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Social Personalism, Its Implications for Education and Implementation in Society

Personalizm społeczny, jego implikacje dla edukacji i implementacje w społeczeństwie

Abstract: The human-person is, according to personalism, open to others, needs others and creates various forms of community. The socialization of the human-person is, most of all, the outcome of lack and excess. The human-person, colloquially speaking, needs other people to grow, and needs interpersonal relationships to 'give and take.' The purpose of this essay is to outline the theoretical underpinnings of social personalism, its implications for pedagogy and selected examples of how it is cultivated in practice. The author demonstrates that the 'I' directed to the 'you' also becomes the 'I' for the 'you.' Thus, the theory of the human being – the person – as a relational being translates into the teleology of education and pedagogical practice. 'I' is oriented 'towards' and 'for' 'you'/'You,' being 'with' 'you'/'You.' It is worth noting that social personalism is a path 'between' individualism and collectivism. It attempts to combine the individual good with the common good through the characteristic of participation in the community. The pedagogy of the person comes to fruition in the community, according to the principles of companionship through dialogue. It strives for the full development of the human being as a person – a development that materialises through active love towards the other in a spirit of solidarity.

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Abstrakt: Człowiek-osoba jest, według personalizmu, otwarty na innych, potrzebuje innych oraz tworzy różne formy społeczności. Uspołecznienie człowieka-osoby jest przede wszystkim wynikiem braku i nadmiaru. Człowiek-osoba, kolokwialnie rzecz ujmując, potrzebuje innych ludzi, aby się rozwijać, potrzebuje relacji interpersonalnych, aby „dawać i brać". Celem niniejszej refleksji jest przedstawienie teoretycznych podstaw personalizmu społecznego, jego pedagogicznych implikacji oraz wybranych przykładów rozwijania go w praktyce. Autor wykazuje, że „ja" skierowane do „ty" staje się też „ja" dla „ty". Teoria człowieka-osoby jako bytu relacyjnego przekłada się zatem na teleologię wychowania i praktykę pedagogiczną. „Ja" nakierowane jest „ku" i „dla" „ty"/„Ty", na bycie „z" „ty"/„Ty". Warto zauważyć, że personalizm społeczny jest drogą „pomiędzy" indywidualizmem a kolektywizmem. Próbuje łączyć dobro indywidualne z dobrem wspólnym poprzez właściwość uczestnictwa we wspólnocie. Pedagogia osoby realizowana jest we wspólnocie, zgodnie z zasadami towarzyszenia poprzez dialog. Zmierza do pełnego rozwoju człowieka jako osoby – rozwoju, który realizuje się poprzez czynną miłość wobec drugiego człowieka w duchu solidarności.

Słowa kluczowe: personalizm społeczny; dobro wspólne; wspólnota wychowawcza; towarzyszenie; dialog; solidarność.

1. Introduction

The human-person is, according to personalism, open to others; needs others and forms various forms of community. Although personalism stresses the priority (logical, moral, and axiological) of the person over the community, the social dimension of the human being is an essential element of personalist pedagogy and pedagogies. The socialisation of the human-person is, most of all, the result of lack and excess. The human-person, colloquially speaking, needs other people to develop, needs interpersonal relationships to 'give and take.' The purpose of this discussion is to outline the theoretical foundations of social personalism and selected examples of its practice.

2. Theory of social personalism

The personalist paradigm (from the Latin *persona*) posits that the essence of human existence primarily resides in personhood. Central to personalist thought is the acknowledgment of humans as individuals endowed with personhood, which is regarded as the quintessential aspect of their ontological structure, and the fullest expression of human life. Theistic personalism builds upon this foundation, asserting that the human being is a person who has a causal origin in God, and having been created in the image and likeness of the personal God, he or she possesses inalienable personal dignity and occupies a privileged place between the visible and invisible worlds. Thus, the human-person is characterised as an enigmatic entity, existing 'in between' the immanent and transcendent, the static and dynamic. The person is conceptualised as a being existing in the most perfect form, not merely as 'something,' but as 'somebody;' not just an object but as a subject endowed with agency. Personal being is at once a substance (*esse-in*), an end in itself (*esse-per-se*), comes from someone (*esse-ab*), is oriented toward someone or something (*esse-ad*), is a relation (*esse-cum*), is pro-existence and a gift (*esse-pro*) (Chrost, 2022, p. 51).

