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Social Pedagogy in the Context of Values – as Seen by Selected Authors – Fields of Inquiry: The Perspective of Polish Social Pedagogy

Pedagogika społeczna w kontekście wartości – w ujęciu wybranych autorów – pola poszukiwań. Perspektywa polskiej pedagogiki społecznej

Abstract: The subject of values is a key, even fundamental issue for the social sciences, especially the practically oriented ones – consequently, also for social pedagogy. They (values) can be identified best by analysing the subject-matter of social pedagogy, which is always dissected in the basic source scheme of this field, i.e., the one that deals with the relationship between the human/individual and the environment. It is in connection with this relationship that the theories and concepts of this pedagogy are developed and practical solutions are adopted for organising the human living environment. The analysis of the accepted interpretations of this relationship by different authors and Polish social educators that has been presented in this paper shows existing regularities in this regard.

Keywords: education; environment; values; humanism; personalism; functionalism; Polish social pedagogues.

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Abstrakt: Problematyka wartości jest kluczową, a nawet fundamentalną problematyką dla nauk społecznych, szczególnie tych praktycznie zorientowanych – a więc i dla pedagogiki społecznej. Najlepiej zidentyfikować je (wartości) można, analizując przedmiot pedagogiki społecznej, który rozpisuje się zawsze w podstawowym, źródłowym schemacie tej dyscypliny, a mianowicie, że zajmuje się ona relacją między człowiekiem/jednostką a środowiskiem. To w związku z tą relacją powstają teorie i koncepcje tej pedagogiki, a także przyjmuje się praktyczne rozwiązania dla potrzeb organizowania środowiska życia człowieka. Przedstawiona tu analiza przyjmowanych interpretacji tej relacji przez różnych autorów, polskich pedagogów społecznych, pokazała istniejące prawidłowości w tym względzie.

Słowa kluczowe: wychowanie; środowisko; wartości; humanizm; personalizm; funkcjonalizm; polscy pedagodzy społeczni.

1. Introduction

The issue of values for the social sciences is a particularly important and even crucial issue. This is because, when we address on their grounds the problem of social relations understood in different ways, which are always aspectually interpreted and identified, reference to values also appears here as a key issue. And this is particularly evident in the practically oriented kinds of social sciences. In such cases, this issue becomes an even more important and visible point of reference for all analyses and conclusions adopted in this area. This is because it gives rise to source questions: what values to implement (the axiological aspect) and how to fulfil them practically and effectively (the praxeological aspect).

This is also the case in pedagogy, including social pedagogy, as a social and practical science at the same time, which studies the process of upbringing and its social/environmental conditions and, in this respect, ultimately formulates certain expectations as to the shape of social life – also the desirable participation of the individual in this life. In this respect, it is also possible to point to specific solutions that have been adopted in the field of social pedagogy, although these have not always been explicitly articulated, also in terms of their genesis or broader philosophical/axiological 'location.'

Thus, these issues are important for social pedagogy, as they are also a way of recognising its identity, its directions of development and the adopted ontological, epistemological and axiological characteristics.

Therefore, the subject-matter of this article are the axiological foundations of social pedagogy, and its aim is to indicate how the three basic structural planes of this pedagogy – the human being, the environment and the organisation of the environment – are characterised and interpreted in the context of values. Particular attention will be paid here to the first two planes as the main sources not only for the theoretical profile of social pedagogy but also for its practical profile. In this sense, although the issue of organisation of the environment (as the third plane indicated here) is an important plane, it plays a secondary role towards these conclusions (the first two planes). The analysis undertaken here was conducted on the basis of the views of selected but representative figures, creators and representatives of contemporary Polish social pedagogy. This analysis was based on the analysis of source texts, which is the research method used in this article; it is also a comparative analysis and as such is a hermeneutic analysis written in an interpretative paradigm. The reflections presented here are introductory reflections on the issues in question – delving deeper into them would require further, more extended analyses.

