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About Spirituality as Individual Property: The Ukrainian Dimension

O duchowości jako indywidualnym przymiocie:
wymiar ukraiński

ABSTRACT

Among the huge number of problems, which now appear in the Ukrainian society, a significant place is occupied by issues of spirituality in philosophical, psychological, cultural, and educational and strictly practical aspects. Growing man himself, on the basis of free choice, listening to his inner "I" chooses his own type of spirituality, but also adapts to the requirements of society. There is no need to put all-embracing tasks, as we did in the Soviet Union, but everyone has to find his way in the choice of spirituality, and the task of education and educators is to help the young generation to do it. Ukraine is already approaching to such an understanding of the problem, at least this trend is already visible. If one looks at the practice of shaping spirituality through various educational centers, in recent years one can see a kind of expansion of scientific knowledge in the humanities and connecting children to different kinds of spiritual experience of humanity. The text considers the phenomenon of spirituality as a social fact and trait of personality. Reflections on spirituality are elucidated in the context of educational sciences. The general trend of synthesis of different perspectives and paradigms is traced.

KEY WORDS

spirituality, culture,
spirit, values, education
and youth

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

duchowość, kultura,
duch, wartości, oświata,
młodzież

SPI Vol. 19, 2016/4
ISSN 2450-5358
e-ISSN 2450-5366
DOI: 10.12775/SPI.2016.4.005

Artykuły i rozprawy

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ABSTRAKT

Wśród ogromnej ilości problemów, które dzisiaj pojawiają się w społeczeństwie ukraińskim, znaczące miejsce zajmują kwestie duchowości w aspektach: filozoficznym, psychologicznym, kulturowym i pedagogicznym oraz ściśle praktycznym. Dorastający człowiek, na podstawie wolnego wyboru, słuchając swojego wewnętrznego „Ja”, wybiera swój własny typ duchowości, ale też dostosowuje go do wymogów społeczeństwa. Nie trzeba stawiać wszechobejmujących zadań, jak było to robione w Związku Radzieckim, ale każdy musi znaleźć swoją drogę w wyborze duchowości, a zadaniem pedagogiki i pedagogów jest dorastającemu pokoleniu w tym pomóc. Ukraina już zbliża się do takiego rozumienia problemu, przynajmniej taka tendencja jest już widoczna. Jeżeli popatrzeć na praktykę kształtowania duchowości poprzez różne ośrodki edukacyjne, to w ostatnich latach widać pewien rodzaj rozwoju wiedzy naukowej w obszarze humanistyki oraz wdrażanie dzieci w różnego rodzaju duchowe, ogólnoludzkie doświadczenia. W tekście poddaje się analizie fenomen duchowości traktowany jako osobne zjawisko oraz przymiot osobowości. Uwzględnia się refleksje dotyczące duchowości w kontekście nauk pedagogicznych. Bada się także ogólną tendencję do syntezy różnych poglądów i paradygmatów.

Amongst the considerable number of problems which are currently present in the Ukrainian society, a significant place is occupied by issues of spirituality in the philosophical, psychological, cultural, and educational and strictly practical aspects. In newspapers, and magazines, on television, on the radio—from shows devoted to entertainment and to global issues—in a variety of texts and contexts, one encounters the word “spirituality”. This term is especially important in educational texts with religious and cultural themes. With each author, each view has its own translation of the concept of spirituality, and its understanding of its contents. Even a superficial analysis of these texts testifies to the fact that they contain a fairly wide range of meanings of the concept of spirituality as they face certain viewpoints, positions and ideologies.

The problem of spirituality is different in pedagogy, a type of science which aims to not only identify and designate directions, ways of shaping a certain competence, knowledge and skills, but also, more

importantly, to develop certain qualities, values, and types of human behavior. Pedagogy has always dealt with questions directly or indirectly related to spirituality, giving it different meanings depending on the historical period, the requirements of society and social level. Indeed, the pedagogical approach has changed depending on strictly educational circumstances—school policy, global pedagogical ideology, paradigms of educational centers, mass media, its closest environment, as well as child or youth subculture. This is most evident during the transition of society from one dimension of activity to the other when encountering global social and cultural transformations. Right now, the Ukrainian society is in the process of emergence and implementation of new ideas with a more or less clear representation of the past and almost indefinite representation of the future. Last but not least there is the problem of spirituality—in cultural-anthropological, religious, and educational dimensions. This is all evidence of the need for the analysis of spirituality as a personal value and as part of, or even the essence of the educational process in today's problematic world of science and various educational realities of teaching.

