

Prof. nadzw. dr hab. Edyta Wolter  
*Faculty of History of Education and Nurture*  
*Department of Pedagogical Sciences*  
*Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw*

## **Taking care of environmental protection and reconciliation with nature**

According to Tadeusz Kotarbiński culture is a part of nature, although it is in contradiction with its primeval powers and only a person, who really wants to be a human being may live in accordance with nature. Such a person is trustworthy (because he or she is the brave carer): "sends love to all living creatures worth loving, what is more, to all creatures ready to suffer, and he or she dreams about the world, where no one is forced to cause another creature's suffering and all beings live in mutual coexistence" (Kotarbiński, 1994, p. 62). He is the advocate of the well known medical rule *primum non nocere*.

A human being is the creator and a creature of culture - as the synthesis of people's activity. Not only the one, who learns the humanities may be a humanist, but also the one, who makes efforts to serve other people (compare Wojnar, 2007, p. 219). Humanism is the expression of philosophical reflection to go deeper into such values as truth, kindness, beauty (Znaniński, 1991, p. 239), it is the humanistic attitude (compare Szyszko-Bohusz, 1989, p. 5) open and sensitive to human things and natural environment (irrespective of professional specialization), it is the respect for personal identity in actions, which transform people, things and the world (compare Suchodolski, Wojnar, 1990, p. 61).

The ecological humanism (Skolimowski, Górecki, 2003, p. 44) is the first step to ecological philosophy, pursuant to which knowledge is to serve the humanity at its best in natural environment and to shape a wise person, a good carer of Mother Gaia<sup>1</sup>. Henryk Skolimowski put it in general that the postmodern IT society is unrefined (does not teach wisdom) (compare Skolimowski, 1991, p. 13), and the society of the future will be subtly judgmental. "Wisdom is the balance between our being and other human beings and the whole universe" (Skolimowski, Górecki, 2003, p. 150). Since the 21st century is becoming the "ecological era" the societies should be educated towards the new quality of existence - the synthesis of the spiritual salvation from the atomizing, mechanistic, quantifiable and

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Greek mythology - the sources of the European culture - the first divine couple were: Uranus - the Heaven and Gaia - the Earth.

alienating technical awareness, which is the antithesis of religious awareness. It is a serious challenge for pedagogues in the process of educating a human being towards "holistic use of human power to help other people and to the benefit of all living creatures" (Pasterniak, 1997, p. 122), to experience the Other (Darowski, 2008, p. 44) – as the outstanding Polish phenomenologist Roman Ingarden put it – psycho-physical integrity of the body and soul of the Person. The human existence is a component of nature, people live in the borders of being: the nature and the specifically human world (Ingarden, 2009, p. 13-18), they create culture, they want to know themselves and the surrounding nature, which has existed long before any activity of *Homo sapiens*.

Human life at the verge of the 20th and 21st century is connected with the "galloping technology syndrome" (Aleksandrowicz, 1971, p. 8), fear against: poverty, manipulation, loneliness in the overcrowded world, the "machine ethics" (compare Skolimowski, 2007, p. 85), mechanistic cosmology (the image of the world similar to a machine) (compare Skolimowski, 1999, p. 95), consumption, relativism (Bauman, 2008, p. 7), the general tendency of postmodern culture, in which - according to Henryk Skolimowski - "everything is equally justified or equally unreasonable". However, according to Zygmunt Bauman the moral choices are subject only to one ethic code (compare: ibidem, p. 174).

Creating a balanced future, healthy society, whose expression is syntony (social harmony) of relations between one person and the whole society (compare Demel, 2008, p. 12) constitutes an implication of ecological way of thinking in "noticing the influence of nature on the conditions of people's lives and pointing out the methods of coexistence with nature" (Bieńkowski, 1993, p. 7).

An ecologist is a spiritual person, who finds satisfaction in mature (compare Schweitzer, 1991, p. 67; compare Skolimowski, 1996, p. 1-2) self-fulfillment, healthy co-creation of particular domains of social life. At the same time it is an imperative of creating a balanced (compare Skolimowski, 1991, p. 29) future, in close connection with shaping the moral sensitivity (compare Aleksandrowicz, 1978, p. 38) on the foundation of the ethics of respect to life (compare Schweitzer, 1974, p. 34), making conditions to protect health<sup>2</sup>, to respect the human society, to shape the ecological awareness "as a collection of information and beliefs about natural society and about connections between the status and character of the natural environment and the conditions and the quality of human life" (Burger, 2005, p. 10).

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<sup>2</sup> Doctors of medicine more and more often emphasize the ecological conditioning of many diseases, especially cancer.