2. Values in social pedagogy – fields of inquiry

Relations between the human being and the society (the environment) are the basic area indicated as fundamental for social pedagogy, which is its characteristic (specific) element and, therefore, also defines it in this perspective. Stanisław Kawula, one of the leading contemporary representatives of social pedagogy, wrote about this:

> Social pedagogy focuses on the problem of environmental conditions of up-bringing processes and on the analysis of the conditions (factors) that make it possible to satisfy the developmental needs of human beings (human groups) in different phases of their lives and various life situations … For these reasons, social pedagogy focuses on the living environment of the individual or groups and on the institutions deliberately established in society to carry out

educational tasks … while it perceives the parts of the environment that are not upbringing-oriented as an area to be … transformed into intentional educational work (Kawula, 1996, p. 29).

Similar opinions indicating such characteristics of social pedagogy can be found in most of the representatives and founders of this pedagogy. For example, Anna Przecławska and Wiesław Theiss wrote: 'this field deals with the theory of the environmental determinants of education and human development and with the theory and practice of environmental design' (Przecławska & Theiss, 1966, p. 9).

Consequently, axiological issues tackled by social pedagogy are consistently reduced to such a ontological and structural perspective – a source perspective, so to say – in the subjective sense (of indicated research areas). This subject area is clearly related to the issue of the relationship between the *individual/human being* and *the environment/society*.[1]

This relationship is also described axiologically – and requires this – as a teleological relationship, i.e., with its necessary translation into practice, where we ask what values are to be implemented.[2] The **concept of the human being** adopted here, as well as the concept of the very structure of social life (society) – in social pedagogy, it refers most clearly to (finds itself in) the **concept of the environment** – must be sought and defined in this complex relational context as key elements of this relationship.

Therefore, the issue of values has been somewhat hidden (contained) in this relationship and refers to it in social pedagogy. In this sense, it is difficult to say clearly here that, for example, the subjective character of social education consists of a certain understanding of the subjectivity of the human being (the individual), including, for example, his or her ability to 'undertake creative social action' or 'cultural activity.' This is because such actions are always 'entangled' in or are the outcome of broader social and environmental relations – the mechanisms of social life that influence them. In turn, these mechanisms can be understood in various ways, not neces-

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[1] Such a description of the subject of research of social pedagogy is accepted by a majority of representatives of this pedagogical sub-field, especially those who deal with its theory, cf. my reflections on this subject: Cichosz, 2014.

[2] I also deal with this matter in my research to which I refer and which I quote literally also in these papers: Cichosz, 2003; 2013.

sarily covering or implying the subjective (in the sense of epistemological, ontological and axiological identity) role of the human being. An example of this can be found exactly in social pedagogy – often, however, understood functionally and deterministically (even today) when it comes to the course of social life – with a dominant and declaratively accepted personalistic and humanistic understanding of the human being.[3] At the same time, however, it should be borne in mind that personalism and humanism can have their various interpretations, including opposing ones, which can be found in both extreme individualist – non-deterministic – concepts, and behavioural and instrumentalist justifications can be adopted here, which will still point to the role of the individual even when his or her individuality manifests itself in social reactivity.

It is not easy to recognise this issue today, if only against the background of cognitive relativism that is currently visible in social analysis – also a multi- and interdisciplinary approach that always differentiates, introduces different topics and solutions and is also relativistic to some extent.

Therefore, the very principles of pedagogical action adopted in social pedagogy, the principles governing social life, clearly interpreted axiologically and of such an axiological 'nature' – such as, for example, the principle of the *common good*, *social justice*, *subsidiarity*, *support*, *but also social capital*, are also the outcome of the understanding of social life and the understanding of the human being and his subjectivity as an active participant in social life (cf. Smolińska-Theiss, 1994).[4]

In addition, each pedagogy, including social pedagogy, entails the immanently, structurally inherent imperative of action – the necessity of pursuing a particular educational practice, which is linked to the need to transform and organise social life also in this case. Here we arrive at the issue of the aforementioned principles on which this transformation is to take place. It

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[3] The functional and deterministic inclination of social pedagogy was adopted, or certainly embedded, more clearly in the tradition of this field in the 'real socialism' period and the related socialist upbringing trend. It seems that contemporary pedagogy, also the social one, is still influenced by such ideological concepts. However, this matter still requires source and analytical studies and research.

