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# Communication et rumeur dans la Rome antique

## Communication and rumor in ancient Rome

### Komunikacja i plotka w starożytnym Rzymie

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**Abstract:** Les Romains, hommes de la parole, aimaient communiquer. Ils sont à la tête d'un empire bilingue. En Occident, le latin s'est imposé en Italie puis dans les provinces, quoique les langues locales aient longtemps persisté. En Orient, ils ont par pragmatisme adopté la langue la plus diffusée, le grec. L'oral prime dans de nombreux aspects de la vie publique et privée. Ceci favorise la circulation de rumeurs, qui peuvent même avoir une influence sur la vie politique. Cependant l'écrit, sous la forme notamment des inscriptions, est très important dans le paysage urbain. La communication dans l'Empire est facilitée par la création sous Auguste d'un service de poste publique, le *cursus publicus*.

**Mots-clés :** communication, bilinguisme, oral, écrit, rumeur.

**Abstract :** Romans, people of the word, highly valued communicating with each other. They ruled a bilingual empire. Although local languages survived for a long time - Latin was dominant in the West — in Italy, and later also in the provinces. In the East on the other hand, due to practical reasons, Greek was adopted as the most common language. The spoken language had a leading role in many areas of both public and private life. It promoted the spread of novelties that could have had an impact on political life. In the urban areas, however, it was the written language, in the form of inscriptions, that was the most important one. During the reign of Augustus communicating with other people and sending messages were facilitated in the Roman Empire owing to the creation of the public post service, *cursus publicus*.

**Keywords :** bilingualism, communication, gossip, spoken language, word-of-mouth, writing.

**Abstrakt:** Rzymianie, ludzie słowa, cenili porozumiewanie się między sobą. Panowali nad dwujęzycznym imperium. Na Zachodzie, w Italii i w okresie późniejszym również na prowincjach – mimo iż długo utrzymywały się języki lokalne – dominowała łacina. Na Wschodzie zaś, z powodów praktycznych przyjęli jako obowiązujący język najbardziej powszechny – grekę. W wielu dziedzinach życia publicznego i prywatnego wiódł prym język mówiony. Sprzyjało to przenoszeniu nowinek, które mogły wpływać na życie polityczne. W przestrzeni miejskiej to jednak język pisany, w formie inskrypcji, był językiem najważniejszym. Za panowania Augusta komunikowanie, porozumiewanie się ludzi i przenoszenie wiadomości zostało ułatwione w Imperium Rzymskim dzięki utworzeniu służby poczty publicznej, *cursus publicus*.

**Słowa kluczowe:** dwujęzyczność, język mówiony, komunikacja, pismo, plotka.

## Introduction

Les médiévaux reconnaissent la force et le talent des Anciens (« nous sommes comme des nains juchés sur les épaules de géants » disait Bernard de Chartres), les modernes croient souvent avoir tout inventé. Or il n'en est rien. Si le concept de communication date certes de notre époque, la chose elle-même existe depuis toujours. La communication prend dans la Rome antique des formes multiples (Achard,

2006), basées sur la définition implicite de l'homme comme créature douée de la faculté de vivre en société et donc de communiquer avec ses congénères.

La communication est orale ou écrite. Vu le coût des supports de l'écriture et le faible taux d'alphabétisation (on y reviendra), l'oralité prend une place très importante.

