and it means improvement and development in the spiritual and material area. Speaking about culture, one speaks about a complex of human and spiritual products (culture aninei) the process in which the improvement of mankind takes place.

Creativity helps culture and progress speeds up. Through creation new values emerge, new works appear, the products of human spirit materialise. Exceptional creativity and ability of man to multiply cultural property help the application of the ideals of spiritual and material improvement of man, society and mankind.

The process in which mankind is being improved is conditioned by cultural forces. The process and its products result from the influence of cultural forces. The origin, purpose and goal can be derived and understood only in the cross-section of cultural creation of the past and present. That also proves that various conceptions are aimed at the ideas of truth, good, wisdom and beauty. In this way, culture has been developed into all areas of human life, it has been investigated in science, morals, religion, art, in its relation to the integrity of human personality, in the relation to social groups, nations and the whole mankind. It causes life to be developed, graded and improved.

According to Aristotle, a man is a social being. He understood that man cannot live alone, far from the others. But he has to be in community with other people. Man's desire and necessity to live in a community with others is also a cultural need (Verbeke, 1990).

Culture, as a historical-social dimension of existence, has been differentiated in space and time. It includes various value orientations and differences in total spiritual development. Natural diversity of cultures has resulted from special and unique conditions and irreversibility of historical time (Skinner, 1971, p.127-144). Culture has its special characteristics in human behaviour and feelings, in customs and morals, in education, in ethical and aesthetic categories.

In the modern and developed communities the idea of humanity and democracy has been emphasized in understanding culture. If the idea that culture is an effort for perfection and especially for perfection of man has been accepted, then culture is deep in its intentions. Therefore the highest values have been searched for in man, in current humanity, in constant deepening and extension of human ideals. It is history that uncovers this dimension of cultural development. This is the universal and multicultural historical message. Culture, torn off historical facts and extrinsic in relation to those facts, is useless and idle (Lacroix, 1970, p.184).

Culture and morality have been qualified as historical and social phenomena. Culture, as a typical human phenomenon, represents the standard of social development. In the sphere of behaviour and human deeds, morality is an evaluative and regulative phenomenon. Culture reflects the extent of human growth and is

manifested in its continuity, regarding the development of mankind. In the area of the human behaviour evaluation, the objectively-valid-moral-life values have been created.

Culture and moral phenomena cannot be investigated in isolation from historical development, with no respect to wider connections, their global and human character must not be neglected. In such a way, we will avoid the danger of abstractions, speculations and illusions. Culture expresses the standard of global development of society and the individual. It was the ancient culture that considered the development of every human being an ideal. Our modern democratic society considers global development of man intensification and creative development of his/her spiritual and moral values the key objective.

Man makes matter spiritual and gives his/her soul a solid ground. The spiritual is the most important and the most valuable culture (Schwaitzer, 1986, p.106). Material products cannot become culture on their own. They become culture after they have improved the individual and society. Underestimating the spiritual value of culture and unilateral preference of material property develops into shallow understanding of culture. Natural culture awareness and progress are based on the spiritual output of a man, on his/her willingness to provide the whole world and individuals with good. Spiritual and moral perfection is the highest objective of culture. Society develops in steps and spirals. There have not been any permanently closed cultures and societies in the social and historical development. Global cultural and moral attributes form the basic platform which keeps the continuity of spiritual creation and the development of human personality's dimensions, the platform of material areas of social life.

Individual ideas and values can survive even after a culture has come to its end. Their ideal and moral content has become real in a real historical situation. In such a way they become a spiritual force of social spiritual development. They survive in such a social continuity as spiritual, cultural and moral phenomena and values. They are not only an abstract and shapeless theory with no links to real life. But on the contrary, the authenticity of human existence is their real manifestation. They are closely manifested together with human existence, its body and soul development.

