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Education in the Perspective of the ‘Inner Image’

Wychowanie w perspektywie „wewnętrznego obrazu”

Abstract: The article fits into the field of anthropology and pedagogical teleology. It identifies three basic anthropological models. The basis for the distinction of the anthropological models described is the category of the ‘inner image’ of the pupil, understood as the deepest truth about the human being; a reality revealed through reflection and at the same time containing elements of mystery, which is why it cannot be unambiguously identified and fully defined but requires an effort to be discovered and then pursued. The three models proposed are as follows: 1. A pedagogy based on the ‘inner image;’ 2. A pedagogy that excludes the ‘inner image;’ 3. A pedagogy of the tacit ‘inner image.’ The theoretical proposals presented are justified by the ideological trends present in pedagogy and their exemplary consequences for educational practice are shown.

Keywords: inner image; trashumanism; *homo absconditus*; upbringing; pedagogical anthropology; goal of upbringing.

Abstrakt: Artykuł wpisuje się w obszar antropologii i teleologii pedagogicznej. Wskazuje się w nim trzy podstawowe modele antropologiczne. Za podstawę rozróżnienia opisanych modeli antropologicznych przyjęto kategorię „wewnętrznego obrazu” wychowanka, rozumianą jako najgłębsza prawda o człowieku; rzeczywistość ujawniają-

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ca się na drodze refleksji, a zarazem zawierająca w sobie elementy tajemnicy, dlatego nie może być ona jednoznacznie określona i do końca zdefiniowana, ale wymaga wysiłku odkrywania, a następnie realizowania. Trzy zaproponowane modele to: 1. Pedagogia oparta na „wewnętrznym obrazie”; 2. Pedagogia wykluczająca „wewnętrzny obraz”; 3. Pedagogia milczącego „wewnętrznego obrazu”. Przedstawione propozycje teoretyczne uzasadniono obecnymi w pedagogice trendami ideowymi oraz ukazano ich przykładowe konsekwencje dla praktyki wychowawczej.

Słowa kluczowe: wewnętrzny obraz; trashumanizm; *homo absconditus*; wychowanie; antropologia pedagogiczna; cel wychowania.

1. Introduction

Among the priority rights of young people, which they expect to be respected by society, the right to ‘be oneself’ is mentioned fairly often. Although this appeal very frequently does not contain clear determinants that could define what it actually means, it expresses a (young) person’s deep conviction that they want to live their life according to their own intentions and beliefs. What they expect from an educator, in turn, is first and foremost to understand them in this regard and to help them achieve this goal. The educator, on the other hand, is generally oriented towards the pursuit of more objectified and socially recognised goals, which do not necessarily coincide with what the pupil understands as ‘being oneself.’

Looking at this situation from the perspective of pedagogical reflection, it should be noted that it opens the way to an extremely important area of research in pedagogical anthropology. This is because it points to a situation in which the pupil conveys in this short message – ‘I want to be myself’ – at least two implicit demands: 1) a negative one – it expresses a disagreement to subordinate one’s own life to external scenarios, goals, tasks, etc.; 2) a positive one – the desire to ‘be oneself’ also indicates that the pupil discovers in themselves a specific content (meaning, significance) of their own life that they want to pursue (fulfil). This second postulate, even when it is not fully recognised and even less concretised in terms of content, points to the issue of the ‘inner image,’ which is present in pedagogical thought, both in its historical and contemporary sources.

The basic thesis of this article is expressed in the conviction about the educational potential of the 'inner image.' The author assumes that a pupil's recognition and acknowledgement of their 'own image' of themselves is a key determinant of their path of personal development. The first part of the article will introduce the relevance of its theoretical content for educational practice because it was a specific educational situation that was the starting point for this article. In the following parts, three different anthropological models will be presented. The first assumes the presence of the inner image in the pupil, the second excludes such a presence, and the third one speaks of its tacit presence. The presentation of the different models is linked to their chronological emergence in pedagogical reflection. For each model, the rationale behind the position taken will be shown and the relevance of the given anthropological approach for educational practice will be suggested.

2. The understanding of the 'inner image' and its practical dimension

The title of this article speaks of education from the perspective of the 'inner image,' therefore, it refers directly to the activities and practice of teaching as education is 'always a socially recognised system of action' (Kunowski, 2004, p. 170). Before showing the different anthropological models in the context of the 'inner image' in pedagogical thought, it is worth reflecting on the practicality and applicability of these considerations in pedagogical activities.

Reflecting on the 'inner image' or, in the language of the youth, 'being oneself,' is a good opportunity to see the deep connection between theoretical and practical issues in education. Bogdan Suchodolski (1903–1992) observes that

for the pedagogue, man is not what he is, but he is always what he becomes under the influence of education, and even man is not what he is, but what he could be if the conditions of his development and transformation were fulfilled (Suchodolski, 1996, p. 539).