## 1. Les langues de communication

Mais en quelle langue communiquait-on ? Les premiers témoignages écrits du latin ne sont pas anciens : seules quelques inscriptions (dont celle de la fameuse fibule de Préneste) sont antérieures au IV<sup>e</sup> siècle avant notre ère. Au moment où se constitue la communauté du Latium dont la langue est le latin, tout près au nord-ouest de Rome se parle l'étrusque (qui n'est pas une langue italique), au nord l'ombrien, à l'est et au sud-est l'osque, etc. L'ombrien est attesté par un texte du rituel d'une confrérie d'Iguvium (Gubbio) connu sous le nom de Tables eugubines, l'osque l'est par des inscriptions plus nombreuses et a servi de langue d'expression originelle à une forme théâtrale, l'atellane. Il est malaisé de déterminer à quelle époque les différentes langues en usage dans l'Italie se sont effacées devant le latin, ou, pour formuler les choses autrement, quand le latin s'est imposé. Sans doute assez tardivement (fin du I<sup>er</sup> siècle), et bien après la guerre sociale (89 avant notre ère) et l'établissement de la domination politique romaine en Italie (Dangel, 1995). Quant au grec, fortement implanté par le fait de la colonisation sur les régions côtières de l'Italie méridionale et en Sicile, il n'a peut-être jamais disparu. Dans le *Satiricon* de Pétrone, dont on suppose qu'il se déroule dans la région de Naples, l'influence du grec sur la langue des affranchis est sensible.

Avec la conquête du bassin méditerranéen, Rome s'est trouvée confrontée à une situation nouvelle. Comme le souligne Bruno Rochette (Rochette, s.d.), « Les Romains ont fait preuve, en matière d'emploi des langues, d'une grande capacité d'adaptation. Ils n'ont jamais imposé le latin par la force comme langue officielle aux régions qu'ils avaient conquises. Les cités du monde grec, une fois vaincues, ont continué d'utiliser le grec comme par le passé. Partout où les Romains sont présents, leur langue s'ajoute à celle(s) en usage dans ces contrées, mais elle ne s'y substitue pas. Ils attendent plutôt que l'initiative vienne des peuples conquis. Contrairement à Alexandre le Grand, qui avait voulu étendre le grec comme langue administrative de tout son empire (Plutarque, *Alex.*, 47.6), les Romains ne considèrent pas que l'extension de leur langue est liée à leurs conquêtes. Cette situation donne naissance à un paysage linguistique assez nuancé ».

Le latin est en principe la langue de l'administration, et sous la République les ambassadeurs étrangers devaient devant le Sénat s'exprimer en latin ou avoir recours à des interprètes (voir Valère-Maxime 2, 2, 2, qui ne parle que des Grecs mais il s'agissait certainement d'une mesure générale ; Cicéron, *De la divination* 2, 64, 131). Quant aux hommes politiques et généraux qui ont affaire aux Grecs, ils leur parlent en latin puis font traduire en grec. Ainsi Paul-Émile, après la défaite définitive de la Macédoine en 167 avant notre ère, annonça aux Grecs en latin le nouvel ordre qui devait s'instaurer, puis laissa à un interprète le soin de traduire la proclamation en grec (Tite-Live 45, 29, 3). Mais certains magistrats préférèrent utiliser le grec pour établir un contact direct avec la population. C'est ce que fit Flamininus en 196 avant notre ère lorsqu'il proclama la liberté de la Grèce aux jeux isthmiques (Plutarque, *Vies des hommes illustres*, « Flamininus » 10-12).

Dans la partie occidentale de l'Empire, le latin s'est généralisé, même si les langues locales ont persisté assez longtemps. Et du fait de sa position de langue de prestige, il a entravé les variantes locales autonomes. Dans la *Pars Orientis* les Romains, pragmatiques, avaient le souci d'établir une communication effective avec les populations soumises et d'être compris du plus grand nombre. Ils ont mis sur pied un système de communication fondé sur la langue la plus diffusée dans le bassin méditerranéen, c'est-à-dire le grec. Ainsi s'est établi un Empire bilingue. Cependant on relève parfois des traces d'ambivalence de la part des Romains, qui hésitent entre la volonté d'affirmer la supériorité romaine en utilisant le latin et un comportement pragmatique consistant à employer la langue commune à tous les habitants de la *Pars Orientis*, le grec (Marrou, 1848 ; Adams, 2003 ; Corbier, 2008).