Culture and morality, as parts of historical and human development, manifest spiritual state (spiritual health) of society. Morality is consciousness of its era, the given period of historical development, it regulates and evaluates movement in human work, ideas and deeds. A period of social changes brings about uncertainty and instability in officially proclaimed moral principles and norms. Individuals and society perceive such a situation as a moral crisis. These signals damage the balance of social structure. This damage has been caused either because the conditions under which these moral norms originated have been destroyed or because

the newly established moral norms contradict the conditions that prevail in social life. In such a context, our moral consciousness gains new content because changed living conditions do not correspond with old norms. These changes take place both in individuals and social-political life.

Cultural and moral phenomena have been *sui generis* in the development of mankind. In their current shape and perspective, they become key ones for man's future, his/her spiritual development within natural and historical development. We think of the highest spiritual, cultural and moral values in human effort. Transferred to real life, it means individual improvement of man, his/her intrinsic development, acquisition of basic human values of good, beauty, the truth, love, etc., in connection with the whole process of speaking culture, including moral maturity of communities, nations and societies (Tester, 1992).

Every process in culture has been a step towards freedom. Material and spiritual freedom are closely connected. Culture expects freedom. History and the development of mankind and society result from the conditions of the past. However, cultural and moral phenomena cannot be developed in temporal and spatial continuity only, but also in temporal and spatial discontinuity. They are dependent on the conditions on continents, countries and nations, and within intensified integration tendencies and efforts. They have become very significant in current European dimensions, in European integration of countries and nations, in the integration of European culture taking into consideration the specific features of national and ethnic cultures. But the problems of disintegration develop, however, hand in hand with integration processes.

Freedom and individuality, humanity and morality can be developed only in a society based on firm democratic principles. If free development of an individual, freedom of consciousness, belief, business, intellectual and moral maturity, etc. are considered the highest value of cultural life, then its development can be provided only on the basis of human and moral stability in society. Freedom, however, should be connected with responsibility. Namely, current ultraliberal anomy makes us "connect" it with responsibility as its counterpart.

Culture and life consider man to be the top value, the creator of all civilised and cultural values. Cultural sphere and morals have been improved by the development of man merging in its biological dimension with spiritual dimension, cultural and moral dimensions (Kohlberg, 1981). It means that values are situated in the areas open to man. The level of cultural and moral maturity is the peak of man's achievements in history. By now it is his/her top perfection. The higher the stage of the development of mankind, the higher its goals and perspectives. But we cannot ignore the current danger of decultivational influences, "barbarism" of technical civilization, devastation of nature and other serious facts.

2. Europe – the value community and European identity

Continental (European) culture has its own value formula which determines its characteristics: its historical function, its spiritual origin, its current processes in European integration. The study of European developmental processes in global connections, the study of European values and features is important for understanding the essence of Europeism, European consciousness, European citizenship, European identity, national identity and personal identity (What is Europe,1995). The current project of integrated Europe is a historical reality, it is a gradually developing stage and the result of history. The current symbolical notion can be explained and understood only in the context of views, relations, connections and processes which have taken place. The current definition of Europe expresses its integration, cooperation, solidarity, and an intensive effort for its peaceful development. We search for something common, for unity in the different and the special. We think of Europe as unified politically, socially and spiritually. Understanding Europe as an environment for people living in it helps understand national identity within Europeism, but also even understanding a new quality in the interpretation of international and intercultural relations in the world. However, Europe as a whole creates a new civilised values and also a new value orientation.

Belonging to Europe is defined as belonging to its cultural area. European culture has been longitudinally developed. It is characterised by rich ideas, a variety of views on human existence, a variety of opinions about individual and social life, its spiritual and value and cultural dimension, as well as the large creativity of European thought. Europe does not have a single face regarding culture and morality. It is a balanced combination of more faces that are complementary. The European culture is many-sided due to its many-sided character of resources. They are not occasional resources. They are resources of special national cultures. The right for European existence belongs to those whose works contribute to the development of European spirit, European thought, and European culture (Europe and Ethnicity, 1996).

Europeism is the recognition of one's domicile in national community of a social and cultural nature. Such a community has significant characteristics which are different from other socio-cultural communities. There is a difference because there is a specific cultural-spiritual and ideal orientation, socio-moral ethos, and life style. European awareness should never develop into cultural superiority and should always include openness and tolerance towards other parts of the world, other cultures and religions. The openness towards other cultures can meet obstacles in areas where significant European values have been challenged.