Before one may consider spirituality as a category of teaching, it is necessary to recall that it occurs as a basic concept of the humanities and is played out by the categories of “spirit” and “soul”, which appeared in the texts of ancient thinkers, and was formed already in the worldviews of animistic societies and then in Christianity, surrounding its world with spiritual beings, as they attributed to the existence of the soul of everything, from dead to living things. It is to be emphasized that this tradition exists even now in everyday life, especially in the most recent times, when we observe the turn of the public to magical and spiritualistic views and beliefs.

The concepts of “spirit” and “soul” began to become prominent in Christianity which, starting from the thirteenth century, became the primary religion and ideology of Europe. Then they acknowledged that “the soul is the immaterial aspect (or essence) of man, which gives him individuality and give him human qualities; often referred to as a synonym for self-awareness, or ‘I’. Theology more narrowly defined the soul as part of the individual, which has a divine origin.”¹ For a long time, Christianity accepted the definition of the soul as

¹ *Всемирная энциклопедия. Христианство*, Минск 2004, p. 212.



the similarity to God in man. The science of religion is not the only view of the relationship between the concepts of the soul, death, immortality, resurrection without interruption, as over the centuries, it formed different schools, concepts, directions, between which there is no end of discussions and polemics. At the same time, the religious definition of the soul does not remain unchanged, despite the ongoing theological discussion. And in our time, in churches during sermons, they speak of an immortal soul that temporarily found its refuge in the flesh; and spirituality is associated with all the complex questions that relate to the soul.

The Soviet philosophy and psychology in dictionaries, encyclopaedias, indexes explains the concept of “spirit” and “soul” as the categories which are non-material, religious, idealistic, closely related to the social and economic contract, which occurred as synonyms of the terms “spirituality”, “culture”, “spiritual culture”, “value”, “ideals” and so on.

Nowadays, in Ukrainian humanities, different theories and trends appear, disappear and reappear in a new context that directly or indirectly investigates the problem of the soul as a central category of human respect. Modern philosophers say that in philosophy, the existential triad of “body–soul–spirit” turns on the epistemological pair of “material–ideal”, among which there is continuous heated debate.²

We shall briefly look at spirituality from the perspective of cultural studies, a type of science which studies the structure of culture in its specific historical manifestations. There are a lot of different definitions of culture, but they all boil down to one thing—this is a concept very complex, which manifests itself among other types of creative human activity and its effects are seen in the area of spiritual and material, historical and ethical determinants of the inner world of man and the complex psychological, intellectual and spiritual norms, standards and principles. Generally, these rules allow individuals and the whole society to create something new, to initiate the emergence of new values.³ And so culture is a spiritual achievement, the center of spiritual values associated with the internal improvement of the people and their development.

² Н. Хамитов, *Философия человека: от метафизики к метаантропологии*, Киев 2002, р. 334.

³ Л. Березовчук, “Великий инквизитор на марше или Культура как власть”, *Октябрь* 2000, no. 5, р. 152–166.

And here we come very close to pedagogy, the theoretical assumptions and their implementation in practice, so that the process of education, upbringing of the child is also teaching a child values, culture, past and future, self-development and the development of society, the surrounding environment.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the first years of independence of Ukraine, the act of seeking for its destiny was conducted, as well as a realization of new values and therefore new pedagogical paradigms. And as it happens in times of ground-breaking, transformational acts, in times of crisis, followed by a reevaluation of values, problems come to the fore. In search of new rules, a new ground but with known problems, and so specialists are now turning to science-related pedagogy to confirm their thoughts.

The changing of paradigms of research in 1990 caused by ideological, social, economic and cultural factors, focused primarily on solutions of moral character, the problem of spirituality in general humanistic, pedagogical and cultural circumstances. No official position of learning about spirituality in the nineties became active exploration, which contradicted the Soviet demagoguery and detachment from real life. The search in the direction of spirituality came to the development of religious paradigm of Christian spirituality, which was tightly linked to the issue of national identity, the mentality of nations as the basis of national tradition. The unique nature of this issue is more about ideology than about self-determination, but both are based on spiritual values such as faith, hope, love and beauty, goodness, duty, advantage, honor, justice, culture, memory, and so on.