## 2. L'oralité

Revenons à l'oralité. Certes parler de l'oralité en latin quand on ne dispose plus que de textes écrits semble à première vue contradictoire. Mais il n'y a pas moyen de faire autrement. On s'accorde en tout cas à reconnaître l'importance de la notion

d'oralité pour un peuple où la carrière politique et militaire imposait la maîtrise de la parole publique et où, logiquement, la formation des jeunes gens culminait avec l'apprentissage de l'éloquence. Cette utilisation de la parole n'est pas sans soulever quelques interrogations concrètes : si dans les théâtres les ingénieurs soignaient l'acoustique (avec succès comme on peut le constater dans les théâtres grecs et romains conservés), comment un orateur parlant sur le forum arrivait-il à se faire entendre de tous ses auditeurs, et comment un général haranguant ses soldats pouvait-il être entendu au-delà des premiers rangs des troupes ?

À partir du III<sup>e</sup> siècle avant notre ère, l'écriture s'est affirmée progressivement dans les différents champs du savoir. Mais les Romains ont continué à réserver à la parole parlée un espace significatif, et surtout autonome, à côté de celui occupé par la parole écrite. Des aspects fondamentaux de la culture accordent un rôle central à l'oral.

C'est le cas par exemple de l'enseignement philosophique qui, dans la tradition socratique et cynique, se faisait sous la forme du dialogue, à travers notamment la technique de la dialectique qui permet l'examen critique de la pensée. Entendu comme œuvre littéraire, le dialogue est passé à Rome (Dubel et Gotteland, 2015). Si le dialogue à la romaine s'écarte du dialogue à la grecque (voir Cicéron, *De l'orateur* 2, 18), c'est par emprunt à cette tradition que Cicéron l'adopte pour certains de ses traités philosophiques et rhétoriques (avec des formules différentes : il peut intervenir directement et tenir le rôle principal comme dans les *Tusculanes*, la parole peut être partagée entre plusieurs personnages qui font de longs exposés, ainsi dans les *Académiques* et *De l'orateur*, ou encore il peut céder la place à des hommes du passé, en prétendant que l'entretien lui a été rapporté, c'est le cas dans la *République* et *De l'amitié*) et que Sénèque qualifie ses courts traités philosophiques de *Dialogues*, ce qu'ils ne sont pas.

L'importance culturelle de l'oralité se voit aussi par le rôle que la *uiua uox* joue à Rome dans la création, la diffusion et la réception d'une œuvre littéraire (Blänsdorf, 1996 ; Valette-Cagnac, 1997). Dans la création d'abord, dans la mesure où l'habitude est de dicter son texte à un secrétaire (Petitmengin

et Flusin, 1984 ; voir Horace, *Satires* 1, 4, 9-10 ; *Épîtres* 2, 1, 109-110), au point que le verbe *dictare* finit par signifier « composer ». Dans la diffusion ensuite, puisqu'à peu près tous les textes pouvaient donner lieu à des lectures publiques (*recitatio* ; Salles, 1992), depuis que cette pratique a été introduite ou mise à la mode par Asinius Pollion : l'auteur lit son propre texte ou recourt au service d'un lecteur (voir Pline le Jeune, *Lettres* 9, 34). Par ailleurs, quand on veut prendre connaissance d'une œuvre, on la lit soi-même à voix haute : ainsi l'esclave Davus écoute son maître Horace lire (*Satires* 2, 7, 1). La lecture muette ou silencieuse ne s'est généralisée à Rome qu'au cours du IV<sup>e</sup> siècle, si l'on en croit un texte célèbre de saint Augustin, *Confessions* 6, 3, 3. Fréquemment aussi, et notamment en société, on se fait faire la lecture par un esclave lecteur (voir par exemple Cicéron, *De l'orateur* 2, 223 ; Pline le Jeune, *Lettres* 3, 5, 11-12 ; Suétone, *Vies des douze Césars*, « Auguste » 78, 4). Les grands personnages ont un esclave spécialisé dans la lecture, ainsi un nommé Encolpius pour Pline le Jeune (*Lettres* 8, 1).