The theory of systems defines European recognition as a set of individual elements which reflects the complex character of the world and designs its new changes

and corrections (Krejčí, 1992). The European recognition has been aimed at the application of a new continental and global function of Europe. The sense of such an application has a significant ethical-and-value-and-educational dimension.

Europe is a multicultural community with its own identity and competencies which create a specific value-forming educational field running towards higher humanity of transnational and global essence. The formation of more humane European community, in the post-modern period has influenced significantly the origins of new paradigms, or the change of older paradigms in the anthropological, philosophical, ethical, pedagogical level and other humane sciences. We are interested especially in the ethic-pedagogical level. The process of creating the moral identity of a personality will be developed in qualitatively wider European dimensions.

New continental and global ethics, its applicable areas in relation to educational phenomena, must, accept basic determinants of cultural-value-educational essence in its internal development. New European reality, the application of continental and global functions has been included in the conception of European culture European recognition, European citizenship, European dimension, and European identity.

In its wider conception identity expresses coincidence, harmony, unity, stability, non-replacibility, non-contradiction of a subject. It is about one's own self, about one's awareness of one's relation to others, about the identification of congruence and difference between people, nations, countries and continents (Kučerová, 1992, s.93-98). Identity does not exist outside itself and it is socially created by specific historical contexts. It is created by the facts which are parts of human memory and by projects of the future. Pragmatically it represents all that is gone, and history is the choice and interpretation of the past. In the process of identity formation, one considers the choice of beliefs by an individual and by society more important, than the event that really happened. Stability of identity has been determined by solidity of an individual's memories, those of society, nation, country and continent.

Identity is closely connected with the search for a place in the world by an individual, ethnic group nation or a wider community living in a certain place and searching for its relation to other communities, in order to identify oneself with them through understanding one's own self. Aiming at one's identity equals understanding one's own self and understanding the world we live in. In the contemporary social territory, we want to return ,metaphysically said, back to Europe which is conditioned by the return to one's own identity and development of the process of "unified European identity formation". The identity of Europe can be easily recognized through the story of identities' negotiation and that of conflict. Identity of any European culture is senseless if it is not considered in the context of its relations to other European cultures.

In the social dimension, there are more relevant elements which create identity. We can mention political and cultural elements which have been related to groups, regions and nations which people have identified themselves with. Then there is a **moral** element which is related to the identity through ideas, opinions, values and deeds. Identity is narrative. I am identified by what I decide to do and others identify me according to my deeds. Do I see myself as a “good” man and do the others consider me a “good” man, too? Currently designed Europe aims at unification. The desire for unified “European” identity is connected with the reinvention of Europe itself, with the reinvention of European heritage, cultural and moral values, and its inner unity. The “exchange” of moral values and cultural values is not possible in Europe. Mutual differences in the European territory, contradictions and complementarity are significant elements in the formation of the European identity. European recognition cannot result in cultural superiority, but it should always include openness in favour of other cultures, the space for mutual cultural enrichment and peace cooperation.

3. European cultural and humanistic ideals of education

European cultural recognition and global connection of historical processes in Europe have their common European principle, their historical reality. This fact has determined the basic conception of a human being’s cultivation in its educative and moral position, together with the formation and application of its basic ideals, and the goal-and-value structure.

The cultivation of human existence, spiritual and physical development of man is the basic and immanent part of the whole developmental process of mankind. In spite of unbalanced development, mutual encounter of various cultural complexes and humanity represents final value destination in the formation and education of man.

Having emphasized dignity and the full development of human life, ancient cultures created the very basic humanistic platform of the development of man. In a civilized world and in nature, man can find the proof of his/her existence and the purpose of his/her life. He/she accepts the idea that events have their inner tendency to do good, in nature and in human life. From this postulate, even a taxonomic and value-educational categorization and the process-of-education intentions have been developed. The development of philosophical thought was decisive for education in antiquity (Dewey, 1963, p.88/90).

