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Personalistic Pedagogy and Transcendence

Pedagogika personalistyczna a transcendencia

Abstract: In this paper I focus my attention on personalistic pedagogy, and its connection with transcendence, which was defined by Karol Wojtyła as ‘another name for the person’, because of its close link to the realisation of man as a person (Wojtyła, 1993, s. 230). In this regard, I focus my attention on references to transcendence in the studies of selected personalists. In its structure the article proposes reflection over the following problems: 1) the spiritual and transcending dimension of the bodily character of the human person; 2) the transcendence of the human person and the human person’s quest for values in the varieties of personalisms; 3) the ‘naturalisation’ of the ‘person’ category, and the openness to transcendence; 4) transcendence in historical, metaphysical and theological personalism; 5) education as a process between nature, culture and transcendence. According to Karol Wojtyła, when we talk about transcendence in relation to the human person we should take into account three dimensions: 1) transcendence in action; 2) transcendence towards another ‘I’ and 3) transcendence towards personal God. The biological life is never

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able to explain the spiritual life, and it is the spiritual life that gives meaning to the biological life, because the only sphere of the spirit reveals to us the value of the personal life and the meaning of human existence. This consequently leads to the need for separate reflection on the world and on man. In this sense, both in theoretical reflection and in practical action, the above-mentioned need is emphasised and points to respect for the ‘mystery of the child’, all the more acceptable in a climate of faith and openness to transcendence. Of course, the process of education and teaching can be approached superficially, in a shallow sense, in which we can remain closed to the possibilities and potential of human development. Epistemological distinctions connected to Maritain’s levels of cognition allow us to notice at least two types of teaching and education (flat and deep). A human being might stop (for various reasons, of course) at the lower levels of existence, and give up any aspirations to higher values, and to transcendence. Here we can seek help in explaining the part of staying open on transcendence of personalistic pedagogy.

Keywords: personalism; historical personalism; metaphysical personalism; personalistic pedagogy; transcendence; carnal and spiritual dimension; person; nature; culture; biological life and spiritual life.

Abstrakt: W artykule koncentruję uwagę na personalistycznej pedagogice i na jej relacji do transcendencji, określanej przez Karola Wojtyłę jako „inne określenie osoby” z racji ścisłego związku z urzeczywistnieniem się człowieka jako osoby (Wojtyła, 1993, s. 230). W tym względzie koncentruję uwagę na odniesieniach do transcendencji w opracowaniach wybranych personalistów, wskazujących m.in. na duchowy i transcendujący wymiar cielesny – charakter osoby ludzkiej. Artykuł w swojej strukturze proponuje podjęcie refleksji nad następującymi zagadnieniami: 1) duchowy i transcendujący wymiar cielesny – charakter osoby ludzkiej; 2) transcendencja osoby ludzkiej i jej dążenie do wartości w wielorakości personalizmów; 3) „naturalizacja” kategorii „osoba” a otwarcie na transcendencję; 4) transcendencja w personalizmie historycznym oraz personalizmie metafizycznym i teologicznym; 5) wychowanie jako proces między naturą, kulturą a transcendencją. Według Karola Wojtyły, gdy mówimy o transcendencji w relacji do osoby ludzkiej, powinniśmy uwzględnić trzy jej wymiary: 1) transcendencja w czynie; 2) transcendencja wobec drugiego „Ja”; 3) transcendencja wobec Boga. Życie biologiczne nigdy nie jest w stanie wytłumaczyć życia duchowego i to właśnie życie duchowe nadaje sens życiu biologicznemu, gdyż jedynie sfera ducha objawia nam wartość życia osobowego i sens ludzkiej egzystencji. Prowadzi to w konsekwencji do konieczności rozdzielenia refleksji nad światem i nad człowiekiem. W tym znaczeniu zarówno w refleksji teoretycznej, jak i w praktycznym działaniu podkreśla się i wskazuje na respektowa-

nie „tajemnicy dziecka”, tym bardziej możliwe do przyjęcia w klimacie wiary i przy otwarciu się na transcendencję. Proces wychowania i nauczania można ujmować powierzchownie, w sensie płytkim, w którym można pozostawać zamkniętym na możliwości i potencjał rozwoju człowieka. Epistemologiczne rozróżnienia związane z Maritainowskimi poziomami poznania pozwalają zauważyć przynajmniej dwa rodzaje nauczania i wychowania (płytkie i głębokie). Osoba ludzka może zatrzymać się (z różnych względów) na niższym poziomie egzystencji i porzucić wszelkie aspiracje do wyższych wartości i do transcendencji. Tutaj możemy upatrywać pomoc w zrozumieniu roli pozostawania otwartymi na transcendencję w pedagogice personalistycznej.

Słowa kluczowe: personalizm; personalizm historyczny; personalizm metafizyczny; pedagogika personalistyczna; transcendencja; wymiar cielesny i duchowy; osoba; natura; kultura; życie biologiczne i życie duchowe.

The crisis of the 1930s, related, among other things, to the aspirations promoting liberal individualism on the one hand, and collectivism and massification on the other, became an important reason for the search for the so-called ‘third way’, associated with Emmanuel Mounier (1905–1950), and a group of his friends, who started to point to the ‘personalistic and communitarian revolution’ as a way out of the returning old currents of thought and misunderstandings concerning, for example, economic collectivisation, and, respectively, the limits of existentialism and reductionism to a kind of communist Marxism.