Personalism in the doctrinal-integral sense primarily encompasses an anthropology that acknowledges humans as persons endowed with faculties such as reason, freedom, autotelology, responsibility, awareness and the capacity for value creation – whether cognitive, moral, artistic, social, ideological, or religious. Additionally, personalism entails a broader conceptual layer, a universal system, wherein the human person is regarded as the centre of all reality, the yardstick and linchpin for its proper comprehension. Thus, personalism is a theory, containing ontological, epistemological and axiological elements, which covers various sectors of social life: education, culture, economics, literature, law, art, and politics. Therefore, we can speak of social, political, aesthetic, economic, cultural or religious personalism.

At the core of personalism lies the concept of humans as inherently prosocial beings 'beings-toward-the-other.' Mindful of the relationship of the human individual to the community, we can discern three main strains of humanism: collectivist (Marxism), individualist (liberalism) and communitarian (Christianity). The communitarian pole of personalism (especially in its Catholic current) stands in opposition to both Marxist and racist col-

lectivism and to egocentric-extreme individualism. Collectivism, by its nature, undermines individual autonomy and dignity, relegating individuals to mere instruments within a totalitarian socio-political model of life. In turn, extreme individualism ignores the fact that people are biologically and psychologically predestined to live in social communities based on the common good that transcends the interests of the individual or professional-social groups. According to personalists, humans are not inherently complete entities – beings that are innately actualised, as individualism presupposes – but rather undergo a process of continuous development. Similarly, they reject the notion propagated by collectivism that humans are featureless entities, contending instead that individuals possess inherent abilities and capacities that actualise from the moment of conception. Thus, personalism is a kind of 'middle ground' between individualism and collectivism.

According to theistic personalism, the human-person is a relational entity in the manner of the relationship occurring in the divine person (between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit). Christianity not only values the relationality with the divine person, but also the underscores the relationship between the divine person and the human person, as well as the relationships among human beings. One can venture to say that theistic personalism ushers in a revolution with respect to Greek philosophy's universe of relationality. While Aristotle calls God an unmoved, transcendent Mind, separate from the world (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, XII), in the biblical view (shared by St. Augustine and St. Gregory of Nyssa), God is 'Emmanuel – God with us,' and therefore relational and communal (Mari, 2006, pp. 17–19). The relationship between divine persons is, as it were, the prototype of the relationship between human persons. St. Thomas Aquinas states that a person needs other people, is not sufficient for themselves, and only by living in community do they achieve their full potential (*Homo est naturaliter animal sociale, eo quo sibi non sufficit ad vitam*, St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I–II, q. 129, a. 6, ad 1). Hence, as social beings, individuals are open to others, naturally seek community and form various social bonds. This fosters interpersonal connections characterised by an 'I–you' dynamic, evolving into collective 'I–we' or 'we–you' relationships. It is through these interpersonal bonds that humans find fulfilment and actualise their potential.

Human life, in its fullest expression of personhood, is inherently intertwined with relationality. This assertion, central to personalist thought, finds

support not only among personalists of theistic or Thomistic backgrounds, such as Krąpiec and Gogacz, but also among agnostic thinkers like Mounier. Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec, drawing from Thomist philosophy, posits that the existence of a human being as a person transcends mere engagement with the natural world, finding its essence within the realm of interpersonal relationships. According to Krąpiec, the meaning and significance of a person's life derive from their connections with others. This relational framework extends beyond human interactions to encompass a relationship with the divine, transitioning from an encounter with fellow human beings to an encounter with the divine 'You.'

> For if I love, hate, make decisions – argues Krąpiec – if I live what is called a personal life, then the justification and essential explanation of this type of life is not material relations, and consequently science (as a cognitive take on material relations), but what legitimises, makes meaningful my life as a person can only be another person – the other 'you.' Therefore, life as a person is fundamentally structured as a mode of existence 'for-the-other-you,' and in the final horizon – for YOU the ABSOLUTE PERSON (Krąpiec, 1974, p. 387).

Another prominent figure in Polish personalism, aligned with the Thomistic tradition, Mieczysław Gogacz, argues that the human person, constituted from existence and essence (as internal causes), demands justification in an external causal cause and an external purposive cause. This purposive cause, which shapes the measure of essence as the potentiality that determines the human person, is another human person. It is this cause that, on the one hand, brings about the constitution of a being as a human person and, on the other hand, brings about the human dimension of the interaction of the transcendental properties of the person with other human persons (Gogacz, 1974, p. 218). We can call these interconnections a relationship of personal interactions. Gogacz describes these interconnections as personal interactions, emphasising that human engagement with others goes beyond mere communication or fleeting encounters. These interactions always lead to self-actualisation, the self-constitution of a person as goodness, and capacity to bestow goodness upon others. Furthermore, such interactions make us capable of being guided by the truth, which is identical with being, with reality itself, and free us from the interpretations that often falsify it (Gogacz, 1974, p. 219).