Life philosophy of Hellenistic antiquity was anthropocentric. In the search for perfection of man, one is looking for the development of his/her natural spiritual and

physical strength. Having joined good and beauty (regarding the Hellenistic ideal of perfection), the ideal of many-sided developed personality, so-called “kalokagathia” was defined, i.e. to be beautiful and good, regarding body and soul (from Greek kalos-beautiful, and agathos-good). In its substance, this ideal represents natural development of human personality, and it is a centre of all efforts in ancient culture.

Medieval culture developed from a transcendental base of the highest life goals. Christian culture and Jewish culture became integral parts of the development of European culture. Christianity brought the theocentrism to Europe. While the substance of the ancient ideal of life perfection joined beauty and good, the Christian ideal of perfection is based on religious life, on the revival of human beings, on spirit and the truth, on the transformation of the old man into a new one with deep spiritual values.

The natural essence of man’s development ideal was extended with the dimension of a higher spiritual substance, by culture of spirit, belief and religion. The culture and spiritual life of Christianity created a new integral structure which penetrates deeply to the whole civilized Europe. In spite of many elements unacceptable by antiquity and different from it, Christian culture developed ancient cultural heritage and uncovered a higher level of spiritual reality. At the beginning of its flourishing, Christian medieval culture is represented by Saint Augustine’s works (Storing, 1992, s.165–170) and in its climax by the works of Thomas Aquinas (Akvinský, 1937–1938).

Using its Christian-spiritual intentions, medieval culture developed Christian-spiritual and universal education. Christianity encountered anthropocentrism. Natural values formed the basic cultural and moral postulates in the process of human education. Having intensified and developed the basic humane value of love of man, the ideal of Christian perfection left the supernatural intention for real values of human life. Love, “very positive” relation of one man to another, reaches a character of Christian and humanistic universal.

Christianity, neither western nor eastern, nor Islam can be separated from the historical development of neither the European nor world civilization. In our opinion, Christian culture gives the ideals of man’s humanity a higher transcendental dimension. In spite of the fact that during further developmental periods new types of cultures and new philosophical doctrines, carrying corresponding and new ideals of education, emerged, the postulates of Christian humanistic universals have been enduring values structures in various philosophical, ethical and pedagogic conceptions.

Renaissance and humanism, as a new era in the development of mankind, created a new type of culture, together with a new ideal of education as its objective. Renaissance intensified the human nature, its spiritual and physical perfection,

revived man as an individual, considered him/her to be a subject with his/her own and free will and decisions. Humanism represented a philosophical and ethical trend of thinking and it considered a human being to be the highest value. The main goal was complex development of a human being. The idea of spiritually, morally and physically well developed man, was created. Human dignity, which requires respect and personal welfare, and charity are values of human life. From the view point of the socio-cultural process of formation and application of humanistic value ideal and the total system of education and instruction, Ján Ámos Comenius's conception of "cultura universalis" (Komenský, 1992,1961,1992) is the most significant. The idea of making every man develop as a many-sided personality, resulted in J. A. Comenius's conception of lifelong education. He included the spiritual and physical activities of man into the whole process of man's formation as an individual and as part of mankind as such. J.A. Comenius emphasized the unity of man and the universe, the unity of philosophy of life and man's formation. His pedagogical system was based on the philosophy of life.

J. A. Comenius pointed to the complex of human improvement and to the entirety of the universal-cultural process. That was based on the establishment of relations and connections between man and the universe, in schools of life and in life as a school, and also on the application of an organic structure of the universe. The process of an internal-man's-culture formation, deeply affects his/her many-sided improvement with regard to the whole human civilization and to the degree a cultural society has developed. The notion of a universal human culture, as a lifelong process in schools of life, belongs among the most significant principles of J. A. Comenius's message. It has created the very basic methodological and theoretical starting point for searching for the highest degree of man's humanization, his/her many-sided improvement and personal development.