The issues concerning the process of shaping ecological awareness was raised in the document "Agenda-21" adopted in 1992 (during the Conference "Environment and Development" in Rio de Janeiro). It is a 700-page long program of action for the benefit of eco-development in the perspective of the 21st century. It covers the global, the regional and the local scale of actions. It is composed of four parts split into forty chapters (compare Borys, 1994, p. 23). Chapter thirty-six is devoted to education, the issue of completing the holistic paradigm of facing problems concerning environment for the balanced future. The idea of balanced development (compare Poskrobko, 1996, p. 49) includes the notion of building ecological awareness (Skolimowski, 1996b, p. 28), which is strictly connected with the general condition of human spirituality.

Declaration from Rio de Janeiro entitled „Environment and Development” constitutes the continuity (confirmation) of the "Declaration of the Conference of United Nations on Human Environment" (which was adopted in 1972 in Stockholm) and its aim is to reach international agreements to protect the global system of the Earth environment. Among the 21 rules there is a record that human beings have the right to a healthy and creative life in harmony with nature, they have an independent right to use natural resources. The right to development must justly account for developmental and environmental needs of the present and future generations. In order to achieve a constant and balanced development it is necessary that environmental protection is an integral part of developmental processes and is not seen as a separate part of it. The countries of the world should co-operate in partnership and account for the needs of all countries in order to keep and protect the ecosystem of the Earth as well as to reconcile with nature. Creativity, ideals and courage of youths of the world should be mobilized to develop global partnership, to support identities, cultures of social groups, to protect environment and natural resources, which also belong to oppressed people, because peace, growth and environmental protection are co-dependent and indivisible.

On the basis of this document it may be generally said that the condition and the educational hope of the 21st century is shaping ecological personalities, the carers of Mother Earth, who are prepared to reconcile with nature and holistic balanced growth, most of all in the area of relation with oneself in order to understand one's own emotions, to use freedom maturely, because freedom is not chaos, but awareness of limitations in the balanced self-assessment and self-esteem in the social and natural environment (like man, like nature).

Interpersonal dignity facilitates mature interpersonal relations. It is connected with the following attitudes: tolerance and intellectual fairness in social life situations and actions for the benefit of friendly co-habitation with natural environment. It is not only about admiration for the beauty of nature, but also awareness of its life giving influence

on human beings, who are integrated with nature. Ecological thinking (compare Kolbuszewski, 1992, p. 9-8) implies also awareness of risks for social and natural environment caused by pathologies, such as aggression, offenses, loss of self-control, lack of tolerance for autonomies of personal and social identity and addictions (narcotics, alcoholism, smoking, sexual harassment, work addictions and mass media addictions).

Autonomy is one of values recognized by people. According to Tadeusz Frąckowiak autonomy is the aim of education understood as support in the dialog between equally treated parties. Whereas Emmanuel Mounier believes that freedom is a way of existence of a person, who aims at reaching autonomy.

Educating a mentally mature nature carer in the aspect of ecological awareness also implies a reduction of attitudes of "being susceptible to stereotypes" for social origin, nationality, race, place of living, religion, gender, age, physical or mental health problems and undertaking apparent actions in human living environment: animate and inanimate nature and social, cultural environment. Human environment includes natural resources and the products of people's actions (compare Tuszyńska, 2006, p. 18-19). The Polish Constitution states (art. 5) that the Republic of Poland ensures freedom, human rights and citizens' rights as well as citizens' safety. It guards the national heritage and ensures environmental protection based on the rule of balanced growth".

Eco-development (balanced growth) is meeting people's developmental aspirations without destruction and degradation of natural resources, but with care about future generations and healthy natural environment as well as permanent values of cultural heritage (compare Cichy, 2000, p. 13). In order to meet the postulates of harmony between nature and culture in balanced growth of social life, global society should be educated to find holistic solutions of ecosociocultural environment (social, ecological, economic) in the translation of "to be and to have" (Kampka, 1993 p. 83 and next), "shaping proper attitudes towards nature by education, information and promotion in the field of environmental protection (Law, 2004 art.2) starting with didactic and educational activity in kindergarten and primary school, educational aims should be realized in the program basis and standards of teacher educating (also in the field of ecological education).

Educating towards balanced growth, shaping ecologically aware personalities, natural environment carers, who live healthy styles of life (Wolski, 2009, p. 7) in harmony with nature is a challenge for school as the institution of direct education. Teachers, in order to realize the program in the scope of ecological education should understand mutual interrelations between components of living environment, directions of changes in social and natural environment as well as the role of a teacher - educator in the promotion of ecological and environmental knowledge, prevention of its deformation,

creation of positive attitudes towards the environment of life. As far as educational skills are concerned, they should master the ability of liberating criticism (deeds, not the personality), mature shaping of creative attitudes in the process of teaching-learning, encouraging pupils to work on their character in constructive exploratory experience.