Personalism, much more than a conceptual system, became for them a certain perspective of ‘militant thinking’, which placed its centre in the person, and for which the communitarian dimension became important, as well as spirituality, openness to transcendence, and a concrete, valuable, and committed existence.

In my paper I focus on personalistic pedagogy, and on its connection with transcendence, which was defined by Karol Wojtyła as ‘another name for the person’, because of its close connection to the realisation of man as a person (Wojtyła, 1993, p. 230). In this regard, I focus my attention on references to transcendence in the studies of selected personalists. Due to such an approach, Wincenty Granat’s (one of the great rectors of the Catholic University of Lublin and personalistic theologians) analyses pay special attention to those French writers who introduced into the idea of personality

the element of one's own activity, and the related element of free will, but also of asceticism, consisting of overcoming individualism in devoted service to others. The human choices made on the line between good and evil constitute a particular value and role in the development of the 'I', and also lead—as Granat draws on from Gabriel Madinier—to a spiritual community, to some absolute 'we', in which the being of our consciousness can be characterised as a social 'we', whereby everyone is not an 'I' but a 'you'. It is in this sense that John Paul II seemed to have spoken of the 'We' of marriage, and Benedict XVI of the 'We' of the Church on the various continents, and in the various communal forms of figures throughout the world (Wojtyła, 1978).

1. The spiritual and transcending dimension of the bodily character of the human person

Maurice Blondel, demonstrating that the person is that which is most perfect, refers to the dogma of the Holy Trinity—in which the three Persons have a single substantial being—as the highest model of the co-participation of persons (Blondel, 1935, pp. 278–281).

Indeed, it is only by going beyond one's own personality, and working towards higher goals, together with devoted service to others, that social harmony, love, and peace are guaranteed. Analysing the approaches of both existentialists and Marxists, Wincenty Granat draws attention to Emmanuel Mounier's *The Personalist Manifesto* (Mounier, 1947), and demonstrates its originality and evaluation of the current situation of man, as not only marked by an economic crisis, but above all by a spiritual crisis (but not in the sense of traditional spiritualism, directing spiritual forces towards 'artificial paradises') (Granat, 1961, pp. 78 ff.).

The fundamental problem, therefore, remains the reference to absolute and timeless values. Pointing to the position of E. Mounier in this respect, Granat repeats that personalists hesitate to direct the person towards non-personal values. All values should take on a social and historical character, i.e. they should be manifested in human society. A person, in Mounier's view, is a pursuit towards something supra-personal, and at the same time is taking part in the life of other persons and giving value to the world (Mounier, 1953, p. 89).

In this sense, Mounier saw the occurrence of human personal existence as being at a kind of crossroads, on the one hand striving towards the external world, and on the other hand striving towards one's own inner self. Mou-

nier's personalism thus differs from individualism, but also from collectivism, pointing to the basic conditions of social life, which include:

- 1) to go out and start from oneself (*sortir de soi*) in order to devote oneself to the service of others;
- 2) to understand others, i.e., without ceasing to be oneself, to try to see things from the point of view of others;
- 3) to take upon oneself the fate, hardship, joy and tasks of others;
- 4) to give, because the economy of the person is the gift economy and not one of compensation or calculation;
- 5) to be faithful, i.e., to take care to remain in love and friendship (Mounier, 1953, pp. 39–40; Granat, 1961, pp. 89–90).

All these aspects and aspirations clearly speak for the spiritual and transcending corporeal dimension of the fact of the human person, who maintains independence by opening up to values, assimilated and experienced voluntarily, and then by voluntary commitment and constant conversion. In this way, for Mounier, the person is the totality of the human being, and at the same time only a spiritual being (Granat, 1961, pp. 93–96).

Ultimately, according to Granat, it is especially Catholic teaching which fully grasps human personality, and man's vocation, by pointing to the striving towards God, which is the basis for both achieving the fullness of humanity and participation in His inner life, and at the same time revising his personality. In realising this aspiration, man chooses, values, and transforms oneself and the world, becomes active, and influences his character (Granat, 1961, p. 229). In this dynamic view, the human person acts with the aim of constantly enriching oneself within the scope of one's entire being, which constitutes the attribution to man of the purposefulness of action and the answer to the question of the meaning of human existence (Granat, 1961, p. 249).

The fundamental characteristic of personalism, in spite of the multiplicity of its varieties and currents, is the fact that it always starts from the 'person' actuality. Pointing to Emmanuel Mounier's position in this regard, Granat repeats that personalists hesitate before directing a person towards non-personal values. Personalism always starts from the 'person' actuality, lived intuitively in one's own experience, and at best oscillates between metaphysical instances (in the understanding of the 'person' category—as the 'Person'—referring to the Creator) and anthropological instances (the person as a historical and specific subject).

References to transcendence occupy an important and distinct place in the practice of personalistic pedagogy, but the explanation of its meaning and role is often lacking, especially in connection with the reference of transcen-

dence to values. Wincenty Granat states, in this regard, that: ‘Modern-value theoreticians René le Senne, L. Lavelle, and R. Polin write a lot about the nature of values, about their source, about the transcendence of the human person, but they do not give any precise descriptions in connection with the human person’s striving towards values’ (Granat, 1961, p. 36).