Konrad Paul Liessmann, in turn, a contemporary Austrian philosopher of education, points out that ‘education (*die Bildung*) is unthinkable without the image (*das Bild*) of a good and successful life to which one should aspire’ (Liessmann, 2019, p. 69). Jörg Zirfas, on the other hand, notes that whoever educates or teaches a child, counsels an adult or supports an elderly person, has a specific life-related (practical, nonphilosophical) ‘picture’ of the recipient of their pedagogical actions (cf. Zirfas, 2021, p. 12). These and similar statements emphasise the importance of the goal of education, i.e. a certain image of the pupil (or of oneself) to which one aspires. It can also be seen from the statements quoted that the definition of this goal is a fundamental point of reference for the educational measures taken.

By reference to the above, the issue of the ‘inner image’ is inherent to both anthropology and pedagogical teleology. It refers to the theoretical assumptions made, which, although they are subsequently externalised in educational action – as they result from the previously adopted educational goal (cf. Wulf, 2016, p. 67), are nevertheless not visible in the direct educational action. For this reason, it is possible to ask the question (or confront the accusation that is sometimes made), ‘To what extent (if any) such reflections are necessary for educators – practitioners?’ In formulating this question, the author is aware that for some readers it will be a return to ‘perennially’ unsolvable issues that are still present in the pedagogical debate. Others, on the other hand, are so intensely involved in educational work that their main pedagogical concern is to focus on finding optimal ways of addressing educational problems. Very often they even warn that there is an urgent need to find solutions to ever-emerging threats and educational dilemmas, rather than ‘always’ tackle purely theoretical problems.

Inspired by such attitudes, this text attempts to dive into theoretical research in the field of pedagogical anthropology, to show how important it is also for the practice of education. Amedeo Cencini, who has dedicated his entire life to formational and educational work, actually obliges every educator to consciously adopt a selected theoretical model of education. He states that

it is not uncommon that educators adopt a formational model without admitting first of all their own choice to themselves, that is, they have hardly any awareness of what they are doing and why they are doing it in that particular

way, as well as they are not thinking much about it ... and are rigidly using their method (Cencini, 2006, p. 12).

For a clearer understanding of the above statement, it is necessary to recall the three essential areas of pedagogical action and research. Karol Kotłowski (1910–1988) spoke of: 1) the sphere of facts; 2) the sphere of duty; and 3) the sphere of praxeology (Śliwowski, 2010, p. 55); and Janusz Gnitecki (1945–2008) referred to the need to answer three main questions: 1) who man is; 2) who man is supposed to be; and 3) who man becomes (Gnitecki, 1999, p. 21). These and similar statements by pedagogues lead to the thesis that pedagogy is concerned with research that is: 1) anthropological, seeking to unveil what things are like and what axioms are assumed about the pupil; 2) teleological, leading to the presentation of the goal (including the most remote and main one); and 3) methodological, focusing on the technology of education.

Returning to Cencini's observation, it can therefore be said that he warns educators against hastily rejecting anthropological and teleological issues and focusing only on the area of technology because in this way the technology of education itself also loses its meaning and can turn against the pupil. This is often reflected in the fact that the less consciously an educator perceives the issues of anthropology and teleology of education, the more rigidly they implement the methodology of education that does not benefit the pupil. This does not mean, however, that an educator who considers anthropological and teleological questions does not attach any importance to the methodology of education at all. It would be more accurate to say that one who rejects theoretical issues is also, therefore, (overly) focused on methodological issues, which sometimes manifests itself in expecting rigorous observance of them from the pupil. It can be assumed that such behaviour on the part of the educator is a form – sometimes unconscious – of concealing their unawareness or uncertainty about the authentic developmental good of the pupil. In other words, the educator expects their actions to be effective but is unable to assess them in terms of their legitimacy.

In this context, it is worth adding that Zirfas observes that anthropological issues are woven into human life and even more so into the life and work of educators, regardless of whether individual educators consciously reflect on them. He says that people 'live anthropologically,' that is, they 'always

have a certain idea of who a person is, who they can become and who they should become' (Zirfas, 2021, p. 13), and according to this idea, they (consciously or not) act towards others. He calls this approach 'anthropological anthropology' and adds that it involves anthropological description intertwining with normativity. This makes it all the more necessary to reflect on anthropological presuppositions to improve and optimise the practice of education and, perhaps above all, to make it an increasingly conscious and consistent choice, in the context of who the pupil not only can, but should, become as a result of educational action.