### 3. Omniprésence de l'écrit dans la ville romaine

La ville romaine présente une originalité : l'écriture lui donne forme, partout de l'écrit y est offert au regard du passant (dédicaces d'édifices publics, inscriptions honorifiques accompagnant une statue, etc.). Ce phénomène essentiellement urbain se prolonge cependant hors des villes par les inscriptions sur les portes des villes, sur les tombeaux le long des routes et sur les milliaires (bornes). On a pu parler d'une culture épigraphique (Corbier, 2006 ; Valette-Cagnac, 1997).

Les textes épigraphiques urbains représentent une part importante des documents écrits qui nous sont parvenus. Ces textes sont de nature très variable. Il peut s'agir de textes législatifs, puisque la loi romaine est une loi écrite, et que l'affichage des lois constitue depuis la loi des XII Tables une garantie pour le citoyen. Le phénomène continue sous l'Empire : le pouvoir impérial publie sur des supports durables les mesures les plus importantes ou

les écrits impériaux (*Res Gestae* d'Auguste, discours de Lyon de l'empereur Claude sur l'entrée des Gaulois au Sénat, par exemple).

Il existe parallèlement une forme d'écriture non-officielle, les graffitis. Certains véhiculent des messages anodins (prix pratiqués dans une boutique, trace d'une relation sexuelle, message électoral), d'autres ont un contenu politique. On est alors tenté de voir là l'expression d'une opinion publique (autrement contrainte par la censure), même si l'identité des scripteurs (hommes du peuple ou membres de l'élite ?) reste indéterminée. Suétone donne de bons exemples de cette forme d'opposition. Par exemple, sous la dictature de César, des gens écrivirent au bas de la statue de Lucius Brutus (le Brutus qui libéra Rome des rois) : « Ah : si tu étais vivant ! », et sur la statue de César lui-même : « Brutus, pour avoir chassé les rois, a, le premier, été fait consul ; / cet homme, pour avoir chassé les consuls, a finalement été fait roi » (*Vies des douze Césars*, « César » 80).

Il serait illusoire de penser que le recours systématique à l'affichage de l'écrit, dont la pratique est diffusée dans tout l'Empire, témoigne d'une alphabétisation générale du monde romain. Hors des classes cultivées, il est impossible de mesurer le degré d'alphabétisation des populations. De nombreux témoignages laissent penser que des compétences limitées en matière de lecture et d'écriture permettaient de lire de courtes inscriptions en majuscules ou les gros titres des plus longues. Cette semi-alphabétisation devait être assez répandue. Un personnage du *Satiricon* de Pétrone, Hermeros, déclare ainsi ne pas avoir appris la géométrie, la critique des textes et autres sornettes, mais pouvoir lire les inscriptions (*lapidarias litteras scio*, 58, 7).

#### 4. La diffusion et la circulation de l'information

On connaît mal la diffusion des décisions aux débuts de la République, mais il semble bien que l'affichage des décisions des comices et du Sénat ait eu lieu assez tôt sur des tableaux blanchis, sans que cela soit systématique. César introduisit en 59 av. J.-C. lors de son premier consulat une innovation capitale

: la diffusion d'un compte-rendu officiel des débats du Sénat et des assemblées du peuple (*acta senatus et populi romani*). Mais son héritier Auguste restreignit considérablement la portée de cette mesure (Suétone, *Vies des douze Césars*, « Auguste » 36).

Pour la diffusion de l'information au-delà de Rome, il y a bien sûr une différence entre ce qui relève de l'information publique, qui comprend aussi bien la diffusion des décisions et ordres du pouvoir que la récolte des informations utiles à la gestion de l'État, et les nouvelles privées que les individus transmettent à leurs proches ou à leurs relations d'affaires, mais au départ les moyens dont ils disposent sont les mêmes. Jusqu'à la fin de la République, il n'existe aucun service officiel de courrier au service des magistrats. Ce sont généralement des particuliers de confiance, avec l'aide de leurs esclaves ou affranchis employés comme *tabellarii* ou *cursores*, ou encore des marchands appelés à voyager entre Rome et des régions parfois éloignées, qui se chargent des échanges de lettres et de dépêches officielles entre le Sénat romain et les provinces. La communication se fait aussi par l'intervention d'ambassadeurs. Ceux qui commandent des troupes peuvent utiliser des soldats envoyés en mission. Le recours à des animaux dressés à cet usage reste exceptionnel : selon Pline l'Ancien (10, 53, 110), Decimus Brutus, assiégé par Antoine dans Modène en 43 av. J.-C. envoie des messages attachés aux pattes des pigeons (Sartre, s.d.).