2. The transcendence of the human person and the human person’s quest for values in the varieties of personalisms

Much has been written about the explicit opening of personalism to transcendence by Armando Rigobello, who even states that this kind of opening to transcendence causes personalism to be perceived as a certain religious doctrine, at least in the intentional form, i.e. it is open to exceeding and transcending its concrete empirical realisations, and at the same time it emphasises the concrete dynamism of everyday existential experience. This type of fact, which characterises personalism in general, is all the more noticeable and strengthened in those approaches and varieties of personalism which explicitly cultivate their reflection in a climate of faith and openness to transcendence (Rigobello, 1975, p. 74). It should also be borne in mind that Christian pedagogy itself is a broad movement in which Catholic pedagogy and the educational doctrine of the Catholic Church have always occupied a central and significant place.

Recently, personalism has developed towards a mosaic of concepts, from spiritualism, Christian existentialism and liberation theology, to neo-Thomism, and especially to personalistic pedagogy. All of its varieties, however, take some stand in relation to transcendence, especially in the context of the axiological problem.

Although there is no lack of positions which try to divide personalism into theocentric and anthropocentric, the above statements about personalism in general, and its openness to transcendence, contradict such approaches. Indeed, while on the one hand Maritain represents the neo-Thomistic position expressed in his publications *L’éducation à la croisée des chemin* [*Education at the Crossroads*] (1947) and *Pour une philosophie de l’éducation* [*Towards a Philosophy of Education*] (1959), Mounier, on the other hand, strengthened the existential, historical, and social dimensions by assuming a ‘community of persons’, in which the rights of the individual—and those of the community—are merged. In both depictions and approaches, however, there remains

an openness to transcendence, and a pursuit of going beyond the current state of affairs.

To be more precise, it should be emphasised that, in general, the person was, for Mounier, interpretable as an open and dynamic structure, and at the same time as a reality cloaked in a certain mystery. It is the result of an experience in which the singularity and creativity of the individual remain in relation to a certain image of transcendent superior values.

From these positions, Mounier's personalism appears firmly rooted in history, as a continuous confirmation of the divine project to be realised day by day in a process of constant conversion. This sets, for education, the very important task of guiding the whole process of human development to maturity in such a way that it allows the person to gradually acquire self-awareness and responsibility for, and among, others (Frabboni & Pinto Minerva, 2002, p. 74).

Max Scheler, linking his axiology to anthropology, is considered to be the founder of the axiological view of man. As a result of this orientation, while E. Husserl was interested in the nature of human cognition and the essence of being, M. Scheler took up anthropology and the theory of values (Szewczyk, 2009, pp. 107–108). In his view of man, Scheler emphasised that it was not enough to consider man as a natural, environmental being, but rather as a spiritual, ethical, and axiological being. It is in this direction that Wincenty Granat also undertakes his original and highly valuable research.

In this diversity and multiplicity of manifested positions, Italian (and also other European) Catholic pedagogy after the Second World War appeared united in the personalistic trend, to the point of almost identifying itself with it. The common element in all these trends was the desire to overcome the predominantly philosophical approach (in which everything was rather realised in the theoretical dimension) in favour of an approach more open to the historical and social dimension of the life of the individual and of the whole community.

3. The 'naturalisation' of the 'person' category, and the openness to transcendence

Based on the example of Italian pedagogical thought, we can see how personalism progressively initiated the process of the 'naturalisation' of the 'person' category, which, while remaining open to transcendence, is not reduced to some condition defined *a priori*, but is enriched and reinforced by

the historicity of the human experience, and of the specific and historical community (Frabboni, Pinto Minerva, 2002, p. 76).

In this kind of process of the ‘naturalisation’ of the ‘person’ category—in addition to the reflections within Catholic pedagogy itself, which also experienced a proliferation and diversity of positions—there is also a series of social, cultural, and religious events of the period. Above all, it is necessary to point to the role of the Second Vatican Council, which, in a certain sense, integrated the instances of renewal in the Catholic community, and in reading the so-called ‘signs of the times’, showed a sensitivity to earthly dramas, and, within the framework of a ‘theology of earthly realities’, undertook to value projects focused on the secular dimension, beyond that of the celestial.

This conceptual position, already present in the writings of Giuseppe Flores d’Arcais in 1960, has been strengthened with the passage of time. With the publication of the book *Le “ragioni” di una teoria personalistica della educazione* [*The ‘reasons’ for the personalistic theory of education*] (Flores d’Arcais, 1987), he undertook the theoretical justification of the choice of the personalistic concept.

In fact, therefore, we note that personalistic pedagogy, by advocating once again the option of moving away from a purely ontological (metaphysical) premise, and affirming that the person, being open to transcendence, is at the same time corporeal and historical, is also revealed as an earthly project which fulfils itself through its own existence. This fact has made it possible for personalism to enter into dialogue with many contemporary currents of thought, including pedagogical thought, and existentialism.