[4] A wide range of interpretations in this axiological area of reading social life, also from the perspective of understanding of subjectivity, can be found, e.g., in works published on the basis of social pedagogy and focusing on the issue of 'social capital' (cf. Marzec-Holka, 2005; Theiss, 2007).

is, therefore, about the **principles of organisation of social life**. We can call it the third interpretative plane for the subject of values. At the same time, it is another area of concepts adopted in this field, which are of course closely linked to the concept of the human being and the concept of social relations (social life – consequently and a source aspect, the understanding of what the environment is).[5]

Therefore, the task of identifying social pedagogy in terms of the values present in it on the three aforementioned planes is quite complex and ultimately quite difficult to identify unambiguously. At the same time, it should be emphasised once again that the analysis undertaken here will mainly focus on the first two planes – the human being and the environment – as being fundamental and apparently more linked to the sources, also when it comes to their translation into a specific practice, i.e., organisation of the environment. In this respect, there are various conclusions and adopted solutions that will be selectively quoted here – however, they come from the main representatives of social pedagogy.

3. Adopted conclusions

The starting point described above, quite universally accepted in social pedagogy as a kind of its structural model, has assumed a different axiological description. The specific features of this description – the adopted conclusions and, consequently, diversity – can be sought on the paths of development of social pedagogy in the work and activities of key thinkers and representatives of this pedagogy. In this respect, we can identify at least a few distinct traditions and currents of thought developed in the past:
   – related to the activities of the forerunners of social pedagogy and its founders. It is a distinctly humanistic and anthropological tradition,
   – developed in the 1970s and 1980s, mainly related to the current of 'real socialism,' which perceives social relations in a functional, systemic

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[5]   In the context of such ways of understanding, comprehensive distinct concepts of social pedagogy have also been developed, in which the category of 'action' remains supreme as the interpretative 'base' (at the ontological, epistemological and axiological levels) (cf. Marynowicz-Hetka, 2007).

and rather deterministic way and is grounded in the academic educa-
tion of those days as part of the official (state) education system,

– the Christian and Catholic current devoted to social education and
  referring to the social teaching of the Church, which is pursued in the
  Thomistic-personalistic intellectual tradition and developed parallel
  to (and rather separately from) the official (state) system of academic
  education,

– conceptually and ideologically diverse contemporary social pedagogy,
  which departs from the source traditions of this field.

The precise identification of the above-mentioned and identified tradi-
tions and currents requires detailed epistemological and methodological
analyses and source research. In order to illustrate only these currents and
their specific features (adopted methods of reasoning), selected views and
statements by their distinctive representatives will be quoted below.

3.1. In the circle of the founders of social pedagogy

A special (though not only) role is played here by Helena Radlińska, also as
the founder and organiser of the Polish 'school' of social pedagogy. In her
conception, Helena Radlińska very strongly pointed out the role of culture as
a carrier of ideas (ideals) that can be/are the basis for educational interventions
referring to and building up the creative attitude of the pupil while assuming
his/her subjective property – a possible sphere of activity. Speaking on that
subject, also characterising the process of education in her works, she wrote:

> The experiences of youth most strongly shape ideals, awaken the will and give
> direction to aspirations. Their content is sometimes subjected by educators,
> more often by coming into contact with people and works of art, often seem-
> ingly at random. More than one encounter of desirable values sensed at the
> moment depends on the culture of the environment. The inaccessibility of the
> great cultural legacy and the proliferation of its one-day substitutes or para-
> sitic creations was rightly regarded as a national tragedy. Rescue is indicated
> by the characteristics of the human element. It is brought about by a creative
> attitude and reaching out to a broader environment for the values latent in it
> (Radlińska, 1961, p. 36).

Further, the author wrote:

> Educational activity that contributes objective values, enriches and expands the immediate environments of individuals and groups, enables them to understand each other and to interact consciously, creates a foothold for the creativity of individuals in the existing output. In this way, it co-operates in building rich spiritual structures and, thanks to them, what we call culture is able to live and last in new relationships and new human works (Radlińska, 1961, p. 41).

In the concept outlined here, complex/culturally developed values play a very important role. The values that are transferred and socially 'shared' through culture. But even more important is the concept of the human being, the individual who, through his or her potential (spiritual powers), can not only participate in this culture but also create and develop it. We can, therefore, say that it is a humanistic concept, i.e., the one that emphasises the importance of culture for social development, but, at the same time, a personalistic concept that emphasises not only the development potential of the individual, but also the possibilities of his or her creative activity and the tasks that can be set for him/her in this respect.