Par prudence on pouvait utiliser un chiffrement pour la correspondance importante (Collard, 2004) : ainsi faisait César (Suétone, *Vies des douze Césars*, « César » 56). Sa méthode de cryptage consistait à décaler les lettres de l'alphabet de trois rangs, A devenant D, etc. Il est possible qu'il ait utilisé parfois des techniques plus complexes (cf. Aulu-Gelle 17, 9, 1-5). Cicéron dans sa correspondance à Atticus utilise largement la cryptographie, la crainte que ses lettres ne soient interceptées l'amène à coder les patronymes. Il substitue notamment les noms propres de Pompée, de Clodia, de son frère Clodius, par des sobriquets. Pompée est désigné par quatre surnoms, Epicrates, Sampsiceramus, Hierosolymarius et Arabarches lorsque les propos de Cicéron se font plus tranchants. Clodia apparaît derrière l'épithète homérique d'Héra Boôpis, « aux yeux de vache »,

c'est-à-dire « aux grands yeux », peut-être par allusion aux mœurs incestueuses qu'on lui prêtait : elle fait comme Héra, à la fois la sœur et la femme de Zeus. Clodius enfin est qualifié de *sacerdos Bonae Deae*, « prêtre de la Bonne Déesse », par référence à sa participation clandestine aux célébrations des mystères de la Bonne Déesse, une cérémonie rigoureusement réservée aux femmes.

La situation change complètement avec Auguste. Suétone (*Vies des douze Césars*, « Auguste » 49) nous apprend qu'en vue d'être informé rapidement de ce qui se passe dans les provinces, Auguste crée un système de relais sur les routes, à la fois pour faciliter les déplacements et les rendre plus rapides, mais aussi pour que ce soit les mêmes messagers qui apportent les dépêches jusqu'à leurs destinataires, de sorte que l'on puisse si nécessaire leur poser des questions et leur demander des compléments d'information. Il a donc été le premier à esquisser un service de transport officiel (nommé d'abord *uehiculatio*), que ses successeurs organiseront davantage et qui deviendra le *cursus publicus*, vaste réseau de relais permettant la circulation des messagers officiels mais aussi des agents de l'État en mission. Ce service de transport est fondé sur trois éléments : l'emploi de véhicules, la présence de relais et le système des réquisitions (de véhicules et d'attelages) pour faire fonctionner le tout. Il suppose évidemment l'existence de routes en bon état. Il fallait un sauf-conduit (*diploma*), délivré avec parcimonie, pour pouvoir utiliser le *cursus publicus*, qui n'était accessible aux particuliers qu'à titre exceptionnel (Pflaum, 1940 ; Kolb, 2000 ; Crogiez-Pétrequin et Nelis-Clément, 2009).

Globalement, il y a une grande diversité dans la rapidité des déplacements et l'acheminement des informations. Différents facteurs interviennent (degré d'urgence, saison, transport terrestre et/ou maritime, éloignement, etc.). Les chiffres donnés par les sources antiques pour la durée d'un déplacement (par exemple Plin l'Ancien 19, 1, 3-4 ; Achard, 2006, p. 134-136 ; André et Baslez, 1993) et l'arrivée d'une nouvelle sont donc extrêmement variables.