In the northern Italian environment, Giuseppe Catalfamo (1921–1989), with a kind of synthesis of the previous heritage of Mounier’s and Stefanini’s personalism, initiated a dialogue with other theoretical and ideological positions, which facilitated the emergence, in the personalist debate, of approaches ranging from Giovanni Maria Bertin’s problematicism to Dewey’s activism, and further to existentialism, and even to Marxism itself. Already in his treatises of 1957 and 1961, and especially in the study *I fondamenti del personalismo pedagogico* [*The Foundations of Pedagogical Personalism*] (Catalfamo, 1966), Catalfamo formalised his critical personalism even more explicitly. It is a personalism which, in a more-than-secular way, considers the problem of the person precisely in a civil way,¹ rejecting dogmatic ap-

¹ The introduced term ‘civil’ is related to the necessity of naming a trend which should not so much be referred to, as is often done, as ‘lay’ or ‘secular’, but more precisely *civil*, i.e. not directly inspired by religion, but also not excluding it.

proaches, and opening up, in a new way, to the religious dimension. It should be added that religious means not only that it is pre-supposedly linked to the metaphysical-ontological order mentioned above, but more embedded in action and social commitment (Frabboni & Pinto Minerva, 2002, p. 79).

In this perspective, during a very interesting dialectical confrontation with Marcello Peretti (the leading representative of spiritualistic personalism), Catalfamo presented the theme of the existence of two different personalisms: the one in Peretti's terms – clearly based on metaphysical foundations, and firmly anchored in 'perennial' Christian principles and values; and the one he describes as 'critical', more problem-orientated, and taking into account the historical perspective.

This discussion, which took place in Italy between 1971 and 1973, placed in opposition the two Italian pedagogues, M. Peretti and G. Catalfamo, following the publication by the latter of the treatise *Personalismo senza dogmi* [*Personalism without dogmas*] (Catalfamo, 1971) and the further development of this position in the subsequent treatise *L'ideologia e l'educazione* [*Ideology and education*] (Catalfamo, 1980). The development of this discussion, and the exchange of opinions in a series of articles as a dialogue between M. Peretti and G. Catalfamo, contributed to the realisation that there were, and still are, different ways of framing the 'person' category in pedagogy. Taking into account metaphysical, theological, and historical personalism, Catalfamo advocated a historical-critical perspective of his pedagogy, while at the same time emphasising the fundamental emancipatory function of education and school in a context rich in opposites, which is precisely the milieu of northern Italian pedagogical thought (cf. Böhm & Flores d'Arcais (Eds.), 1978; Śliwerski, 2003, p. 193 ff; Śliwerski, 2009; Frabboni & Pinto Minerva, 2002, p. 80).

In a similar way, we can further analyse other personalisms: phenomenological and historical personalism (M. Scheler, R. Ingarden, R. Guardini); existentialist personalism (G. Marcel, K. Jaspers, A. Brunner, N. Berdyaev, L. Shestov); neo-Thomistic personalism (J. Maritain, P. Wust, M. Gogacz, M. A. Krapiec); philosophical and religious personalism (M. Buber, P. Teilhard de Chardin—representing so-called correlative personalism); systemic personalism (Cz. S. Bartnik); spiritualistic personalism; Augustinian personalism, etc. (Kowalczyk, 2010).

This differentiation is also followed up by interpretations and theories of the person, including in terms of education, teaching, etc. on the basis of pedagogy. Thus, for example, according to the Italian personalistic philosopher Luigi Stefanini, personalism itself is seen as a philosophy which particular-

ly points to the ontological, gnoseological, moral, and social dignity of the person, raising it as an essential counter to immanentistic and materialistic denials of it. In turn, as an attempt at the integral presentation and definition of this direction, the definition by the same author can be stated as follows 'Existence in accordance with one's nature is personal, and everything that in existence is not personal is derived from the person; it exists as an expression of the person and of the relationship that occurs between persons' (Stefanini, 1955, p. 36; Stefanini, 1969, col. 1504–1511).

According to Stefanini, personalism cannot be confused with any of the varieties of idealistic monism, nor with immanentistic transcendentalism or solipsism, since the foundations of personalism are pluralistic and transcendentalistic, for the person is intrinsically linked to determination expressed in the form of categories such as 'being-in-itself', 'uniqueness' (which is very aptly described by the German term 'die Einmaligkeit'), and 'sameness' ('identity'), which retain their essence and constancy, even when persons enter into different relationships with others surrounding them.

Thus, according to L. Stefanini, personalism expresses itself as the logical outcome of the spiritualism which spread through Italian philosophy and pedagogy. He sees its origins in Italy in the thoughts of Antonio Rosmini, and the influence which the ideas of E. Mounier and the whole movement of French personalism, especially the thinkers associated with the *Esprit* magazine, had on Italian personalism. Understood in this way, personalism not only points to a certain ontology, but is an ontology itself, since the concept of 'person' in fact takes the form of a concept truly linked to a specific being (cf. Catalfamo, 1981, pp. 4–5). Embedded in ontology, the concept of 'person', in modern times, with a certain departure from metaphysics, under the influence of critical thinking, has been increasingly questioned, while on the other hand attempts have been made to view and present the person in phenomenological categories, in terms of specific experience, personal encounter, etc. In this way, whoever says 'person' is at the same time saying man 'who is a value', referring to man as that natural being who, among other creatures inhabiting nature, possesses his own dignity, elevating man above the animal world, with which, however, he is united (cf. Catalfamo, 1981, pp. 4–5).