According to French personalist Emmanuel Mounier, the experience of the human person is not confined to the experience of one's self, but is oriented toward the existence of other persons. Human existence is therefore coexistence, and communication is a fundamental dimension of the human being as a person. Mounier goes beyond recognising the social nature of individuals and asserts the constitutive role of interpersonal relationships in shaping the human person. He asserts, 'the person is the only reality capable of communicating oneself directly, it is directed toward another person and even exists in that other person; it is directed toward and exists in the world before it exists in oneself' (Mounier, 1960, p. 201). Mounier delineates several facets of the social dimension of human existence. The first of these is to 'transcend the self,' that is, to overcome one's egocentric self-love. A person should cultivate an understanding of others, including their motivations, attitudes, and fears. Additionally, showing solidarity with others and sharing in their joys and sorrows are integral aspects of the social attitude of the human person. Such an attitude requires a willingness 'to give' which is related to the ability to sacrifice. Ultimately, Mounier contends that genuine engagement with others requires a commitment to creative fidelity – an ongoing dedication to realising one's life purpose (Mounier, 1964, p. 38). The concept of interpersonal communication, as elucidated by Mounier, concerns both the plane of ontology and of axiology. The human being finds in his/her 'I' a link with 'you' and 'we' – thus, recognising the interconnectedness between 'being-with-another' and 'being-for-another' (Mounier, 1964, p. 309).

Although personalism recognises that the human-person is a relational being, we should not forgot that it stresses the precedence of the person over the community. Each human-person is a unique, original, and whole entity, with these constitutive qualities originating from the creative act of God (Stefanini, 1979, pp. 15–17). It is this intrinsic value and inviolable dignity bestowed upon the individual by their Creator that forms the basis for their openness to the world and with others, with whom they must continually interact (Stefanini, 1979, pp. 17–19). The universum is interpersonal, but to delve into the universum is to delve into individuality. This singularity (originality) is a condition for universality, unity with others and the world. As a human-person, I am inherently different from everyone else, yet this fact, paradoxically, brings me closer to others and fosters a sense of connection because in essence these others are also inherently unique, original,

and whole. The human community is bound together by similarity and dissimilarity. Insofar as people are similar, they come closer to each other; while insofar as they are different, they protect their differences and respect each other's uniqueness (Stefanini, 1979, p. 19).

Here, we can draw upon the insights of Paul Claudel and Józef Tischner, both personalist-existentialists, who claim that the paradox of human connection arises from the simultaneous similarity and difference among individuals. They argue that while 'others' may share similarities, they remain fundamentally distinct, never coming close enough to becoming the same nor so far apart that there will be a 'total difference' between them (Tischner, 2017, p. 12). This notion resonates with Chantal Delsol's analogy likening the bond between people to a bridge spanning the banks of a river.

> The bond does not remove the distance. It crosses it, but it also guarantees it. For it is a bridge, and a bridge does not bring the banks of a river closer together; it leaves each bank in its place, like the space that separates them (Delsol, 2011, p. 170).

Social personalism is deeply rooted in ontology and insists on the primacy of the individual over the community, in logical, moral, and axiological terms. It explicitly rejects Marxist notions that prioritise society over the individual or suggest that society shapes the human person. Instead, it affirms that the human person, as an end in themselves, defines social goals (Stefanini, 1979, pp. 47–49). Moreover, it acknowledges that socialisation is 'endogenous' to the human person (not in the immanent sense) that is, the human person has a social vocation in his/her potentiality (due to the creative act of God). Luigi Stefanini argues that introspection leads to the discovery of others within oneself, while openness to others reveals more about oneself: 'the more I look into myself, the more I find others, but also the more I open myself to others, the more I learn about myself' (Stefanini, 1979, p. 50). Stefanini revisits St. Augustine's thought that love loves itself but would not love itself if it did not love something else: *Caritas diligit quidem se, sed nisi se aliqiud diligentem diligat, non caritatem se diligit* (Augustine, *De Trinitate*, VIII, 10). Thus, he approaches socialisation from a personalistic perspective, advocating for the construction of communities in personalised forms. He identifies the family and the nation as fundamental forms

of human community, with numerous intermediate communities between them. Stefanini contends that individuals are not inherently 'equal' or 'unequal' but are primarily similar to one another. This similarity fosters love when it unites them and respect when it acknowledges their differences. The concept of similarity (if we consider issues of socialisation in the spirit of personalism) can unite without destroying, govern without unifying, and create a community of the different (Stefanini, 1979, p. 60).