The above reflections lead to the conclusion that the practicality of educational action does not only amount to learning and mastering certain educational techniques but already begins with developing an appropriate attitude by the educator. This kind of practicality includes not only the dimension of the effectiveness of their activity but also that of its legitimacy. In such an attitude, the educator not only sees the results of their actions, which always brings joy, but also has the certainty that they are acting in accordance with their assumptions, the consciously defined good of the pupil, or their own beliefs. To help educators in such a reflection, each anthropological model described below will be followed by an attempt to present the practical application of the adopted assumptions in educational action. At the same time, it should be remembered that these are not the only possible exemplifications. Rather, they are intended to show the direction of practical thinking and inspire further, perhaps more detailed, solutions.

3. Education in the perspective of the 'inner image' – theoretical assumptions

The 'inner image' is linked to the anthropological and teleological assumptions of education. Aristotle (4th century BCE) assumed – as quoted by Markus Gabriel – that 'everything that happens in nature has its ideal or perfect form to which it aspires' (Gabriel, 2015, p. 64). It should be noted that the 'form' of which Aristotle speaks can be understood as the 'image' referred to in this article. Thus, the assumption that man has an 'inner image' is based on a broader anthropological assumption, which recognises that being has

a purpose for its existence inscribed in itself (a teleological understanding of being).

Pedagogically speaking, the category of 'image' is contained in one of the original and still today essential pedagogical terms, namely: education – from: shape (German *die Bildung* – from: *das Bild*).¹ Many scholars acknowledge that the origins of this concept go back to the Old Testament Book of Genesis, where it is mentioned that man was created in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen. 1:27), and pioneers of this interpretation of the phrase include Meister Eckhart (ca. 1260–1326), Henry Suso (1295–1366) and Johannes Tauler (ca. 1300–1361) (cf. Böhm & Seichter, 2018, pp. 74–75), whose understanding of the 'image' shall be presented below. For this reason, the category of 'image' is continuously linked to the pedagogical understanding of the development of man, who, in the process of education, discovers in himself the content of this 'image' and then realises it in his life (Meyer-Drawe, 1999, pp. 168–172). Marian Nowak, following Romano Guardini (1885–1968), points out that

in Christian pedagogical thought, it is assumed that the category of 'image' neither originates autonomously from the spirit, nor is implanted in man by social activity, but is inscribed in the person, by the creative and law-making will of God Himself (Nowak, 1999, p. 285).

Therefore, he continues,

this category is understood as an 'inner image' ('authentic image'), in the sense of an orthodox 'icon' as it were, distinctly different from an occurrence, phenomenon and from fiction. It is about the real dimension of existence, perceived in the 'mystery of the icon' (Nowak, 1999, p. 285).

Therefore, it amounts to an understanding of the 'inner image' that is synonymous with the authenticity of the person, their identity is with themselves, the deepest senses and meanings of self-understanding that transcend

¹ Following D. Stepkowski – acknowledging the differences between 'education' and *Bildung* signalled in the article – the author assumes that the optimal equivalent of the German term *Bildung* is 'education.' This text, therefore understands education as the equivalent of *Bildung* (Stepkowski, 2019).

fleeting and transitory whims and desires. ‘The inner image’ is – in other words – the deepest and most authentic (if one can say so) truth about the person, which, however, is non-obvious, i.e. does not reveal itself in direct cognition. This reality has something of a mystery about it, which is why ‘it cannot be clearly defined and fully specified’ (Maliszewska, 2019, p. 185). It therefore requires an effort to be discovered and then pursued.

Originally, the content of this image was interpreted theologically and the process of education – generally speaking – was about turning away from the world and towards God. What is important at this point, however, is that God could be found through ‘that Something in the soul which, according to Meister Eckhart, like God is unformed and uncreated’ (as quoted by: Meyer-Drawe, 1999, p. 169). Emblematic in this context is the statement of the German Dominican Henry Suso, who said that man ‘must be unformed (*entbildet werden*) from the forms and images of creatures, he must be formed upon Christ (*gebildet werden*) and transformed into the Godhead (*überbildet werden*)’ (as quoted by: Benner & Brügger, 2010, p. 180). John Tauler, on the other hand, spoke of the existence in man, at his deepest dimension, of a divine core, a bottom, a foundation, a spiritual depth (*Seelengrund*) that originates directly from God (cf. Szymona, 2008, p. 379). Yet another example of this understanding of the inner ‘image,’ which symbolises (and sometimes even makes present) God Himself in man, is the statement by Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814) that

As long as man wishes to be someone in himself, God does not come to him, because no man can become God. But as soon as man destroys himself in a way that is pure, complete and down to the roots, only God remains and is everything in everything. Man cannot create God for himself but he can destroy himself as an actual negation, and then he sinks into God (Fichte, 1845, p. 159).