4. Transcendence in historical, metaphysical and theological personalism

This is where there also emerges an important difference between metaphysical and theological personalism and the personalism called ‘historical personalism’, which touches on the essence of the relationship of pedagogical personalism to transcendence.²

For *metaphysical and theological personalism*, what can be defined as ‘the quality of the person’ is seen as a ‘gift’ (‘die Gabe’). It affirms that man is a person because he is in a relationship (which different spiritualist philosophies express differently) with God, having this original connection with Him which manifests itself particularly in his conscience.

On the other hand, in *historical personalism* (according to G. Catalfamo, for example), man is a person because he has his value marked and acquired in history. In history—in the temporal perspective—he becomes a person, and this process of ‘becoming a person’ is endless and continuous. Therefore, according to historical personalism, man is a person when he is able to affirm himself as the ‘person’. The person, thus, should not only be supported and developed, but also maintained, preserved and protected, even from man himself, who never ceases to strive for animalisation, having not only the ability of self-creation and development, but at the same time also of self-destruction (Catalfamo, 1981, p. 5).

A further problem remains to be considered. How did man become a person? By what means? By virtue of what activity and through what abilities?

To solve this problem, historical personalism turns to ‘experience’ (‘die Erfahrung’), in and through which man ‘faces the world’ and grapples with his destiny. In this way, we are dealing here with making contact with the world through ‘experience’, which E. Husserl put in the very significant concept of ‘personal encounter’ (‘Erlebnis’). Such ‘experience’ (‘Erfahrung’) is connected with a kind of ‘union with nature’, and at the same time with the ‘making of history’. When we speak of ‘nature’, we are speaking of that reality to which man is subjected, and when we speak of ‘history’, we mean all that man creates.

In ‘experience’ man acts through his reason and will on nature, and transforms it, making it useful for the achievement of his purposes. From this it

² This is what G. Catalfamo calls it, and at the same time places himself in it as his own personalism, in *Der historische Personalismus und seine Pädagogik* (1981, p. 5).

follows that man as a ‘corporeal being’, and ‘natural’ (i.e. united with nature), is ‘given’ as an object among objects; but as a ‘thinking and willing being’, he is also given as a ‘subject’, i.e., as an object he depends on ‘nature’, and as a subject he *faces* ‘nature’, which is subjected to him (cf. Catalfamo, 1981, p. 6).

Very interesting references to transcendence can also be found (still in the Northern Italian environment) within the so-called ‘pedagogy in a situation’ (situational) present in publications, in particular those of Gaetano Santomauro (1923–1976), and in his specific educational activities carried out for broad groups of the population in the 1960s. These references were orientated towards areas of poor literacy.

In this own perspective of communitarian personalism, Gaetano Santomauro also reinforces the spiritual and transcendental dimension of his pedagogical commitment,

which accepts initiative and a stronger connection with the world, not to lose oneself in it or to agree to some mere ratification of the established order, or to the existing functioning of institutions, but to better interpret certain senses, problems and expectations of the world, with the aim of applying more decisively and universally the existing educational law to a constructive and liberating action in education (Santomauro, 1968, p. 13).

The progressive openness of Catholic faculties to confrontation with ideologies of various kinds, which was demonstrated by the pedagogical research undertaken at the Faculty of Educational Sciences of the Salesian Pontifical University of Rome, should not be overlooked in this context, as was clearly presented at the 1975 ‘inter-ideological’ Congress dedicated to the theme *Democratic school management in a situation of conflicts within the Italian democratic community* (of 1976).

This contribution made by the Salesian Pontifical University can also be seen in a broader sense, i.e. in terms of its contribution to the development of experimental disciplines in pedagogy, and the consolidation of the experimental approach to education (Frabboni & Pinto Minerva, 2002, p. 81). These achievements, and selected trends, as well as their representatives and their interests, have been recalled in order to show, based on their example, how pedagogical personalism over the years has quite significantly modified its own conceptual and ideological positions, marking itself and distinguishing itself through the multiplicity of positions in its own environment (Nowak, 2019, pp. 487–508).

Presenting the pursuit of communal commitment, and overcoming dogmatic and ontologically-determined approaches, this personalism sought to show the value of the person in his or her 'essentiality', and humanism, without necessarily looking for a reference to the dimension of transcendence as a starting point. In this way, it sought to show the concrete person in his or her corporeal dimension, sharing life experience 'with others', with its bright and dark sides; someone who is capable of taking responsibility for his or her own life choices and does not suffer from feeling subject to some destiny.

Thus, the indicated 'person' is understood anthropologically—without neglecting his or her value inscribed in a transcendental sense—which characterises pedagogical personalism in the phase closest to our period, when we notice a process of transition: from metaphysical personalisms—to civil systems, from more integristic personalisms—to critical personalisms (Frabboni & Pinto Minerva, 2002, p. 81).

This movement away from all kinds of metaphysical-ontological constructions in relation to the person was taken up by Mario Manno, who developed his own critical personalism—not so much metaphysical, but historical and practical: a personalism which, while remaining against the background of religiosity and transcendence, especially values human experience (framed in a Heideggerian and Deweyian way), and pays particular attention to the relationship which exists between theory and practice—framed in a kind of circularity which allows practice to reflect on itself, and theory to formalise its own statute, recognising each other—precisely in the 'relationship' which unites them.