3.2. In the current of real socialism

In this current, an important role is played by Ryszard Wroczyński, who, on the one hand, refers to the first 'school' of social pedagogy (related to Helena Radlińska) and, on the other hand, develops this pedagogy also in the current of the ideas of real socialism and the Marxist way of understanding social relations and conditions, which are understood here in the context of educational tasks. Pointing out that education is supposed to lead to development, he wrote:

> The essence of development lies not in the one-sided dependence of the human being on environmental factors but in the mutual functional interdependence of the human being and the environment. This functional interdependence relates to both biopsychological factors and natural and social conditions. Biological factors shape human development, but do not deter-

mine it; they can be corrected through conscious activity and the organisation of appropriate environmental influences; the natural environment and the social environment are not fixed and unchangeable – they change under the influence of human activity. These complex developmental conditions, determined by various factors, constitute the essence of functional interdependence between the human being and the environment (Wroczyński, 1966, p. 64).

Continuing his reflections, Wroczyński wrote:

The problems of the educational environment and the organisation of cultural and educational work in the environment assume particular importance in a socialist society. The development of a socialist society is based on the planned organisation of all areas of economy and culture. The organisation of social life, education and upbringing in the community is also planned. Every individual in a socialist system should have an opportunity to satisfy his social and cultural needs in his living and working environment; the environment, in turn, should be organised so as to shape the conditions and stimuli for development in accordance with the basic ideals of socialist education (Wroczyński, 1966, p. 50).

While adopting this fixed, universal starting point for social pedagogy, i.e., the reciprocal relationship between the individual and the environment, the concept presented here specifically sees the role of the individual in this system. On the one hand, the individual remains in a necessary (functional) relationship with the environment, which, being a source of stimuli, influences him by shaping his personality. On the other hand, as a consequence of such interactions and remaining in such a relationship, the individual is an element of a social system, a specific social structure (environmental conditions) and his/her development is determined by the way in which this structure functions. Thus, what we deal with here, is the relatively distinct functionalism and behavioural approach to the accepted visions of society and the individual. With limited human activity, determined by social development and socially controlled.

3.3. In the current of the Church's social teaching

One of the significant figures of this current, Andrzej Niesiołowski, points to the spiritual side of human nature and such a spiritual and universal dimension of culture and values and their role in and for education. He writes:

> The human being spontaneously adapts to the environment and the spiritual attitude prevailing in it. This produces a certain natural social culture, which is the spontaneous result of development and conditions. It is the natural surface for the growth of a second layer of social culture, which represents consciously recognised and spread aspirations and ideals. It will be the implementation of some principles and ideals sussed out from reflection. These can be deductions from the main norms, or inductively developed specific indications. We will call this a rational social culture. Here, of course, a distinction must be made between the standards themselves and their implementation (Jagielska & Kostkiewicz, 2015, p. 228).

The author goes on to write:

> Whoever has acknowledged the truth of the cognitive assumptions of Catholicism and is determined to accept the consequences resulting from them, has already come under logical constraint in relation to the values that, within this system of thought, apply as necessary conclusions from the premises already given (Jagielska & Kostkiewicz, 2015, p. 245).

In his conception, the author clearly and strongly emphasises the role of culture, of cultural goods for human development (including spiritual development). On the one hand, it is a social culture given to everyone in a real tangible experience. On the other hand, this development depends on the individual activity of each person – in terms of cultural goods received. The most important sphere of human development, however, is of transcendent nature, and as such depends on contact with God and leads to it – it is the sphere of spiritual development.

3.4. Contemporary inspirations

In contemporary approaches adopted in social pedagogy, emphasis is placed on the role of the human being as an active and creative subject remaining in such a 'dialogical' relationship, also to the social environment and other individuals. This is also the background for the important role of social (environmental) education. Adopting a specific vision of the environment here, Wiesław Theiss writes: '[the environment] is a place of encounter and dialogue with the other, with culture, with the past, and with nature. It is an area of expanding economic, social and political activity in society' (Theiss, 1996, p. 1). In this context, the author writes about the role of specific environmental education:

> It consists, on the one hand, of the knowledge of the modern world, … and, on the other hand, of the stimulation of local positive development factors and education for the common good, the latter being understood as a set of inviolable rights of the person in moral, material and intellectual terms. This goes hand in hand with developing the skills of dialogue, co-operation, tolerance and trust (Theiss, 1996, p. 1).