In the above statement, it is noteworthy that when man destroys in himself all his desires and wants (in a way that is ‘complete and down to the roots’), he does not become a void, but then it is that ‘only God remains.’ This is evidence that the ‘inner image’ is identified here with God Himself, which is why it assumes the name *imago Dei* – ‘image of God’ – in the literature (cf. Maliszewska, 2019, p. 187f.).

In addition to its theological interpretation, 'inner image' was also interpreted anthropologically. It has been seen not only as a 'trace' of God in man but also as an opportunity to know the authentic 'self' that man can find within himself. An example of this approach is the statement of the aforementioned Meister Eckhart, who – as a complement to the statement quoted above – added the words: 'that Something is the Self as Self' (as quoted by: Meyer-Drawe, 1999, p. 169). Elsewhere, Eckhart calls this the true original image (*Urbild*), while its opposite are illusions (*Abbilder*). In this area of research into the anthropological significance of the 'inner image,' Burkhard Mojsisch formulates 'Eckhart's imperative.' He points to the necessity for man to turn away from illusions (*sich entbilden*) to be able to shape himself (*um sich zu bilden*) (Mojsisch, 1997, p. 102). Thus, shaping (*Bildung*) gains the following definition: 'it is freeing oneself from all images and finding oneself as an imageless Self' (Mojsisch, 1997, p. 102) and is bound by the triad: 'to want nothing, to know nothing, not to let anything passively influence one' (Mojsisch, 1997, p. 102).

From the 18th century onwards, the theological dimension will gradually disappear, but the idea of the 'inner image' will remain, finding further areas of meaning in new ideological contexts. The main idea of this approach, however, remains the same.

Nowadays, as Käte Meyer-Drawe emphasises, 'education' is intertwined with the 'search for one's own identity' (cf. Meyer-Drawe, 1999, p. 172), which is part of the process of understanding the 'inner image' shown above. In emancipatory terms, on the other hand, it indicates the critical distance of the enlightened human being from the heteronomy of metaphysics, theology and the ruling social class and establishes its autonomy in man's own reason. Through this 'inner image,' man frees himself from the prevailing conditions and becomes an end in himself rather than a means to external ends (cf. Böhm & Seichter, 2018, p. 74).

No matter, therefore, how this 'inner image' in man is interpreted in terms of content, it is always linked to a certain ideal, perfect, purposive vision of his own development. It should be emphasised that the pursuit of this vision is not a 'mechanical' result of the processes taking place but is always an 'act of freedom' of man and 'a product of his activity' (cf. Lichtenstein, 1966, p. 26). Also worth noting is the regularity that, in the context of theological interpretation, the 'inner image' points to what is common to all hu-

man beings because it refers them all to the one Source, which is God. Non-theological interpretations, on the other hand, emphasise the uniqueness, unrepeatability and specificity of individual people in relation to others and also in relation to the socio-cultural context in which they live. However, always reaching within oneself is a way of learning about the true self (see Maliszewska, 2019, p. 186). Based on the interpretative suggestion of St Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. 140–ca. 202), the two approaches can be seen as complementary rather than isolated. Indeed, St Irenaeus explained the biblical expression ‘in the image and likeness’ (Gen. 1:27) to mean that he ‘understood the image as something irreducible, immutable, while likeness as something that can be obliterated ... but also recovered ... and even advanced’ (Maliszewska, 2019, p. 192). Hence, ‘image’ could be a symbolic representation of what is a shared truth about man in general, and a ‘likeness’ of what constitutes his meaning and significance.

Based on the above issues, the following conclusions can be made about the anthropological image of the pupil. First of all, it should be stated that the assumption of the presence of an ‘inner image’ in the pupil sees the pupil as a free subject of their own action since it describes them as someone who takes certain actions (a free act) in following an assumed goal (their inner truth of self) (cf. Gabriel, 2015, pp. 62–67; Krąpiec, 1995, p. 9). Apart from the autonomy and freedom of the person, it can also be added that the assumption of an ‘inner image’ in the pupil also recognises them as capable of relationships. First and foremost, of a relationship with themselves and then with others (cf. Jeziorański, 2022, pp. 147–168).

For this reason, the educator will first and foremost try to read this ‘image’ correctly and also help to assist the pupil in doing so. In other words, the educator will take seriously, albeit with cognitive caution, all the appeals of the young person to ‘be themselves,’ assuming that it is in them that the authentic meaning of the pupil’s life may be hidden, even when, for themselves, it is not yet fully recognised and aptly named. It is only based on such recognition, which is never a single and finite act, that the educator will propose a specific path of development.