In this way, 'critical pedagogy' effectively shows its theoretical face (of philosophy of education), but also reveals its practical face (including empirical pedagogy/pedagogics), devoting its attention to the organisational and curriculum aspects of the particular realisation of education and teaching (Frabboni & Pinto Minerva, 2002, p. 81).

In recent years pedagogical personalism has been taking up the challenge of confronting the complexities of contemporary social life, deeply troubled and wounded as it is, but also rich in positive inspirations, and has been trying to achieve this—for example, in its most recent 'neo-personalistic' positions—without renouncing the transcendental dimension, or placing it at the foundation of pedagogical theorisation.

In this sense, personalism accepts the person as a value in itself, in relation to the particular choices which each person has to take up and make in the course of his or her own particular existence; called explicitly the taking

of responsibility at the same time, understood as the capacity to consciously assume the consequences of one's own actions; it gives to education the fundamental place necessary to elaborate a certain project for the formation of the person, not so much elaborated dogmatically, but constructed, as it were, on an ongoing basis, in the course of that formation (Frabboni & Pinto Minerva, 2002, pp. 82–83).

Of great significance in this area of analysis and research are, contemporarily, Norberto Galli, Luciano Pazzaglia, and Mauro Laeng, as well as conducting research on creativity and practising reflection on the idea of community and participation, Luciano Corradini; characterised by an intercultural approach, Luisa Santeli Beccegato and Angela Perucca; the reconstruction of the theoretical debate between personalism and civil directions, which we find in the works of authors such as Giorgio Chiosso, or experimental research, Luciano Gallini and Nicola Paparella; and even the research on nurseries, conducted by Sira Serenella Macchietti (Frabboni & Pinto Minerva, 2002, p. 83).

Finally, reference should be made to researchers who, while remaining in touch with the Christian-Catholic pedagogical trends, approach questions in fields of research which are less distinct in the personalistic sense. This concerns, among others, the position represented by Maria Teresa Gentile, an inquisitive researcher specialising in the role of the word and the image in the formation of man, associated with the evolutionism of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, as well as Epifania Gianbalvo, associated with the critical idealism of Vito Fazio-Allmayer (Frabboni & Pinto Minerva, 2002, p. 84).

At the foundation of the phenomenon of education we always find the manifestation of a moment of crisis, while we also find freedom and a made decision. These lead to the question of their basis and their reasons, with Leibnitz having already stated in this regard, *omne ens habet rationem* ('every being has a reason'), but the whole thing cannot be reduced to a question of rationality, which certainly serves to explain, but needs to be complemented, by reference to a metaphysical perspective.

Education, according to personalism, is a phenomenon which—as an undertaken practical activity—has constantly accompanied human history, and, thanks to the works of the great philosophers, has received its first definitions and theoretical presentations, which have made it possible to develop descriptions and analyses of its essence and genesis.

On the basis of existing studies, as well as conducted research, it is very easy, as emphasised by Thomas H. Groome, to observe the three dimensions exposed in education, which characterise it: 1) it is a process which is accom-

plished, 2) current, and 3) open to the future and to new goals. Education in this sense has both the dimension of the already accomplished goodness and that of future goodness (cf. Groome, 1999, p. 5).

In this way, after Whitehead, we can say that education is about transcending something which would be the realisation of the current state, that it is about realising one's potentialities under the influence of the current environmental factors (cf. Whitehead, 1929, p. 39).

Whitehead also stresses 'the essence of education is that it is religious' (Whitehead, 1929, p. 14). When we speak of human education, therefore, we necessarily arrive at issues concerning religion and religiosity as well as culture, which in the view of pedagogical personalism often appears as the transcending of the person (transcendence of the person).

As a subject, man has the capacity for initiative and for starting everything (making a new beginning). This raises the question of how man expresses and implements said capacity. Our existence, our 'being'—in thinking and in wanting, in experience—can be realised and become the result of various functions and activities: understanding, memory, imagination, fantasy, needs, inclinations, instincts, emotions, and feelings. They are all aspects and components of our being, and the person is a kind of synthesis of these aspects.

All of the above dimensions in a particular person are so united that for each person they are specific and only characteristic of that person. In this way the person 'becomes' ('individuates'), 'emerges' (as Viktor E. Frankl puts it), in its 'being' as an original, unique, one-time existence. 'A person', therefore, in its existence, takes on a certain role, only proper to it, being, on the one hand, related to nature, but on the other hand, goes beyond nature, and transcends it. As an 'object' it is included in the causal relations of the phenomena occurring in the world and in itself, while as a 'subject' it projects itself and opens itself to the world of goals and its capabilities:

- in the first respect the human person is subject to nature,
- in the second respect, the human person adapts nature to one's purposes.