Staying within the current of contemporary interpretations undertaken within the area of social pedagogy and relating to the sphere of axiology, we can also recall an approach to the issue of institutions and institutionalisation that differs from the traditional approaches adopted in this field so far. In this respect, Ewa Marynowicz-Hetka elaborated the concepts of the symbolic institution and the invisible environment. Defining the issue, she writes:

> The activity of the social educator in the field of practice becomes a social activity with the characteristics of commonality when a symbolic institution is created. In the course of this process, a new institution (a set of norms and values) is constructed at the border between the real and the imaginary institution. The creation of a symbolic institution takes place in a relational relationship between individuals situated in a living environment (Marynowicz-Hetka, 2019, p. 25).

The issue of values analysed in the context of understanding the human being and the role of the environment in the process of their mutual relationship was also addressed by Anna Przecławska. For this author, the most important interpretative structure of this relationship is the issue/space of cultural participation. She writes:

> Participation in a culture understood in a narrower way has the character of a social communication process that conveys a system of symbolic meanings and the attribution of values valid in a given cultural circle and facilitates mutual communication (Przecławska, 1976, p. 17).[6]

Thus, culture emerges here as the main space for development, where the transmission of certain norms and values takes place. Anna Przecławska associated possible cultural contacts of young people with particular environments and groups, which she regarded as an area of social relations and relationships playing a crucial role in upbringing. These environments and groups included: family, peer groups, cultural dissemination facilities and the mass media.

For the Author's views on cultural participation, also in the context of the pedagogical consequences of this process, the way of understanding the phenomenon of upbringing as such is a very important, even crucial issue. Adopting a more social vision of this process in this respect and emphasising the role of the 'meeting' of the subjects of upbringing – the relations that take place between them, the author indicates here the role of the environment – the upbringing environment, as a space of conscious interactions but also the role of the individual. She wrote:

> The influence of the educational environment is not understood by me as a behavioural mechanism for eliciting a specific response, by a specific stimulus. It is an individual experience that forms in the process of upbringing and depends mainly on it … The 'core' of the upbringing process is in the pupil, and this also applies to the influence of the upbringing environment. … While transforming the personality of the pupil on the basis of his own

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[6] In her works, the author used a relatively simple understanding of culture, often referring to the findings of sociology in its more functional understanding (cf. Kłoskowska, 1964). It is unlikely that Przecławska conducted in-depth analyses in this field.

internal activity, the educational environment also changes under his/her influence (Przecławska, 1993, p. 15).

In conclusion, it should be said that the Author's views clearly indicate the humanistic dimension of social – environmental upbringing, treating the environment as a place of meeting and personal relations, where cultural content – values – play an important pedagogical role with the independent and active role of the individual, which is a fundamental here, with his/her creative and, at the same time, relational attitude.

Another important figure in social pedagogy when it comes to a specifically elaborated conception, is Tadeusz Frąckowiak. Adopting the basic and crucial patterns of understanding of this field, also with regard to its structure, i.e., the ontological model of the basic relationship: human/individual – environment, he adopts a distinct humanistic and personalistic interpretative perspective in his views. Here, he points to human dignity, freedom and rights as a fundamental point of reference for the adopted conclusions. His suggestion concerning the threefold orientation of any pedagogy, including social pedagogy – i.e., that it is both *the pedagogy of personality* – the formation of the mind and the shaping of virtues, based on the ethos of obedience, the *pedagogy of preparation for life* – reckoning with the possibilities of the individual and the needs of the market, based on the ethos of adaptation, and the *pedagogy of universal education* rooted in the hope of liberation through enlightenment – says that:

> All three pedagogies, variously subdivided into directions, fields, trends and currents, take into account humanism and humanitarianism as an attitude relating to dignity, freedom, the human right to happiness and the versatile development of the personality. In the sense that they promote the humanistic idea that marks its presence in study programmes, they are humanised pedagogical sciences … In such case, they include the knowledge of values, the ways of finding, participating in and respecting them in complex existential conditions (Frąckowiak, 2005, p. 40).