In order to confirm the national-Christian religious values, Ukrainian proponents of such reasoning are turning to previously forbidden aspects of pedagogical and journalistic theory by analyzing the works of the outstanding educator Constantine Uszyński, discovering for themselves the once forbidden during Soviet times truths of an educator by the name of Grigori Waszczenko (1878–1967) from his book *The Educational Ideal*⁴. In this book (as you can presume from the title), the author analyzes the various educational ideals: Bolshevik, Christian, pan-European and national Ukrainian. Criticizing the Bolshevik ideal, Waszczenko focuses on the Ukrainian na-

⁴ Munich 1950; Brussels 1976, released in Ukraine in 1994.



tional educational ideal and concludes that “the slogan under which it is to educate the Ukrainian youth is to serve God and country (...) The ideal of the Kingdom of God must have a Christian star that indicates the way. It must strive every day to implement its ideals and to prepare the people for the Kingdom of God in heaven.”⁵

This point of view is now quite popular in Ukraine.⁶ It is most prominently represented by O. Wiśniewski in the textbook *Theoretical basis of modern Ukrainian pedagogy. Course lessons*.⁷ He sees the educational system as a system of values, as well as a hierarchy emphasizing the idea of God and the life of the Church, on which rests the spirituality of men and corresponding spiritual values, such as morality (absolute eternal value), patriotism (national value), democracy (social value) familism (family value), character (the value of personal life), awareness of nature (ecological value).

In recent decades, we are seeing the return to the paradigms of religious spirituality, which can be called the neo-religious spirituality. This concept is manifested in the business schools of Western Ukraine with their introduction of religion classes in school, teaching religious ethics, encouraging the participation of people serving in the church.

At the same time today, given the prevalence of esoteric concepts of development (and spirituality, respectively), which on the one hand, combine spirituality with nature and man, and the other —with different religious and philosophical concepts. In this context, popular theories and trends that deal with child upbringing and spirituality in unity of nature and spirit, shaped by a sense of beauty, the aesthetic of environment; this happens through teaching children and youth the knowledge of the world by not only the senses, but also by treating them as citizens of the universe. This is what anthropology, esoteric, Eastern religions and their teachers strive towards

⁵ Г.Г. Ващенко, *Виховний ідеал*, Полтава 1994, р. 174.

⁶ М. Стельмахович, *Українська родинна педагогіка*, Київ 1996, р. 286; А.В. Вихрущ, *Основи християнської педагогіки, Освіта*, Тернопіль 1999, р. 166; Ю. Руденко, О. Губко, *Українська козацька педагогіка: витоки, духовні цінності, сучасність*, Київ 2007, р. 384.

⁷ *Теоретичні основи педагогіки: курс лекцій*, ed. О. Вишневський, Дрогобич 2001, р. 424; re-edition: О.В. Сухомлинська, *Духовно-моральне виховання дітей та молоді, загальні тенденції й індивідуальний пошук*, Київ 2006, р. 42.

and include, for example, Rudolf Steiner, Helena Blavatsky, Nicholas Rerich and others.

Ideas that shape spirituality have found their supporters in practice. R. Steiner's Waldorf Schools are very popular in Ukraine, where the child is a spiritual being, where in addition to the physical body, they have a soul—the divine substance. This pedagogy is to discover and awaken the child's emotions, feelings and spiritual experiences, to have body and soul in cooperation. Ukrainian teachers-practitioners, pre-school teachers, who work in the system of Waldorf Education, look at the system rather than the sole concept of teaching, seeing it as a kind of idea of free education, humanistic education, teaching the man of goodness, beauty, and dignity.

Needless to say that the Rerichian ideal has also found itself in individual establishments of Ukraine, which in the construction process of education and child care are based on the ideals of beauty, the principles of the unity of the cosmos and human life, on the ideas of good, love, beauty, faith in the processing power of art (art connects people).

As one can see, it is quite different than in the Soviet times, because spirituality has returned to the pedagogical and behavioral discussion in various interpretations, paradigms, and contexts—such as the transcendent to the scientific rationalist. Ineffective in theory, it is widely shown in practice as an eclectic set of beliefs and preferences of carriers and guides of these ideas, most frequently directors or teachers in primary schools.