Teacher-educator should not realize the "hidden program" (compare Kwieciński, 1992, p. 123-124), connected with symbolic violence, imposing the perspective of meanings in the analysis of particular social phenomena. He should present autonomous types of ethic roles (arbiter, translator, arranger, observer) (compare Kwieciński, 2007, p. 23) in the promotion of mature freedom and autonomy of a Person (*argumentum ad rem*) in the social and natural environment.

Intellectual fairness, moral attitude of teachers is realized in the didactic and educational practice thanks to the following competences: pragmatic, interpreting and communicating, technological, organizational and managerial competencies, co-operation, creating, IT and media and cognitive competences (compare Wiatrowski, 2007, p. 84-85). Therefore, it may be emphasized that in the process of ecological education, when emphasizing particular theses, teachers should aim at the gist of things, the objective truth instead of apparent reasoning. By a choice of arguments, a teacher not only reveals his or her intellectual attitudes, but also specifies his or her personal system of values and moral attitude towards the environment of life.

A discussion is a particularly precious teaching method, especially if it is well planned because of the problem and interests of participants. It is a very good method to realize ecological education, the aim of which is ecological awareness, development of sensitivity towards environmental problems, showing the dependence between the condition of the environment and the human activity. With this teaching method a teacher may shape the culture of interpersonal co-operation and show positive and negative aspects of people's interference with environment.

The value of discussion as the method of shaping the carers of Mother Earth is visible not only in the knowledge about social and natural environment, but also thanks to emotional and social maturing, in experiencing one's individuality (compare Marciszewski, 1994, p. 1), inspiring educational and teaching practice (Fronckiewicz, Kołodziejska, 2008, p. 12). It is about (as already mentioned in this article) avoiding sophisms (see: Schopenhauer, 1993, p. 12) and about remembering that every human being is a Person, has original personality and interprets reality differently ("when two people say the same, it does not always mean the same"). It is connected with personal and social experience, "emotional colors" of expressed content and the skill of verbalizing, understanding words and issues (substantial competence).

Educating social and natural environment carers is strictly connected with encouraging students towards the attitude of intellectual fairness, so that they do not use somebody else's knowledge (*argumentum ad ignorantiam*) for particular aims. Intellectual fairness (first of all) towards intrapersonal and interpersonal relation and towards the natural environment in the scope of: the skill to observe the immediate surrounding; seeing, describing and explaining connections between natural components of environment, and the person and his activity; organizing actions, which serve the improvement of the status of environment in the immediate surrounding and in one's life; noticing threats for today's civilization resulting from irrational use of natural resources and uneven level of life quality in various regions of the world; evaluation of the activity of ecological non-governmental organizations, their aims and forms of action as well as compliance with ecological state policy; undertaking rational actions in order to improve the environment in the local, regional, domestic and global scale; the skill of perception of the rules of cleanness and order in public places (Tuszyńska, 2008, p. 143).

The threat of natural catastrophes was (among others) described by Jacques Delors - in the Report for UNESCO, International Commission for Education for the 21st century (Delors and others, 1998, p. 11), and he emphasized the value of international co-operation in respect for human life, natural resources and the value of creative constant education shaped in four pillars: learning to explore; learning to act; learning to live together, learning to co-habit with others, learning to be present. It should be added that shaping knowledge, sensitivity and ecological skills is also the matter of universal skills (Goźlińska, 1997, p. 82), such as: social skill to work with a team, the skill to present one's own attitude and account for somebody else's point of view, the skill to use the modern IT technology and foreign languages, the skill of using various sources of information, independent solving of problems, taking decisions and dealing with creative originality in (e.g.) efficient organizing, ordering, completing and evaluating one's own work.

When analyzing the above considerations, it should be emphasized one more time that ecological awareness in the 21st century must be the integral part of all developmental processes, which means that it may not be put separately, but as a part of all aspects of problems concerning biosphere, psychosphere, sociosphere, technosphere (Bonenberg, 2004, p. 24-25). Therefore, the task for educators is to bring up the "active person, an innovative and responsible man of action" (Kozielecki, 1998, p. 106), who thinks respectfully, namely: he or she believes that human life is a value in itself, that love is the way of people's existence, creativity is the integral part of human nature, joy is a part of daily life, brotherhood of all beings is the basis of epistemological paradigm (Skolimowski, 1993, p. 147).

According to Wilhelm Dilthey - representative of classical philosophy - the nature is the basis of humanistic sciences. It is not only the theater of all times, but "the physical world brings building material to the whole field, in which the spirit put its values and its nature" (Dilthey, 2004, p. 71). Ecological awareness is to become the holistic awareness with a spiritual dimension, it should aim at reconciliation with nature and internal harmony to care about order in the social and natural environment, to merge the practical aspects with the ethical ones (Skolimowski, 1991, p. 21), in the evolutionary process of, as Pierre Teilhard de Chardin put it – creative growth, maturing towards moral sensitivity, shaping the values of truth, kindness and beauty in the environment of living.

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