J. A. Comenius developed his conception of universal humanistic cultivation of man in a theoretical and practical position within the European context. His pansophistic and pedagogic works had their influence not only upon Europe, but also on the whole world. His idea and theoretical projection of international organization, acknowledgement and dissemination of education, as a stream of light (active and positive principle) against the dark (passivity and lack of material and spiritual support) has been elaborated in "Cesta světla" (Via Lucis). This is a metaphor of the total peace-harmony-welfare-good achievement. In his work named "Všeobecná porada o nápravě věcí lidských" (The Universal Improvement of Human Things) explains the principle and mechanisms which could lead to a thousand-year empire of peace and to cooperation between nations.

New cultural revival and the development of new educational ideal on the basis of cultivated humanity and natural human rights and the improvement of the

human essence is closely connected to the Age of Enlightenment. It followed the anthropocentric disposition of renaissance. The idea of natural rights, together with the dissemination of the ideas of good, justice, freedom and deep respect for natural mind are the attributes of the development of the whole cultural and social life, together with new ideas concerning the education of man. The Enlightenment intensified ancient rationalism. Compared to ancient education and scientific acknowledgement, which were mostly of theoretical character, the Age of Enlightenment was marked with orientation on practical problems. Man should develop all natural forces and abilities towards perfection. The position of making the basic principle of social organization and coexistence (i.e. the principle of human rights) was established.

Among the scholars who developed the theory of natural law the idea of natural revival and the idea of creative development of humanistic education, Jean Jacques Rousseau (Bowen, Hobson, 1974, p.120–163) was one of the leading personalities. He contradicted the old world of science with a new world of an individual and his/her internal life. He emphasized the individual freedom and man's right to an individual life. The intention to bring up free man, who loves freedom, is the key idea of the complex theory of natural education. Freedom is man's natural right and J. J. Rousseau considered it an essential and determining value category for man's education and up-bringing.

Natural human rights that are connected with the values of freedom, equality, justice, respect for man and his/her individuality, help every individual to achieve welfare and perfection. Having applied his ideas to his system of natural education, J. J. Rousseau emphasized and developed the humanistic and democratic essence of man's formation.

J. A. Comenius's and J. J. Rousseau's ideas had significant influence upon further development of the universal theory of man's education. They also facilitated the rise of human spirit, the definition of life goals and objectives, and also the definition of one's relation to oneself and to other human beings. Those ideas became a resource of the total moral and spiritual revival within the European Cultural Context.

During further historical periods, those ideals developed into a real dimension. The focus of interest has always been on man himself, on his/her efforts towards complex development and improvement. The modern age with its development in natural sciences and technology and the appearance of new social needs has enabled the development of the ideas of democracy, freedom, humanity, and the progress of mankind. The persistent humanistic tradition created, developed and improved the best fruit of human culture in the communities whose development was based on democratic principles. After the Second World War, bipolarity in Europe resulted

in developmental dichotomy and stagnation, in which the civilization of human rights was opposed to the society of social engineering. The contradiction results in current search for civilization of human rights and responsibility.

Following from the European historical and developmental process, in the modern democratic society, we search for new dimensions of human ideals' application. This process has been manifested in new humanistic, cultural-anthropological, ethic-axiological and pedagogic-educational dimensions. Classical humanism has been replaced by modern humanism. Basic humanistic and axiological postulates have been a constant platform which can be used when solving the current and human-being issues. Searching for the sense of life, the purpose of life relation towards one's self, and towards other people have been the ideas to mobilize spiritual forces of individuals and groups in the whole mankind. Narrow evaluation viewpoints of professional acknowledgement, by individual ideological and political and philosophical and theological social theories have been replaced by multicultural viewpoints. These are about welfare, humanity and morality (Loewy, 1993).

No scientific paradigms of current radical pluralism can claim their absolute validity. We agree with S. Kučerová's conception of man: "In the time of fantastic civilization possibilities and in the time of general danger of ecological destruction and nuclear post-war destruction, it is worth defining man as an authentic, creative, free responsible, universal and complex being. Current sciences about man should identify themselves with questions such as: "How can man develop positively under current social conditions? What has been created during history and who has contributed to its further development and cultural heritage acquisition?" (Kučerová, 1996, s.40).

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Tu čoš nie tak