4. Education in the perspective of the 'inner image' – implications for practice

Applying this anthropological model to issues of educational practice, it should be noted first of all that it should be based on two essential actions. The first action will be to help the pupil discover the truth about themselves (this 'inner image' of themselves) and then to take action to implement the content discovered. Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776–1841) already indicated such a way of educative accompanying the pupil. In his *General Pedagogy Derived from the Purpose of Education*, he wrote that

for the boy, the educator represents the man of the future; in his endeavour, therefore, he must strive for those aims which the pupil will set for himself in the future as an adult; for these, he must now prepare favourable conditions in the soul of the pupil (Herbart, 2007, p. 46).

This instruction from the father of academic pedagogy requires that the educator should guide the pupil towards the developmental goals that he recognises in himself. The metaphor of 'adult human being' is not an image of an adult human being in general, but specifically of a particular pupil, who already carries an image of the future within himself.

Today, an educational practice that takes into account the 'inner image' of the pupil corresponds to education understood as a maieutic of the person. The Greek word *μαϊευτικός* means the work of a midwife. Socrates (5th century BCE), using this metaphor, explains the extraction of knowledge from the mind of the pupil and thus introduces this term into philosophical reflection. In pedagogical terms, the image of the work of a midwife is transferred to education in general. Nowak writes that

the highest goal of education is therefore to enable the subject (pupil) to take charge of their own development process. It is such an approach to education that brings it closer to the process of 'maieutic of the person,' i.e. the awakening of the person in the pupil (Nowak, 2005, p. 243).

He also points to three levels of maieutic of the person: 1) natural; 2) cultural, i.e. supra-natural; and 3) transcendental, i.e. supra-cultural (cf. Nowak, 1999, pp. 322–360).

What is important in each of these levels is that the educator does not act as someone who imparts certain qualities, abilities, etc. to the pupil, but rather only brings them out in the pupil or helps to recognise and develop them. This is particularly evident at the first – natural – level. Examples include a person's upright posture or ability to use speech. Both of these skills are present in human nature, but it takes an educator (social group) to bring them out. As the Swiss biological anthropologist Adolf Portmann (1897–1982) states: 'society, group, is an obligatory element in the process of learning speech. ... Also posture is largely a socially determined phenomenon' (as quoted by: Kron, 2012, p. 175).

Another feature of educational activity in this context is that in the 'inner image,' the educator can find (and at the same time develop) general human characteristics, as shown in the example of speech and upright posture, and individual characteristics of the individual. As shown above, this combination of these two dimensions was pointed out by St Irenaeus.

The general human qualities at the different levels indicated by Nowak include the following:

- the level of natural development: bringing out species-related potentialities, such as upright posture, the ability to speak; the rationale for this was given in the earlier example;
- the level of cultural development: bringing out the value system; here it is assumed that an essential sensitivity to good and evil is present in every human being. The bringing out of this capacity will consist in the formation of a sense of values and their consistent implementation;
- the level of transcendental development: bringing out sensitivity to supernatural, transcendental, spiritual, religious realities, which are present in man in the form of a sense of the existence of 'Someone' who / 'Something' that transcends this world. For believers, this will be the space for religious development.

On the other hand, with regard to the individualised qualities of the person, at the different levels, the educator will help to discover and bring out the following content:

- the level of natural development: helping to recognise and shape the individual talents and abilities of the pupil;
- the level of cultural development: in the area of the broadly understood achievements of human culture, this will be assistance in recognising one's own – in the words of Stefan Kunowski (1909–1977) – 'spiritual homeland,' i.e. a place in culture in which the pupil will be able not only to understand a given cultural message but to enter critically and creatively into an authentic 'cultural dialogue' (cf. Kunowski, 2004, pp. 212–213);
- the plane of transcendental development: this is the search for and shaping of an individual sense of life, sometimes called a life mission or vocation. It is the area of the formation of a worldview which is always a 'practical and subjective image of man in the world, formed based on philosophical and religious knowledge' (Kamiński, 1998b, p. 34).

5. Education in the perspective of the absence of the 'inner image'

An immense breakthrough in the reflection on the 'inner image' was the emergence of the empirical current in pedagogy. Following the practicalism of Auguste Comte (1798–1857), slogans were taken up that the social sciences, and among them pedagogy, 'are to be free from philosophical questions and to limit their field of study to physical phenomena' (Kamiński, 1998a, p. 100). As Heiz-Herman Krüger writes, for empirical pedagogy this meant that 'only experience is the source of knowledge ... and all questions going beyond this, for example normative problems, are to be rejected as useless and speculative' (Krüger, 2007, p. 35). For this reason, the issue of 'inner image' was excluded from pedagogical thought as being inaccessible to sensory experience and therefore speculative.