The intricate dynamics between individuality and society, and between individual good and common good, are thoughtfully expounded upon by Jacques Maritain, a French personalist rooted in Thomistic philosophy. When delineating the connection between individuals and society, Maritain distinguishes between two dimensions of the human being: individuality and personality. Defined by their corporeality, humans exist as individuals, while their spiritual essence defines them as persons. Maritain concludes from the above that while the human being as an individual is subject to the community, the human being as a person transcends it. The individual is a representative of the species, an integral part of it. While the individual serves the species, the human person possesses their own purpose in life (Maritain, 1947, pp. 27–34, 53, 64). Thus, the community exists for the person, not the other way around.

Maritain emphasises that the community is not a super-person but a communion of persons, each with their own inherent dignity and value. Therefore, the connection between an individual and society extends beyond merely the individual's role within the species: it entails active participation and voluntary acceptance of responsibilities (Maritain, 1947, pp. 52–53). Additionally, Maritain delves into the concept of the common good, which is not the sum of the goods of individual people, but is a separate and higher value. He views the common good both horizontally and vertically. The former pertains to the good of individuals, while the latter focuses on the good of persons as individuals. Maritain argues that the common good of the community supersedes individual goods, of course, in relation to values of the same type. However, the good of a particular person has priority when it relates to qualitatively higher values. A person can sacrifice his or her life for the homeland (for example, to defend it), but cannot renounce respect for the truth or violate one's conscience for its sake. Maritain warns against the pitfalls of individualism, which undermines the

common good, and collectivism, which absolutizes it. Christian personalism, he contends, upholds the importance of the common good as the basis of social life while safeguarding individual dignity and the good of the human being as a person. Any compromise of personal good for the sake of the common good would distort the very essence of communal welfare (Maritain, 1947, pp. 71–76).

The human being is a being who experiences love. Love occupies a central place in our life, gives us meaning, and is the main dynamism that motivates our behaviour. It constitutes the driving force that shapes both our personality and our life. In the most general terms, it can be said that before love expresses itself in action (the act of offering something or oneself to another person), it is first a form of positive emotional attitude 'towards' someone or 'towards' something: an attitude 'towards.' These positive affectional dispositions are infinitely different, depending on the stage of development of the person who has the attitude and the object of the attitude. The human-person loves and wants to be loved. In order to 'live fully,' individuals must not only receive but also give love selflessly. A person as a relational being becomes actualised through love. It is love that is the quintessential interpersonal relationship through which participation comes into being. A community without love is nothing more than a personal collective bereft of authentic and lasting ties. Only love, externalised in its myriad forms, is the catalyst for fostering a community of love. Love should express itself in action just as the human-person expresses themselves in action. A person who does not love does not 'become' and does not help others 'become.' This applies to every human being and is a result of ontology – the design of human nature. Lack of love introduces disorder into human life.

According to Mieczysław Gogacz, love not only defines human beings; it constitutes them as persons. In his view, 'A person is such a real individual entity that contains an intellect, and under the influence of his/her existence is bound by love to other persons.' This initial definition can be expressed in a shorter way: a person is such an existing rational entity that loves. Thus, a being becomes a person through three constitutive elements: existence, intellect, and love. Existence is the foundational aspect within an individual, the primary structural element that immediate cognition of the reality of being points to. The rationality of cognition indicates the intellect. Love, expressed through selfless care for others, is what defines humanity.

These three – existence, intellect, and love – define both humans and God. Therefore, humans and God are persons (Gogacz, 1997, p. 69).

According to social personalism, the socialisation of the human-person is the result of lack and excess. As Vittorio Possenti writes:

> the person is both positivity and lack, and their openness is based on these two poles. There is openness to the other as a response to lack and as an expression of fullness. By virtue of lack, the person needs the other, and as fullness they desire to enter into communication with the other (Possenti, 2017, p. 70).