Through this project developed by the 'person', 'transcendence' of the person beyond the lived 'experience' and an opening up to a 'future experience' occur. This is especially true of the projects outlined to solve the problems which arise and which confront the person, enabling that person to hypothesise possible solutions and to open up, on the basis of the past 'experiences', to new 'possible experiences'. Of course, it is also a particular characteristic of man as a person that man's projects go beyond the horizon

of the merely verifiable and manifest as a ‘pursuit of transcendence’, often referred to as the ‘transcendence of the person’.³

5. Education as a process between nature, culture and transcendence

There is no doubt that the process of educating younger generations is first determined and guided by nature itself, and takes place as a process of development which we can identify with natural development. However, considering the particular situation and position of man in the world, we discover that this process cannot be left to natural development alone. It was precisely pedagogy as a science which came to the aid of this process (Kunowski, 1946, p. 12; Kot, 1934; Kukulski, 1923, pp. 33–36), undertaking a reflection on the natural process of human development and outlining the basic directions and aims of education, which are achievable after the fulfilment of certain educational tasks (Kunowski, 1946, pp. 12–13).

The process of education in the view of personalism takes place in this specific tension which arises between nature, culture and transcendence. Man is a natural, cultural being, and at the same time supernatural and supra-cultural, i.e. transcending nature and culture (Guardini, 1950, p. 49).

In this context, Romano Guardini writes that

with the analysis of the process of education of the person, it becomes evident step-by-step how the process of human development alienates itself from natural obviousness, whose rank is raised by the intrinsic value of this process, and how its structure becomes increasingly full of tension, endangered, subject to destruction. As a consequence of all this, it becomes less and less possible to describe the process of education with naturalistic notions and using natural criteria. Pedagogical issues stretch between the biological and the theological spheres. Pedagogy belongs to the sciences which embrace all areas of existence (Guardini, 1991, p. 278).

An important proposition in this regard was presented by Karol Wojtyła, according to which, when we talk about transcendence in relation to the hu-

³ It would be necessary, however, to pay attention to the interpretation of this statement; in any case, it cannot be taken in a scholastic sense, nor in a Kantian or an idealist sense (cf. Catalfamo, 1981, p. 7).

man person, we should take into account three dimensions: 1) transcendence in action; 2) transcendence towards another 'I'; and 3) transcendence towards personal God. According to the opinion of Michał Kosche, only such a widely shaped consideration can reveal the richness and complexity of Karol Wojtyła's/John Paul II's teaching on the transcendence of the person (Kosche, 2019, p. 59).

Exploring these dimensions, we can affirm:

Re. 1) the transcendence in the act joins, according to Wojtyła, with the consciousness of personal 'I' and the conception of self-knowledge (Wojtyła, 1979, pp. 43–45). According to Wojtyła, both of these attributes (consciousness and self-knowledge) interpenetrate each other in a human being;

Re. 2) transcendence in the face of second 'I'. Karol Wojtyła claims in this regard that it is possible to capture the world of object values realised by another person by transforming his own experiences to him or her and knowing his actions. He calls the approximation to another person, built on the life of one's own person, 'participation in the humanity of another' (Wojtyła, 1978, p. 13). Participation in second human nature becomes the chance of the fuller survival of oneself, checking oneself in the different person light, and in the consequence also self-determination: the self-education. Improving the person does not happen so on the way of the intimate experience, but by the purchasing of the features and efficiency, which aim to make up the folded painting of the culture in every man. This, meanwhile, gradual assimilates the reality to oneself; the more the person participates in the process of personalisation, the more the person becomes autonomic in making free and coherent elections (Wojtyła, 1979, pp. 268–269);

Re. 3) transcendence in the face of God is steering on God in The Holy Trinity and participation in God Father, Son and Holy Spirit community (John Paul II, 2006, pp. 163–164).

The biological life is never able to explain the spiritual life, and it is the spiritual life that gives meaning to the biological life, because only the sphere of the spirit reveals to us the value of the personal life and the meaning of human existence. This consequently leads to the need to separate reflection on the world and on man. In this sense, both in theoretical reflection, and in practical action, respect for the 'mystery of the child' is emphasised and points to, all the more acceptable in a climate of faith and openness to transcendence (Rigobello, 1975, p. 74). The state of perfection is not possible for man in his earthly existence, but it is possible to gradually perfect oneself. Such an effort to perfect oneself also leads through the assimilation of the

personal qualities of others, as formulated by E. Mounier—in the ‘process of personalisation’ (Mounier, 1953, p. 52 ff.).

Karol Wojtyła claims, in this respect, that formulating the world of subjective values, realised by another person, is possible thanks to transferring one’s own experiences to that person, and learning about that person’s deeds. He calls the approach to another person, built on the experience of one’s own person, ‘participation in the humanity of the other person’ (Wojtyła, 1978, p. 13).

This kind of participation in the humanity of another person becomes an opportunity to experience oneself more fully, to test oneself in the light of another person, and, as a consequence, also to self-determine, to self-educate. The perfecting of the person does not therefore take place in the manner of an intimate experience, but through the acquisition of qualities and abilities which aim to form a complex image of culture in each human being. In turn, with regard to this gradual assimilation of reality, the more a person participates in the process of personalisation, the more autonomous the person becomes in making free and coherent choices.

Treated as a person, the subject of education can never be seen as a thing (*res*), neither in the family nor in the state, and no one is granted hegemony in this respect on any grounds. What should characterise the educator in particular is an attitude of respect for the specific ‘mystery’ (*enigma*) of the person of the one being educated. The person is always ‘someone’, and therefore cannot be reduced to a simple result of abstract reasoning. Mounier stresses this clearly, stating that a person will never be the result of interpretative endeavours. On the contrary, the person is always the starting point and the point of arrival of all human reflection and activity. This can be defined as the truth of the ‘irreducibility’ of the person, which forbids the practice of ‘some zoology of the person’.