## 5. Nouvelles, rumeur, lieux d'échange

La place de l'écrit n'a jamais fait disparaître la diffusion orale de l'information. Des bruits circulent, on vient aux nouvelles, des rumeurs se créent, vraies ou fausses. Les banquets, les thermes, le forum, sont des lieux privilégiés de rencontre et d'échange. Tite-Live fait des descriptions spectaculaires de l'arrivée des nouvelles importantes, ainsi le délire de joie qui s'empare de Rome à l'annonce de la victoire du Métaure sur Hasdrubal en 207 pendant la deuxième guerre punique (44, 50-51).

La lecture de Tacite et de Suétone montre à quel point les rumeurs jouent un rôle important dans certains épisodes historiques (Duchêne, 2020). Par exemple Tacite (*Annales* 15, 39) nous dit que les mesures prises par Néron pour soulager le sort du peuple lors de l'incendie de Rome ne lui valurent aucune popularité, « car s'était répandue une rumeur selon laquelle, au moment même où brûlait la Ville, il s'était rendu sur sa scène personnelle et avait chanté la destruction de Troie ». Suétone ne parle pas de rumeur, il affirme la chose comme une certitude et c'est sa version qu'on trouve le plus souvent chez les historiens modernes. Ce sont de faux bruits volontairement répandus qui, alors que Galba s'était retranché dans le Palatium, l'en font sortir, ce qui permet de l'assassiner (Suétone, *Vies des douze Césars*, « Galba » 19). Tacite a quelques réflexions théoriques sur la rumeur, grossie par la crédulité des oisifs (*Annales* 14, 58, 3).

En temps de paix civile, la soif de nouvelles n'est pas moindre. Martial nous a laissé un joli portrait de nouvelliste en 9, 35 (on pensera au personnage d'Arrias dans les *Caractères* de La Bruyère) :

« Tu as un sûr moyen de te faire inviter à souper, Philomusus, c'est d'inventer force nouvelles et de les débiter comme vraies. Tu sais ce qu'a décidé, dans son conseil, le roi des Parthes, Pacorus ; tu sais le compte de l'armée du Rhin et de celle de la Sarmatie ; tu es au fait des ordres qu'a transmis par écrit le chef des Daces ; le laurier de la victoire n'est pas encore aux mains du général, que déjà tu l'as vu ; le ciel d'Égypte ne verse pas une fois ses eaux sur les noirs peuples de Syène, que tu n'en sois informé ; le nombre des vaisseaux sortis

des ports de la Libye ne t'est jamais inconnu ; tu sais d'avance quelle tête César couronnera de l'olivier, et à quel vainqueur le père des dieux destine la guirlande triomphale. Épargne-toi ces inventions, Philomusus : tu souperas aujourd'hui chez moi, à condition que tu ne me contes pas de nouvelles. » (trad. V. Verger, N.-A. Dubois et J. Mangeart, 1834-1835).

L'épigramme est une variation sur le thème de l'invitation à dîner. Mais ici le parasite est un colporteur de nouvelles.

## 6. L'exemple de Martial

La rumeur intervient beaucoup aussi sur les questions de vie privée. C'est le ragot, le bruit qui court, généralement malveillant. Il concerne souvent les pratiques sexuelles et permet de formuler des accusations scandaleuses peu vérifiables (Greenwood, 1998). Ainsi dans l'épigramme 2, 82 de Martial :

« Pourquoi, Ponticus, fais-tu mettre en croix ton esclave après lui avoir coupé la langue ?  
Ne sais-tu pas que tout le monde raconte ce qu'il ne peut plus dire ? »

La chaîne rumorale est ici claire : le maître (Ponticus), l'esclave, le peuple : une fois l'information relayée par la rumeur, le mal est fait, et il ne sert plus à rien de réduire au silence son premier vecteur.

L'épigramme 7, 62 fonctionne différemment :

« C'est la porte ouverte que tu enfiles des garçons déjà grands, Amillus,  
et tu désires être surpris en pleine action,  
pour faire taire les affranchis et les esclaves hérités de ton père  
et le client malveillant au bavardage sournois.  
Celui qui prend à témoin qu'il n'est pas passif, Amillus,  
fait souvent la chose sans témoin. »

Amillus commet ses impudicités (en l'occurrence la sodomie) les portes ouvertes, ce qui est un paradoxe que le poète explique : il agit ainsi parce qu'il cherche à faire taire la rumeur, diffusée par ses esclaves, ses affranchis et ses clients, qu'il est un homosexuel passif (ce qui est déshonorant pour un Romain libre). Il essaie donc de faire circuler une rumeur pour en empêcher une autre.