On this account, Possenti makes a distinction between eros and agape – two distinct forms of love. He writes,

> When we love someone or something with the love of desire (eros), we start from the experience of a certain lack that is within us: we lack something (a person and/or an object), and this lack sets in motion a dialectic of desire that propels us to possess the desired object and enjoy it. This object first remains estranged from the desiring subject. The movement of eros starts from the subject experiencing lack and moves toward the desired and loved object to claim it, only to eventually return to the desiring self. It is a circular motion in which the desired subject becomes back referred to us. … Agape is different. It is not the love of desire, but of plentitude, the love of fondness and affection. Unlike eros, which stems from a sense of lack within ourselves, which generates desire, agape arises from a place of fullness. … The benevolent love is selfless love, a love that flows from abundance, unlike eros. It does not seek out an object because it is beautiful and good. It seeks out things that are neither beautiful nor good – in order to pour into them beauty, goodness and truth (Possenti, 2017, pp. 79–80).

3. Pedagogical implications of social personalism

Properly interpreted and developed, the theory of the human-person as a relational being, in the view of social personalism, determines pedagogical teleology. According to this perspective, the human-person, inherently relational, is naturally inclined towards a community comprised of free individ-

uals – subjects directed towards the common good. Therefore, the pedagogy of the person is, on a horizontal plane, a pedagogy of relationship, a pedagogy of love and encounter (gift and responsibility) through encounter and dialogue with other-persons. The fulfilment of the pedagogy of the person finds its optimal expression within a community setting.

Relationship as a scientific term has a centuries-old tradition. It was introduced into the scientific language by Aristotle. Etymologically, the Greek *pros ti* was rendered before the Latin *relatio*, which comes from *referre* – to relate. Thus, a relationship is 'assigning anything to anything' (Krąpiec, 2007, p. 712). To be more precise, it can be stated that a relationship is a reference that results in a way of living between two borderlands (Krąpiec, 2007, p. 712).

Relationality is a fundamental, not an accidental feature that characterises every human being; it consists of self-development and counteracting isolation and loneliness. As humans, we 'become' more and more through the relationships we form with others. A person is open to others, needs others, realises themselves through a selfless gift to others, and creates relationships, bonds, and various forms of community. This is how an interpersonal relationship is created: 'I–you,' and then 'I–we' and 'we–you.' Man as a relational being opens not only to 'you' and 'us,' but also to the transcendent 'YOU' (Chrost, 2020, pp. 151–174).

A special type of relationship that a person can create is an educational relationship (Musaio, 2020, pp. 136–176). The first to introduce the term 'educational relationship' (*der pädagogische Bezug*) to the language of pedagogy was Herman Nohl (1879–1960). He defined this term as the concept that the basis of upbringing is an emotional/greedy/emotionally engaged relationship (*leidenschaftliches Verhältnis*) of a mature man to a becoming or evolving human being (*zum werdenden Menschen*) in relation to him, so that he can develop his own life and form (Nohl, 1988, p. 169).

According to Marek Jeziorański, the upbringing relationship must have human beings (in other words, correlatives) as its ends and personal development is the reason for its creation. On this basis, the following definition of the educational relationship can be proposed: it is an interpersonal assignment whose goal is personal development. In other words, the educational relationship is a kind of assignment between people, the purpose of which is the personal development of at least one of them (Jeziorański, 2022a, p. 584; 2022b).

According to personalism, a human being – understood as a human person – is inherently social, inclined towards openness to others, whether they are individuals or a personal God. This openness of the 'I' to the 'you'/'You' is what directs us as human beings 'towards' others, towards being 'with' others, interacting, empathising and acting 'for' the common good. 'I' is directed 'towards' and 'for' 'you'/'You,' being 'with' 'you'/'You.' Stanisław Grygiel beautifully articulates this concept:

> God speaks the human being into existence as a person directed and sent to another person; He speaks him as a man directed and sent to a woman and as a woman directed and sent to a man, and He directs and sends their community from the Beginning to Himself (Grygiel, 2022, pp. 12–13).

The primary goal of education carried out in the spirit of social personalism is the involvement of the human-person within a community where both individual and collective well-being are realised. Both of these forms of good complement each other and actualise the fullness of humanity. In the framework of social personalism, a person not only engages in collective actions with others, but also achieves self-realisation and growth through them. Through the concept of participation, individuals not only act alongside others but also collaborate in creating an authentic community, thus contributing to the realisation of the common good.

