

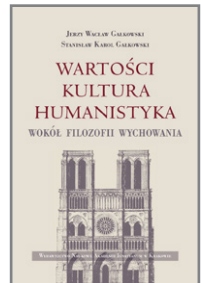
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Around the Cathedral: Education in a World Founded by Values, Culture and the Humanities

Wokół katedry – wychowanie w świecie
ufundowanym przez wartości, kulturę
i humanistykę

Jerzy Wacław Gałkowski, Stanisław Karol Gałkowski,
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wychowania*, [Values – Culture – Humanities: Around
the Philosophy of Education], Wydawnictwo Naukowe
Akademii Ignatianum, Kraków 2019, pp. 132

From its very beginning, the book by Jerzy Wacław Gałkowski and Stanisław Karol Gałkowski presents a multifaceted approach to its subject and endeavours to describe the world not only from the point of view of philosophy—which both authors consider to be the queen of sciences—but also through other interpretative keys. Father and son, representing two generations of scholars, look at the contemporary world, from the perspective of both classical values and the processes that are transforming this world at an extraordinary pace. This examination of the world (with the



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emphasis on the leading role of philosophy) is accompanied by other sciences: psychology, sociology, history, culture, literature, biology and law. What are father and son looking for in this intense writing session? The elder is from the generation of the 1930s, so his childhood was influenced by the war and his youth by totalitarian systems. For the younger one, the generational experience was of martial law and the political transformation in the country in which he had to mature and start his adult life. What are father and son, serving the same cause, adopting the same values—but with such different experiences—looking for together?

This search is about fundamental, timeless and universal issues. In fact, it is about one thing: man, who has always been the subject of analysis in scientific reflection; whose condition and existence in the world, in his relations to the world, to other people and, last but not least, to himself, constantly intrigues, amazes and fills us with hope and fear.

The upbringing of a person remains the focus of both authors. Understood as a conscious, purposeful process whose goal is the multidimensional development of the human being, upbringing must be based on the values in which the teacher himself believes and which he uses as the foundation of this process. Thus, upbringing, being the subject of pedagogy, does not take place in a vacuum, but is founded on the categories referred to by the authors: values, culture and the humanities. Starting from the philosophical tradition, but not stopping there, the authors recommend to the reader the world of values, the world of culture and the world of humanities as necessary foundations in the process of educating a young person in the contemporary world (Gałkowski, Gałkowski 2019: 11).

The main research problem addressed by the authors is therefore upbringing. In the first part, this problem is extensively analysed by means of the philosophical method. Moral, philosophical and scientific authorities—such as Karol Wojtyła or Fr Jacek Woroniecki OP—become the central point of reference. The authors reflect on the general problem of responsibility, the value of a human act and the category of conscience. These reflections are continued in the second part of the book. The fascination with the subject of culture is reflected in its discovery and enhancement by adopting the attitude of an active, engaged viewer and participant (Gałkowski, Gałkowski

2019: 53). The authors definitely opt for the need to define the so-called canon of culture and to introduce it to education as the basic tool for shaping young people.

The section entitled “Humanities: A return to classical *paideia*” begins with a linguistic argument, juxtaposing the term *paideia* with *humanitas*. The authors support the conviction that each generation must, in a way, begin the effort of education and self-education anew. This kind of approach seems pessimistic. What is helpful, according to the authors, are two universal tools: philosophy, understood and defined here as “working on oneself” (Gałkowski, Gałkowski 2019: 93), and fairy tales, which, through their wealth of symbols, archetypes and behavioural patterns, become for the child a treasury of knowledge about life and man. The chapter entitled “Humanities and teaching” reassures the reader of the need for humanistic education. The authors describe the function and role of the humanities. The final emphasis of the third part of the book is a rather pessimistic view of the humanities in the age of the internet. The consequence of the disintegration of the old world, and man’s analogue perception of it, is the modern world—the so-called liquid modernity, in which everything flows, everything is relative (including values) and there are no objective, binding rules governing the world. Man assumes the role of a passive consumer of goods, but also of culture (Bauman 2006). It is “a world full of so-called Peter Pans who do not want to grow up. In spite of the Internet, television and additional activities, the loneliness of a child seems to become increasingly more common” (Chrobak, Wądolny-Tatar 2016). This loneliness also applies to every human being.

It is certainly no coincidence that the cover of the Gałkowskis’ book features an image of the west façade of the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. Erected on an island in the Seine, built over almost two centuries, it is not only a monument of architecture and a legacy of world cultural heritage, but also a great symbol of European culture and values. Impressive in its size and harmony, the building rises toward the sky in accordance with the Gothic rules of mediaeval architecture. The cathedral’s composition, based on the square and the circle, refers us to theological, divine and cosmic symbolism. The circle, as a perfect shape and the intrinsic dynamics of the constant π as the mathematical standard for the perfection of the world, is

the basis of the cathedral, its source and its strength. The cathedral, which is the work of the mind and hands of the brilliant artists of the time (according to mediaeval symbolism) is above all a reflection of the divine, cosmic order, fixed in stone. In his letters to Czesław Miłosz, Zbigniew Herbert wrote that “it’s a cathedral which I walk around from all sides, and I cannot cope with it at all. You understand yourself that my eyes seem to go out of my orbits and they only get back into their place at night, though not always” (Toruńczyk 2006). For Herbert, the cathedral is a symbol of inexpressible beauty and value. His slow “walking around the cathedral from all sides”, his recognition by deduction or induction, his metaphorical attempt to describe it—all this leaves the poet in a state of awe, but also helplessness. It is similar with our authors: they walk around the cathedral of values and culture from all sides, starting from the philosophical side, attempting to describe the phenomenon. Do they share Herbert’s feelings? One would like to say that they express both admiration for the world of values and a peculiar helplessness towards the global world of liquid modernity that emerges towards the end of the text. “What interests me in this postcard, however, is something else: a record of the experience of helplessness. I walk around the cathedral from all sides and I cannot cope with it, says Herbert. The words about the intensity of the cathedral as an object of perception are likely more than just a reproduction of the travel writer’s topos of ‘captivation.’ Perhaps they convey a sense of the real problem that Orvieto’s *Il Duomo* becomes for Herbert. The cathedral is a problem, a challenge. The force of its existence demands some kind of response from the traveller” (Antoniuk 2017: 173).

Looking at the cover of this book, it is hard to shake the impression that the cathedral is a historical and artistic context that cannot be overlooked or ignored. An attentive reader will notice the date parallelism between 2019, the year of the publication of the book in question and the year in which the Notre Dame Cathedral was burning for several hours in front of the eyes of the whole world in a fire that caused irreparable damage. The burning of the Paris cathedral and the burning of classical values, culture and humanities is happening in front of our eyes. The voices of Professors Galkowski are an attempt to describe this phenomenon, to indicate its general causes and perhaps to suggest some ways to solve it.

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