This approach, in the first place, changed the anthropological conception in pedagogy. Man as such was fully inscribed in natural reality. This, in turn, resulted in a change of the research method. As Gnitecki notes, 'empirical pedagogy assumes that a methodology analogous to that used in natural sciences, a methodology based on observation, measurement and quantitative

analysis, can be applied to the study of humanistic and social phenomena' (Gnitecki, 1999, p. 27). The empirical sciences reject the assumption of the intentionality of human action and adopt a dysteleological understanding of being because, as Gabriel notes, 'from their perspective, no intention is hidden behind natural processes' (Gabriel, 2015, p. 62). Hence – in this approach – man in his life does not aim at the realisation of specific, assumed goals, but only realises some specific functions – or rather we should say, such functions are realised in him (because it is not he who is the subject of these actions). Consequently, it should be stated that in place of human 'action' comes 'functioning,' which is the recording of 'bare' facts and reacting to them. In contrast, an internal belief in the realisation of assumed goals would, in the context of empirical pedagogy, only be 'a particular form of illusion; the kind of explanation that is imposed on us because we do not yet know enough about evolution and the brain' (Gabriel, 2015, p. 68). In empirical anthropology, as Peter Bieri notes, 'suddenly there is no one doing things. What remains is the stage on which things happen' (Bieri, 2001, p. 32).

By examining educational phenomena in this way, the way is opened to explanatory, causal research, in which the question is sought: why is it the way it is? Based on the assumption of a cause-and-effect relationship of educational phenomena, the causes of these phenomena are pointed out. In other words, one does not seek an intrinsic (hidden) intentionality in them but explains their specificity by pointing to the earlier phenomena that shaped them.

Very quickly, however, it was noticed that this model can also work the other way round. It not only entitles one to search for the causes (determining factors) of the analysed educational situation but – knowing the causes of changes – one can design its shape in the future. The previously present 'inner image,' which had to be recognised with the efforts of the mind, was replaced by the technology of education, which promised a predictable result of educational measures. Already Ellen Key (1849–1926) recognised this dependence and in *The Century of the Child* appealed:

We have already seen that the human will is decisive in the breeding of new and superior plant and animal species. In relation to our own genus, to the elevation of the human type, to the ennoblement of the human race, it is apparently governed by chance in its beautiful or ugly form (Key, 2005, p. 11).

Some translations render the last phrase of the quoted text as follows: '... is **still** [emphasis mine] governed by chance ...' (Key, 1905, p. 5), which emphasises all the more the postulatory nature of changing this situation. John Watson (1878–1958) also spoke in a similar vein when he wrote:

Give me a dozen healthy, well-built children and an environment in which to bring them up, and I guarantee that I will raise each one of them, randomly selected, to be a specialist in any field – to be a doctor, a judge, an artist, a merchant, or to be a beggar and a thief – regardless of their aptitudes, inclinations, abilities, predispositions and ancestral background (Watson, 1990, p. 235).

Based on the examples of statements quoted, it can be seen that this current of pedagogy involves a growing conviction about the effectiveness of educational measures, but understood in terms of educational technology. These are therefore activities that omit the active participation of the pupil. Nowadays, this approach is present in posthumanism or transhumanism (cf. Lipowicz, 2017). Meyer-Drawe, a German professor of general pedagogy, describes these processes under the category of the 'fourth insult,' thus referring to Sigmund Freud's (1856–1939) text on the three insults to humanity. To the cosmological (Copernicus), biological (Darwin) and psychoanalytical (Freud) insult, Meyer-Drawe adds another one: the cybernetic one, which, in her view, is a further depreciation of the uniqueness of man by – this time – inscribing him in the world of things and machines (cf. Marotzki et al., 2006, p. 109).

The anthropological approach stemming from the assumptions of empiricism, on the one hand, eliminates the issue of the 'inner image' of the pupil and, on the other hand, objectifies the pupil. The educator in this approach assumes full responsibility for the 'education' (not only in the intellectual sense!) of a person. A suitable metaphor for such an understanding of education might be the image of a blacksmith or sculptor who with full commitment gives form to his work. In addition, of great interest in this pedagogical approach are the individual techniques, tools or methods of upbringing for the proper education of the human being. At the extremes, however, the category 'education' should be replaced by 'programming' or 'enhancement' (Lipowicz, 2017, p. 71). The idea is to shape people so that they can function as effectively as possible in the social space. This is linked

to the contemporary development of (neuro)genetic sciences and the use of their results in the field of pedagogy. The view of the possibility of altering the structure of DNA, which can be understood as an ‘educational shortcut,’ where the effort of educational work is replaced by interference in the human ‘software,’ is expressed with increasing boldness. Transhumanist anthropology does not see this as a threat, but as a developmental opportunity, because, as the British philosopher Max More admits, the specificity of the transhumanist approach is the readiness to ‘go beyond the cultural limitations of traditional forms of education to overcome natural limitations through biotechnological interventions in the human body’ (as quoted by: Lipowicz, 2017, p. 71).