One of the key concepts in pedagogical personalism is 'community.' Within this framework, it represents a unique phenomenon of interpersonal relationships, established for the betterment of individuals. Personalist thought assumes the distinctness of two realities of social life: the community as a collectivity of people, and the community where interpersonal relations are forged according to the principle of 'from heart to heart,' 'from person to person.' The community contains a material and a formal element. The material aspect comprises the members of the community: human persons. The formal one is the bond that unites these persons. A community is not a substantive entity, a mere idea or a super-person. The ideal community is a social group, which is grounded in higher values and is never selfish. It thrives on mutual understanding, shared emotions, and collaborative action. True communities can only be fostered by free individuals – individuals who are committed to pursuing the com-

mon good. Central to community life is the pursuit and realisation of this common good.

The human being-the human person lives within a community where everyone is a teacher and everyone is a student. Throughout life, individuals engage with various communities. Typically, this begins with the family, followed by interactions within schools, universities, local communities, religious groups, and the nation. Each person not only plays a role in these communities but also contributes to their formation. Failure to foster a community of both educators and learners results in a void and leads to educational losses. Katarzyna Olbrycht expands on this idea with the following words:

> For those who view a human being as a person, a group, unless it evolves into a community of individuals, remains merely a social environment, either easily or more difficult to live in, and easily manipulated by specialists. To transition into a community, its members must unite around a shared goal, which goes beyond common interests to encompass the holistic human development of all participants. Solidarity is essential for fostering the necessary conditions for such growth and advancement. Creating communities, living and acting in them as human-persons is not easy. It demands acknowledging the absolute value in every individual (Olbrycht, 2007, p. 75).

Karol Wojtyła highlighted the attitudes crucial for community building, namely solidarity and defiance. These attitudes demonstrate a commitment to the common good and necessitate active participation in dialogue. Solidarity is fundamental to expressing one's involvement in the community, as individuals acting in solidarity prioritise the collective well-being, that is, the common good. The attitude of defiance, on the other hand, does not contradict the attitude of solidarity, as it signifies the pursuit of one's rightful place within the community (Wojtyła, 1994, pp. 323–325).

Education aligned with social personalism is framed within the context of community. Initially, it begins within the family unit.

> The family, regarded as a community of individuals and a social institution, is founded on love and the voluntary commitment of a man and a woman united in marriage. Together, they assume responsibility for each other and nurture the next generation, in such a way that it also gives birth to and raises the new generation (Dyczewski, 1994, p. 27).

In the family community, the child-human being-person grows and matures. One can, following Zdzisław Stoliński, venture to say that upbringing in the family has two main goals: fostering the child's personality development (the process of personalisation) and the preparation (adaptation) of the child for social life (the process of socialisation) (Stoliński, 2009, p. 38). Therefore, the family unit serves as the foundational and principal environment for personalistic upbringing. While other communities such as schools, parishes, or peer groups (and later the professional, local or national community) play supporting roles, the family remains paramount. The involvement of other communities follows the principle of subsidiarity, wherein they supplement the family's efforts, particularly in areas where individual families cannot effectively act alone, thus serving the well-being of the family (Chudy, 2006, p. 54).

In personalistic education, based on social personalism, providing accompaniment is crucial. Wojciech Sroczyński explains:

> Upbringing, as understood by social pedagogy, supports autonomous processes of growth and integration (socialisation), introduction into culture and work, teaching life goal selection, and fostering progress and creativity. In this view, the educator does not directly influence students through their personality in interpersonal interactions (though this form of education is not excluded). Instead, they organise and create favourable conditions for development, seeking partners or 'social forces' within the local environment: home, family etc. (Sroczyński, 2010, p. 99).

It is important to remember that upbringing is a psychosocial process, shaped by individuals and their relationships. Educators, guided by universally recognised good, help those being educated reach stages of maturity and achieve their own identity (Tchorzewski, 2018, pp. 64–65). Educational accompaniment is a bond between educator and learner, student and teacher, based on a relationship of reciprocity, which is an event happening between two people (Dybowska, 2014, p. 86). This relationship is not about domination, substitution or doing tasks for someone, but about working together and support. Both the student and the teacher, the educator and the learner, are partners in personal dignity. Accompaniment involves presence and dialogue. As Zbigniew Marek writes:

> The pedagogy of accompaniment prefers a model where the meeting of persons is oriented towards a clear goal, encompassing both the horizontal and vertical dimensions of human life. The student is not left alone to their intuition, as the educator oversees the entire process, staying close by (Marek, 2023, p. 71).