Thus, the author's approach to social pedagogy is explicitly humanistic and axiological [emphasising the level of values], indicating the primary role of values in education.

To sum up, we can say that the views of the selected authors presented above, on the one hand, fit into a certain specific – universal ontological pattern of reflection appropriate for social pedagogy, such that they always ultimately refer to the understanding of man and the environment and these areas they concern. On the other hand, they show the differences that are adopted in the interpretation of these areas. From a more subjective treatment of the individual, who is a product of environmental conditions (R. Wroczyński), which is typical for Marxist approaches (such an approach usually translates into a functional and often deterministic understanding of social relations), to humanistic and personalistic approaches emphasising the subjectivity of man and his creative possibilities in terms of influencing the social world (H. Radlińska). Clearly different and expanding such a humanistic nature of the accepted interpretations are the concepts emphasising the spiritual and transcendental role of man, who at this level and in connection with these areas undertakes his social activity (A. Niesiołowski, T. Frąckowiak). In these approaches, there is always the space of the individual – the subject, as a key link in social activity. This subjectivity is also interpreted in different ways. We can safely say that we are dealing here with various types of personalism (A. Przecławska, W. Theiss, E. Marynowicz-Hetka).

4. Directions of adopted solutions

The examples quoted above demonstrate the different interpretative approaches and directions that have been adopted in social pedagogy when it comes to understanding the basic relationship: human/individual – environment, especially in the context of their axiological specificity and the characteristics adopted in this regard. It is fair to say that these interpretations are varied and contain different topics and lines of thought. The dominant approaches here are social – similar to sociological interpretations; such as systemic and functional approaches, i.e., those that emphasise institutional social relations. We can also find here humanistic and personalistic approaches and their understanding that would correspond to some extent with the sociological approaches indicated above. However, it is difficult to point out definitively any ideological homogeneity of social pedagogy in the above-mentioned areas of inquiry, because we come across a variety of ideo-

logical solutions here. Perhaps they form and give a certain comprehensive idea of social education with its possible and diverse – not necessarily mutually exclusive – solutions, but this would require further detailed research. When it comes to the directions and trends that can be seen from the analysis, we can say that:

Human being/Individual

It always remains in an inalienable, somewhat genetic (social) relationship to the environment. It is always a relationship that influences and shapes human development. The active role of the human being is usually also mentioned, often with emphasis on the creative activity of the human being resulting from his/her free choice. The role of interpersonality and cooperation – remaining in personal relationships as such relationships that can/do result in proper/expected social participation – is often highlighted.

These are also the approaches that tend to reduce the role of the human being to a functional presence, which is the outcome of organised and delivered stimuli. In such a case, the role of the free choice is limited and the emphasis is placed on appropriate rules for organising social life, where the human being will be the recipient, participant and beneficiary.

Environment

It is the permanent and fundamental place of human life – the space of his activity – the arrangement of conditions – other people, also natural surroundings – it is the living environment. The cultural dimension of this environment as a carrier of specific content, models, designs and standards, is indicated most often here. In this sense, the environment is a space of culture, most often broadly defined as material (institutional dimension) and spiritual (models and role models).

However, regardless of the way in which culture is understood, its educational nature is pointed out most frequently. Therefore, the environment is – must be – an upbringing environment, which is usually combined with a specific praxeology – the ways of putting it into practice – in social pedagogy. Also in this sense, the educational environment always assumes its own axiological characteristics, certain contents to be assimilated, which should lead to the transformation of the environment.

5. Conclusion

The search for values – their place in social pedagogy – is an important, yet difficult task, because their adoption stems from and fits into a specific conceptual profile of this field. Sometimes this profile is explicitly articulated and follows from a clearly presented and accepted vision of the world. More often than not, however, these assumptions are not fully articulated – sometimes they are adopted unconsciously and may also result from ideological attitudes. The attempt made here to identify these assumptions is a preliminary simple attempt superimposed on the universal model of this pedagogy, its source scheme, such that it always deals with the relationship; the human/individual to the environment. This seems to be an objective starting point. However, further in-depth research will probably show that we deal with a much more complex reality.

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