Today, in our civilized and globalized world, the education and upbringing of children and youth are aimed at shaping morality as a component of spirituality, instilling moral values, civilizational standards of behavior that are accepted in modern societies. Therefore, we can talk about the unification of efforts by institutions in one direction, because contemporary themes and issues of spirituality more and more link and correlate with the discussions that are conducted in the West and the East, and so they become common to everyone.

What are the directions for development of spirituality in children and adolescents in such conditions? What are we, educators and scientists, going to give to parents, educators and teachers?

First of all, we have to work out modern technologies of spirituality in children and adolescents, viewing them as conceptual principles, instruments and criteria for diagnosis and monitoring.



The next thing that seems to be compulsory—the procedural and instrumental development based on new realities, or at least reflecting those realities in which the child lives now. We talk a lot today about the socio-cultural aspect, that education should be based on historical and cultural experience, spiritual traditions of the nation. Undoubtedly, this is a mandatory component of spirituality, but no less important is also our attention to introducing the child to spiritual reality of today with its volatility, ambiguity, multiculturalism, a number of different points of view on one and the same phenomenon.

Today, when most of the problems of ethics apply to areas of personal human life (for instance, the consumption of drugs, alcohol, sexual orientation, etc.) when the media, radio, television, computers, radically change a child's life, the development of the needs, motivations, the areas of emotional and intellectual value sharply enlarge the problem along with the development process of shaping the spirituality of the “core values, which define the meaning of quality and direction of human existence and are an example of human values for each individual.”⁸

If one agrees with those notions of spirituality, and its substantive fulfillment, one should take into account the culture in the broadest sense of the word, including tradition and modernity, religion and morality, culture and youth subculture, law, economy, etc. All these components are involved in the development of spirituality in the modern world, which reflects the mental characteristics of our era and the many directions of uneven development, which denies the existence of one of the many truths about the universal nature of human knowledge, culture and spirituality.

We can talk about the appropriateness of using a synergistic approach the direction of the research and programs that connect different concepts and approaches which are educational, having an outdoor character and a set goal on shaping of the spirituality of children, adolescents and young people; and one of the leading places in this process belongs to the Christian values which, are common to us as the achievements of European civilization.

⁸ Л.П. Боева, “Духовность и проблемы нравственной культуры: духовность, художественное творчество, нравственность” (Материалы круглого стола), *Вопросы философии* 1996, no. 2, p. 3–9.

The point is that growing up in a family, the child gets used to this kind of spirituality (religious or secular), which is cultivated in the family. Later, in various educational institutions, especially on the secondary level, the child's worldview is shaped by the principles of scientific rationality, through the content of education and human values in the educational process. In their spare time, outside of school, in youth organizations, the child is in the system of different influences, which contributes to a variety of tastes, values, moods, which dominate in these environments. If we were starting from the family, the mother and the father, schools, youth organizations, the church, through the different zones of activities, often opposing positions, we deliberately build and cultivate parameters of spiritual norms and values in the process of child development, we develop in them certain influences, interactions, denials, beliefs, a sense of spirituality, which is secular or religious, suiting their inner self.

In modern democracies, the fundamental values promoted and protected by society are tolerance, pluralism, trust, mutual respect, freedom, but also—the autonomy of individuals, free choice, competency, responsibility, the ability to make decisions about their own lives, their beliefs and preferences. In this way, a process of subjectivisation of values, spirituality, which are absorbed by the individuality, cannot be separated from a person.

A growing person, on the basis of free choice, listening to your inner "I", chooses their own type of spirituality, but also adapts to the requirements of society. There is no need to take on difficult tasks, as we did in the Soviet Union; everyone has to find their own way in the choice of spirituality, and the task of education and educators is to help them make that choice.

Ukraine is already approaching this particular way of understanding the problem, at least as far as one can tell. If one looks at the practice of shaping spirituality in various educational centers, one may observe a kind of expansion of scientific knowledge in the humanities, connecting children to different kinds of spiritual experience of humanity in recent years. This process begins in elementary school, then continues in high school—through literature, history courses, "Man and the World", "Ethics", "Christian ethics", natural sciences, where other types of spiritual development of mankind, texts and contexts, which familiarize the child with



the achievements of world culture, including religious and spiritual, that make up the rich and varied image forming spirituality are quite widely represented.

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