The pedagogy of the person as a relational being develops in the community through dialogue. Janusz Tarnowski, who developed the pedagogy of dialogue, proposed distinguishing between method, process, and attitude in educational dialogue. The method of dialogue is the method of interpersonal communication, aiming at mutual understanding and collaboration. The process of dialogue is the actualisation of mutual understanding and interaction. The attitude of dialogue, in turn, is the willingness to understand and interact with others through conversation. Tarnowski also distinguishes between factual, personal, and existential dialogue in educational dialogue. The goal of factual dialogue is to reach the truth about the world, expressing objective reality. The purpose of personal dialogue is to reveal and affirm the axiological Self. The goal of existential dialogue is the mutual offering of goodness flowing from the depths of the interlocutors' existence (Tarnowski, 1993, pp. 116–117).

The pedagogy of the person, carried out in the community in a spirit of accompaniment and dialogue, is directed toward the good of the person and the common good, and therefore translates into practical action expressed through love in tangible deeds.

4. Selected examples of the implementation of social personalism in Poland

Social personalism manifests itself in various scopes, levels, and sectors. Natural communities, such as family and nation, shape a person's mental and spiritual identity through historical tradition, ethos, and culture. These communities are essential forms of social life. The ethno-national community requires protection that only its own state can sufficiently provide. Social-ethnic personalism, in turn, inspires social-political personalism. The doctrine of social personalism seeks to avoid extremes in the relationship

between the individual and society as well as to prevent the reduction of individuals to mere parts of the social organism (collectivism), while also avoiding the creation of passive attitudes where people expect society to solve their problems for them (individualism) (Burgos, 2012, p. 350). Social personalism rejects an idealistic view of humans and society, opposing both collectivist (rationalist) and individualist (irrationalist) pedagogy, and instead moves toward realism (Kiereś, 2016, p. 280).

Catholic social teaching was established on the grounds of social personalism, which places high value on personal dignity and emphasises the principles of subsidiarity and social solidarity. Czesław Strzeszewski explains:

> The starting point of Leo XIII's social teaching is the dignity of the human person (*dignitas personae*, RN No. 1). Respect for human dignity determines the Church's position on both the situation of the employee vis-à-vis the employer and the citizen vis-à-vis the state. Thus, *Rerum Novarum* clearly formulates the concept of human rights, based on personal dignity. Leo's encyclical identifies three social principles: freedom, the common good, and justice; these are threaded through both the doctrine of labour, property, and the role of the state (Strzeszewski, 1985, p. 259).

A significant achievement of social personalism and Polish personalists like Wojtyła and Tischner is the development of the idea of solidarity and the ethics surrounding it. This stands as a notable Polish contribution to humanity's history. As Józef Tischner puts it:

> The word 'solidarity' gathers our anxious hopes, emboldens us to fortitude and reflection, and binds together people who only yesterday stood far from each other. History invents words, so that words can then shape history. Today, the word 'solidarity' joins other quintessentially Polish words to reshape our present (Tischner, 1982, p. 7).

Solidarity, according to Karol Wojtyła, entails 'a constant readiness to accept and to realise one's share in the community because of one's membership within that particular community' (Wojtyła, 1994, p. 323). A person of solidarity, in Wojtyła's view, is 'one who does what he is supposed to do not only because of his membership in the group, but because he has the benefit of the whole in view' (Wojtyła, 1994, p. 324). Thus, solidarity consists in the

fact that a person (as a person, as a subject) embraces the common good of the community in which they live; that is, they accept the common good as their own good and commit their entire self to it. Solidarity, therefore, involves a special sensitivity to the needs of the community, where the willingness to contribute to the community's well-being surpasses individual interests. According to Wojtyła, the key strength of solidarity lies in its being 'an essential sign of participation as a quality of the person,' and that by virtue of 'this attitude a person finds self-fulfilment in complementing others' (Wojtyła, 1994, p. 324).

According to Tischner, solidarity is primarily for those who have been harmed by others and who endure preventable suffering. While this does not exclude solidarity with others, the bond with those suffering due to others' actions is particularly strong, powerful, and spontaneous. The Polish personalist philosopher develops an ethic of solidarity rooted in conscience. True solidarity requires a shared sense of moral responsibility. Without a conscience, you may share a train ride, sit together at dinner, or read the same books, but that is not true solidarity. Not every instance of being together is genuine solidarity. For Tischner, authentic solidarity is deeply connected to a solidarity of conscience.