La crainte des indiscretions faisait apprécier les esclaves sourds. Voici l'épigramme 11, 38 :

« Récemment, Aulus, un muletier a été vendu vingt mille sesterces.  
Tu t'étonnes d'un prix si élevé ? Il était sourd. »  
Donnons enfin une épigramme où la rumeur ne concerne pas le domaine sexuel (3, 80) :  
« On raconte que Cinna écrit des petits vers contre moi.  
Il n'écrit pas, celui dont les poésies ne sont lues de personne. »

La médisance et les ragots pouvaient être pesants. Pline le Jeune (*Lettres* 1, 9) se réjouit d'être dans sa villa des Laurentes et explique : « Je n'entends rien, je ne dis rien que je puisse regretter d'avoir dit ou entendu ; personne ne décrie devant moi qui que ce soit par des propos malveillants, et de mon côté je ne critique personne, si ce n'est moi-même quand je n'écris pas à mon goût ; aucun espoir, aucune crainte ne me trouble, aucune rumeur ne m'inquiète. »

## 7. Le banquet, lieu d'échange

Le banquet à Rome est certes un festin de mets, mais il l'est aussi de mots. Les discussions, savantes ou non, accompagnent les plats et les rendent plus savoureux. Les relations se nouent par le partage de la nourriture et de la parole. Naturellement il existe des banquets de nature très différente : ce peut être une sorte de spectacle offert par un riche personnage pour se faire valoir ; à l'opposé, il peut s'agir d'un repas frugal entre ami cultivés. Le banquet a en principe ses règles (on parle alors de *cena recta*) concernant

l'heure de commencement et de fin, le nombre et la place des convives, le nombre et l'ordre des plats, etc., mais elles ne s'appliquent pas à tous les types de banquets (Vössing, 2012). Il arrive notamment que le repas soit un repas inégal (*cena impar*), où le maître fait servir une nourriture et un vin différents à ses amis intimes et aux autres convives (voir Pline le Jeune, *Lettres* 2, 6).

Horace (*Épîtres* 1, 5), Martial (voir plus bas) et Pline le Jeune (*Lettres* 1, 15 ; 3, 12 ; 9, 17) ont défini le repas idéal : c'est un repas frugal où l'on parle librement. Cependant il y a des nuances entre eux : Horace insiste sur la présence de vin, Pline aime qu'on fasse venir un lecteur, un comédien, un ou une musicienne. S'il peut être agréable d'entendre lire, l'hôte ne doit pas faire comme le Ligurinus de Martial (3, 44, 45 et 50), qui n'invite à dîner que pour procurer à ses vers des auditeurs.

Martial définit le repas idéal dans une invitation à son ami Toranius (5, 78). La nourriture sera modeste, et pour le vin, Toranius le rendra bon en le buvant. En revanche, il n'aura pas à prononcer ou entendre des discours mensongers, ni ne devra se forger une contenance ; le maître de maison ne donnera pas lecture d'un gros volume ; aucune danseuse de Gadès ne se livrera à des mouvements lascifs. Une petite flûte créera un fond musical, et deux jeunes filles feront la compagnie. Martial a repris une autre fois le thème de l'invitation à dîner. En 10, 48, il convie six amis : là aussi la nourriture sera simple, du vin de Nomentum l'accompagnera ; surtout la conversation

sera libre, et cela sans qu'on ait le lendemain à regretter ses paroles de la veille – allusion aux accusations qu'entraînaient sous les empereurs tyranniques les propos imprudents lâchés dans l'ivresse.

