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Introduction

Contemporary culture encourages us to strive for professional excellence, but when it comes to morality, we are too often satisfied with being “good enough”. From the pedagogical point of view, this raises the danger of technocratism, i.e., the belief that the highest professional qualifications automatically make us experts in a given field. The danger lies, firstly, in the fact that it prompts us to adopt the model of educating technocrats as the goal of education – specialists in a narrowly understood field. Equally harmful in its effects is the second type of danger, which is expressed in the fact that we (educators and educators) can perceive ourselves as technocrats – the efficient functionaries of education, able to carry out every task set before us, but without subjecting it to broader reflection or moral evaluation.

Perfection and mastery in work necessarily mean – in today’s highly sophisticated science and technology – a far-reaching specialization. The role of the specialist is to focus on one area of knowledge, to “sift” all available data, to eliminate those irrelevant to the problem under consideration, and to use what is left to solve it. However, specialization does not increase the level of competences in matters that are, in a certain sense, the most important, namely in the field of moral, axiological or, more broadly, worldview

outlook on life values. Thus, technocratism works where the main challenge is the effectiveness of action, while its role decreases in contexts where ethics is of fundamental importance, e.g., in family life and upbringing. This was strongly emphasized by Jacek Woroniecki, who wrote: “Moral education, unlike mental education and technical improvement, does not allow specialization” (Woroniecki 1986: 413). After all, its purpose is to build an integral moral character.

The relationship between morality and work can be seen most clearly in the professions that can be understood as vocations, therefore the relationship between the educator-teacher and the pupil acquires (or rather should acquire) a special meaning – it should be perceived in terms of the master–student relationship. Its core is not so much the fulfillment (even to the best) of a strictly defined task, but taking responsibility for the person of the student (although, of course, the scope of this responsibility may be differently defined). In this case, professional excellence is closely related to moral qualifications. Strictly professional competences cannot therefore be considered as sufficient to be a good teacher. In order to be recognized as a master, someone must create in himself values, virtues, especially intellectual, so-called dianoetic, which will make him an outstanding specialist, a master in some field (Stróżewski 2007). For this reason, the problem of mastery is not only one of the most difficult challenges faced nowadays by educators, but also one of the most important subjects of pedagogical reflection. Mastery – as a historical, cultural and pedagogical category (Kola 2019) – should be read anew in the changing socio-cultural reality. The reflections and analyzes contained in the present volume are an attempt to interpret the mastery of the teaching profession in precisely such a way.

References

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