> To be in solidarity with a person is always to be able to count on the person, and to count on the person is to believe that there is something constant in them that does not disappoint. This unwavering quality is their conscience. However, for someone to have a conscience, they must desire it. Most people who possess a conscience do so because they choose to. This is both sad and hopeful: sad because a person has the power to destroy the very thing that defines their humanity, but hopeful because a conscience can always be rebuilt, as long as there is a genuine desire to do so (Tischner, 1982, p. 148).

A pivotal factor in the adoption of social personalism doctrine concerning social matters in Poland was the establishment of the Social Council by Cardinal August Hlond, the Primate of Poland. Modeled after the Mechlin Union system, the Social Council played a significant role in assessing Poland's social and economic challenges from the point of view of the Church's social teachings. Additionally, it embarked on publishing works on Catholic social doctrine (Strzeszewski, 1985, p. 363). Noteworthy documents issued

by the Social Council under the Primate of Poland included *Guidelines on the professional organisation of society* (1935), *Declaration on the economic and social condition of the Polish rural areas* (1937), and *Declaration on the enfranchisement of labour* (1939). Members of the Social Council included notable figures such as Father Antoni Szymanski, Leopold Caro, Ludwik Górski, Czeslaw Strzeszewski, Father Stefan Wyszyński, and Father Jan Piwowarczyk.

The evolution of the concept of social personalism in Poland translated into practical initiatives aimed at supporting workers, orphans, and youth. During the interwar period, Aleksander Wóycicki championed the cooperative movement and workers' associations, advocating for democratic corporatism. Similarly, the endeavours of Stanisław Adamski, the bishop of Poznań, aligned with these principles. Wacław Bliziński and Mieczysław Kuznowicz dedicated their efforts to assisting orphans, by establishing shelters and orphanages. Educational initiatives were spearheaded by individuals such as Bronisław Markiewicz, Róża Czacka, Urszula Ledóchowska, and Kazimierz Jeżewski.

Social Catholicism flourished in interwar Poland, both in theory and practice, offering a distinct approach to addressing mounting social challenges. Positioned as a 'third way,' it stood in opposition to both exploitative capitalism and militant communism. Instead of endorsing extreme individualism, it advocated for personalism, and in lieu of collectivism, it embraced the principles of communitarianism. While defending private property and individual freedom, it also championed the common good and social justice through the principles of human dignity, subsidiarity, and solidarity. Social Catholicism laid the groundwork for the development of the concept of education for action in social pedagogy.

The interwar era witnessed Poland following the lead of other nations in assuming responsibility for social welfare. In 1923, the Law on Social Assistance was enacted, leading to the establishment of numerous associations and mutual aid funds, alongside the rise in popularity of charity balls. This period also marked the inception of two pivotal aid organisations: the Polish Red Cross and Caritas. Throughout World War II, the Polish Red Cross dedicated its philanthropic efforts to saving lives and preserving national heritage. It coordinated the operation of field hospitals, kitchens, donation drives, information centres, and aid for prisoners of war.

Following World War II, major relief efforts were carried out by institutions such as the Polish Red Cross, the Society of Friends of Children, the Central Welfare Committee, and the Orphan's Nest Society (Kelm, 1983, p. 86). The 1980s saw the emergence of new charitable organisations, including Monar, Brother Albert's Aid Society, and the Polish Committee for the Defense of Children's Rights. Despite operating underground until 1989, self-help initiatives gained substantial momentum, bolstered by humanitarian aid from abroad. With the dawn of 1989, the Polish social movement experienced a resurgence, reviving the activities of former aid institutions and ushering in new ones. To distance from the past's negative connotations, the term 'volunteer' was introduced into the lexicon. Serving as a precursor to the modern volunteer was the role of the social caregiver within the Polish social welfare system (Kubiak, 2002, p. 38).

5. Conclusion

One dimension of personalism is social personalism, which is entrenched in the concept of the human being as a relational entity. In this view, the 'I' directed towards 'you' becomes an 'I' for 'you.' This theory of the person as a relational entity informs both the teleology of education and pedagogical practice. The 'I' is oriented 'towards' and 'for' 'you,' and towards being 'with' 'you.' Social personalism navigates a path between individualism and collectivism, seeking to merge individual good with the common good through active participation in the community. The pedagogy of the person is realised in relationship, within the community, following the principles of accompaniment through dialogue. Its goal is the full development of the human being as a person, achieved through active love towards others in a spirit of solidarity.

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