6. Education in the perspective of the tacit ‘inner image’ – *homo absconditus*

Almost simultaneously with the development and implementation of empiricism in pedagogy, anthropological ideas are growing out of the ‘anti-positivist breakthrough,’ which, according to Jerzy Szacki (1929–2016), ‘was an above-all German phenomenon and remains incomprehensible as long as it is considered in isolation from the German intellectual tradition’ (Szacki, 2012, p. 410). For this reason, in this part of the article, I will focus primarily on presenting this intellectual tradition in relation to the ‘inner image’ in pedagogy.

Foremost, it is important to note the changes in the understanding of the human being. They are crucial. Andrzej Maryniarczyk (1950–2020) states that ‘man transcends nature. It follows that man cannot be completely determined by his habits or psycho-physical disorders, but, on the contrary, he can repair these deficiencies, put disorders in order, correct bad inclinations and deviations’ (Maryniarczyk, 2006, p. 72). He then adds,

human states such as acts of love, decisions, religion, and conscious action, in general, cannot be adequately and sufficiently explained by reference to some complex or set of material relations expressed in the language of physics, chemistry or any other science (Maryniarczyk, 2006, p. 73).

Considering the above characteristics of the human person, Maryniarczyk concludes that such an anthropology is

the most optimistic image of man. It does not prejudice the 'impotence' or ultimate 'determination' of man. In this image, the pedagogue finds a wide field for understanding man (both from the perspective of body and spirit) and discovers a wide range of possibilities for helping him (Maryniarczyk, 2006, p. 77).

Those anthropological areas that transcend nature or cannot be reduced to a set of material relations also elude precise scientific descriptions. Nevertheless – precisely in the context of German anti-positivist thought – we find examples of anthropological approaches that take up this challenge and offer original solutions. Their common denominator is openness to the human being as such in his complementarity and integrity, regardless of the possibilities of recognising or describing individual anthropological areas.

The German pedagogue Fritz März postulates that a pedagogical approach is characterised by capturing the human being 'in his entirety' (*in seiner Ganzheit*). März expresses this with the words: 'whoever seeks the human being in his entirety, who is constantly on the path to full perfection, can and should not limit his view only to what is directly accessible' (März, 1965, p. 29), but should also take into account the mystery of man, which is included in the totality of human existence.²

According to März, an integral research approach in pedagogy necessitates the use of two anthropological categories: 'problem' and 'mystery,' which he borrowed from Gabriel Marcel (1889–1973) (cf. Tarnowski, 1989, p. 106). März proposes to call the part of human reality that can be problematised and (attempted to be) resolved scientifically as a 'problem.' He writes that 'science encounters being in the aspect of a problem, that is, the entire reality is fragmented into problems' (März, 1965, p. 22). However, there are

² In the scientific literature, the postulate of anti-reductionist anthropology is articulated in various ways. For example, it is expressed by: Karol Wojtyła (1920–2005), who formulates the postulate of 'adequate anthropology' (Wojtyła, 2011, pp. 62–66), Viktor Frankl (1905–1997) creating the concept of 'dimensional ontology' (Frankl, 1984, pp. 145–146), and Margaret S. Archer introducing the categories of 'top-down conflation, bottom-up conflation and central conflation' (Archer, 2013; cf. Wielecki, 2015).

areas of human reality that cannot be problematised or verified by available scientific methods. They should not be eliminated from the field of research interest simply because science cannot ‘master’ them. This scope of reality is what März calls ‘mystery.’ Particularly in this pedagogical approach, which inherently deals with the human being ‘in his entirety,’ one must treat the human being holistically, as both ‘problem’ and ‘mystery.’ Referring both categories to cognitive activity, März adds that the problem must be ‘recognised’ (*er-kennen*), which corresponds to scientific research, and the mystery must be ‘acknowledged’ (*an-erkennen*), which directly eludes scientific research. Recognition thus amounts to accepting the existence of something beyond what science can recognise here and now. However, only considering both aspects provides a basis for generating a complete anthropology. The German pedagogue insists on recognising the ‘space of mystery’ in the pedagogical research approach because, as he writes, ‘symptomatic of modern science is the lack of appreciation (*ver-kennen*) for what should be “acknowledged,” i.e. “mystery”’ (März, 1965, p. 23).