Biological life can never explain spiritual life, and it is precisely spiritual life that gives meaning to biological life, since only the sphere of the spirit reveals to us the value of personal life and the meaning of human existence. This consequently leads to the necessity of separating reflection on the world and on man. In this sense, both in theoretical reflection and in practical action, respect for the ‘mystery of the child’ is emphasised and indicated, all the more acceptable in a climate of faith and with openness to transcendence (Rigobello, 1975, p. 74). This kind of respect for the ‘mystery of the child’ who becomes a person is required of various educational institutions (Nowak, 1993).

Such orientation towards transcendence is a further aspect which characterises and determines the specificity of the 'human person'. Owing to this, the 'project of the person' enters the sphere of the mystery, leading to its object no longer being the future, but 'fate' in general ('das Schicksal').⁴

The project of a person in this way enters the unverifiable, and, concerning the future, becomes a kind of hypothesis which is not created in order to solve a specific problem, but in order to 'decipher the mystery' of a person, as Janusz Korczak puts it. Korczak opines that, in educating a human being, we are dealing with something comparable to the task of reading an ancient papyrus, from which we are able to decipher only certain signs. G. Catalfamo writes similarly about such decoding of the mystery (Catalfamo, 1981, p. 7). It is connected with a specific activity related to forecasting the future of a person, with anticipating the person's personal development, and with the orientation towards 'the future developmental good of the person' (Kunowski, 1981, p. 38).

So, in this case we are confronted by the function of theoretical thinking, which we define as prospective or prognostic, which in reference to the person should lead to knowledge of and respect for the person, considered not as an instrument to any end, but as an end in itself (Manno, 1981, pp. 28–29).

It is worth clarifying at this point, however, that it is not always immoral to consider the other as an instrument. It is precisely the orientation of the human being towards values and towards transcendence which gives the process of teaching and education a specific character, involving the requirement of devotion on the part of all persons. There are, indeed, situations in which, according to personalism, we must never consider the other as an instrument. However, there are situations in which I must (or voluntarily can) devote myself completely to others as an instrument. This involves the important problem of the situation and functions of the 'public' (or 'social professions' and 'voluntary work'). In a sense, after all, public servants are also instruments of society, or 'instruments of the State', considered as the entirety of legal institutions, or as the entirety of socio-political administration. This is also pertinent to the situation of the school, and to the work of individual educators, as well as those employed in educational institutions. Those who work in them sacrifice themselves to their pupils as instruments for their intellectual and moral development; similarly, the pupils themselves must be accepted by the true professional, in some sense, as an 'object', in order to

⁴ See a closer definition of the category 'fate' in Kunowski (1981, pp. 195–201).

influence them through the created situations of cognition and the assimilation of knowledge. They should appear specifically as individuals whom we want to adapt and initiate to creative activity, and to become a personality. In this way, by working in education we become specific instruments in our pupils' becoming persons, to realise their humanity as unique persons in both the individual and social dimensions (Manno, 1981, pp. 29–30).

Of course, the process of education and teaching can be approached superficially, in a shallow sense, in which we can remain closed to the possibilities and potential of human development. Epistemological distinctions connected with Maritain's levels of cognition allow us to notice at least two types of teaching and education, which we can associate either with preparation for specific tasks, e.g. to follow a profession, or to behave in a specific way towards nature (this is referred to as *shallow ecology*), but can also lead to true education and the formation of attitudes, which John Paul II very evocatively (with reference to ecology) describes as 'deep ecology'. By analogy, we can speak of a shallow view of education, when we teach the techniques of a particular profession, and a deep view of education, when we undertake professional formation. These levels, following Maritain's suggestion, should also be linked to the spiritual progress of the person (Maritain, 1948).

However, a human being might stop (for various reasons, of course) at the lower levels of existence, and give up any aspirations to higher values, and to transcendence. Stefan Kunowski, in his presentation of the educational development of a human being in his original stratified theory (through successive structures—temperament, individuality, character, personality, world-view), points to the danger of the occurrence of the so-called 'closed structure', i.e. a specific halt of further development on one of the lower developmental structures. Stopping at a lower developmental structure causes a partial 'vicariate', i.e. the replacement of higher human mental functions by lower ones, and the latter become the criteria for evaluating all matters and things. In such a way there is an overgrowth of, for example, the structural factor—feelings, intelligence, or will—to the point of their complete exclusiveness, and the emotional sphere will be destroyed by an excessive development of the intellectual life, while the intellect in turn can be destroyed by excessive cravings of the will.

In this sense, taking into account even the lowest structure, which is the temperament, causes an inhibition of the further development of man, and makes him react to everything with his temperament and emotionality, having no mental or moral brakes. The same can also happen in the next,

higher structures if there is no aspiration to gradually go beyond and transcend them.

Here we can seek help in explaining both the lack of interest by certain persons, and even groups of people, in higher values, and the rejection of transcendence, and, conversely, understand remaining open to them in particular varieties of personalistic pedagogy.

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