Another increasingly prominent example in contemporary literature of an attempt at a comprehensive anthropological approach is the concept of *homo absconditus* (the hidden man, the man not comprehensible by itself). The term originates from Helmuth Plessner (1892–1985) and refers to negative (apophatic) theology, which holds that God as the Absolute is primarily unknowable. Neither human reason nor language can adequately describe Him. In all such attempts, God persists as the *Ganz Andere* (Wholly Other) or *Der Andere* (The Other) throughout.

Plessner explains that ‘this concept, originally attributed to the unfathomable nature of God, is true for the nature of man’ (as quoted by: Zirfas, 2021, p. 177). Christoph Wulf, on the other hand, explains that

with the concept of *homo absconditus*, it can be said that anthropological cognition is only capable of prospectively and thus not fully grasping man. ... From the new amazement (*thaumazein*) begins the fascination with the mysteriousness of the world and the curiosity about the limits of the human person (Wulf, 2016, p. 12).

In this anthropological approach, all anthropologies that have *fully* described and explained the human being, leaving no area mysterious and

unknowable, are rejected. In the anthropology of *homo absconditus*, it is acknowledged that 'there is no longer a binding anthropological norm' (Wulf, 2016, p. 20). Zirfas says that 'man in this perspective becomes an unsolvable question' (Zirfas, 2021, p. 172). It is therefore an anthropological position that stands in opposition to both normative anthropologies, based on which (in part) the category of the 'inner image' is built, and descriptive anthropologies, which in turn definitively exclude this category from pedagogical interests.

Applying the above-mentioned anthropological concept to educational practice begins with formulating the fundamental 'commandment' of *homo absconditus* pedagogy. In this case, another reference to the religious tradition is not surprising, it reads as follows: 'Thou shalt not create an image of the person (pupil) entrusted to you!' (Zirfas, 2021, p. 176). This pedagogical commandment prohibits educators from determining the sense, meaning, and life vocation of the pupil. This is the prerogative of the pupils themselves. What is most meaningful is subordinated to his personal decision. However, it should be added that in the context of *homo absconditus*, the pupil is also a mystery to themselves. He needs effort and work to discover and get to know it slowly, but always with cognitive caution.

An important area of learning about oneself is human activity embedded in the overall socio-cultural context, which Wulf describes as mimetic processes that take place in the zone 'between' what is exemplary, given, determined, socially recognised, etc. and what this given state of affairs inspires in each pupil (human being). Wulf explains further that mimetic processes, on one hand, can

lead to conformity with what is given, rigid, lifeless; on the other hand, they can bring much hope ... They can initiate a sequence of movements without a clear intention, open up a space for non-identity, enable a non-instrumental approach to the world, whereby the particular defends itself against the universal and the shelter for things and people is provided (Wulf, 2016, p. 227).

Zirfas, on the other hand, lists four constitutive components of the mimetic process when explaining that:

mimesis appears here firstly as a physical, pre-reflective form of action, secondly in its performative dimension as an enactment of identity, then as a potential enabling a change in relations to oneself and to the world, and finally as a complete experience of change (Zirfas, 2021, p. 96).

Thus, in a certain space ‘between’ what is given by nature, environment, culture, tradition etc. and what transcends all these areas, man can get to know himself, discover the meaning and essence of his life. The main educational potential therefore arises in the relationship between the educator and the pupil, in its practical, dynamic, current, bodily, social, and cultural dimensions. However, it should be added that in this approach, one never arrives at a full and irrevocable answer to the question of the internal meaning of the pupil’s life. *Homo absconditus* does not cease to provoke a continuous search and does not cease to doubt any content found.

7. Conclusions

This article has presented three anthropological and pedagogical concepts in relation to the category of the ‘inner image,’ understood as the deepest sense and meaning of human life. On their basis, corresponding proposals for educational practice were then proposed. Each of these approaches can be identified with leading strengths and weaknesses.

In the first concept, a significant strength lies in formulating educational goals and the entire educational activity in relation to the recognised contents within the pupils themselves. This approach also assumes the existence of certain natural, universal traits. Such an approach provides a certain stability and constancy to educational action. However, a weakness of this concept is the danger of ideological indoctrination in education. Education based on the model of natural sciences, and thereby excluding the ‘inner image’ allows the construction of *science*, the recognition of causes of observed educational phenomena, and the design of optimal pupil development. The weakness of this approach lies in its anthropological reductionism, which excludes from the scope of educational interests those aspects that cannot be fully understood through empirical knowledge. The last proposal – *homo absconditus* – inspires the educator to constantly reflect critically on his own activity. It

does not allow either the educator or the pupil in relation to themselves to be unaware of emerging inspirations, aspirations, desires, etc. However, a weakness of this model is that at any moment in educational work, the current direction of development and recognised values can be overturned in favour of different ones. It lacks the assurance of even a minimum of constancy.

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