Les *Saturnales* de Macrobe, qui ressortissent au genre littéraire du banquet, sont une forme extrême de banquet lettré, puisque, comme chez Platon, Xénophon, Plutarque ou Athénée, il n'y est presque plus question de nourriture et de boisson, mais seulement des propos tenus (Romeri, 2002).

## Conclusion

La communication, en règle générale, s'effectue sur plusieurs registres, indépendants ou concomitants : le langage, le paralangage (intonations, niveau de la voix, etc.) et les gestes ou mouvements utilisés comme signifiants. Nous nous sommes limité ici au premier aspect. Les Romains avaient un goût incontestable pour la parole, l'échange, la communication. Ce qui est sans doute le plus remarquable dans la société romaine, c'est à la fois l'importance de l'oralité et, parallèlement, l'incroyable quantité de textes gravés sur pierre ou sur bronze. La langue est la meilleure et la pire des choses, on le sait depuis Ésope, et l'oralité avait pour corollaires le bavardage et la circulation de rumeurs. Quant à l'écrit, il n'a cessé de se développer, et les Romains ont réussi par la maîtrise des voies terrestres et maritimes à mettre en contact toutes les parties d'un Empire immense.

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## Philip Clayton's „Open Panentheism”: Reconstruction and Criticism

„Otwarty panenteizm” Philipa Claytona: rekonstrukcja i krytyka<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** Philip Clayton, an American theologian and philosopher, devotes a significant part of his research work to seeking bridges between theology and the natural sciences. The position he takes is the Christian version of panentheism. Within it, the world is a part of God, but God is more than the world; the world is embodied in the divine, even though God goes beyond the world. All beings exist only through participation in divinity. The version of panentheism advocated by Clayton further suggests that God is connected with the world in a sense analogous to the relationship of our minds to our bodies. Many contemporary authors critically assess panentheism, including the version proposed by Clayton, presenting both theological and philosophical arguments against this position. In light of these allegations, the position of panentheism is not based on the Bible, does not fit into the Christian doctrine, and goes beyond the traditional standards of Christian thinking. The arguments and explanations presented by traditional theism, open to science, seem to be more accurate, logical and consistent with the Christian vision of God's relationship with the world.

**Keywords:** God, panentheism, theism, emergence

**Abstrakt:** Philip Clayton, amerykański teolog i filozof, znaczącą część swojej pracy badawczej poświęca poszukiwaniu pomostów pomiędzy teologią a naukami przyrodniczymi. Stanowisko, które przyjmuje, to chrześcijańska wersja panenteizmu. W jego ramach świat jest częścią Boga, ale Bóg jest czymś więcej niż świat, świat zawiera się w tym, co boskie, choć Bóg wykracza poza świat. Wszystkie byty istnieją jedynie poprzez uczestnictwo w boskości. Wersja panenteizmu, za którą opowiada się Clayton, sugeruje dodatkowo, że Bóg związany jest ze światem w sensie analogicznym do relacji naszych umysłów do naszych ciał. Wielu współczesnych autorów krytycznie ocenia panenteizm, w tym w wersji proponowanej przez Claytona, przedstawiając zarówno teologiczne, jak i filozoficzne argumenty przeciwko temu stanowisku. W świetle tych zarzutów stanowisko panenteizmu nie ma oparcia w Biblii, nie mieści się w doktrynie chrześcijańskiej, wykracza też poza tradycyjne standardy chrześcijańskiego myślenia. Argumenty i wyjaśnienia, które przedstawia otwarty na nauki tradycyjny teizm, wydają się bardziej trafne, logiczne i spójne z chrześcijańską wizją relacji Boga do świata.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Bóg, panenteizm, teizm, emergencja

### Introduction

For centuries, people have expressed their views about God and His relationship to the world. One of them is panentheism (from the Greek *pan en theos*, i.e. all in God), according to which the visible reality is a constituent of God, but at the same time, God goes beyond this reality. According to the pantheistic doctrine, God is both in the world and beyond, everything is in God and God is in everything, but God is more than the world. The key word in the context of the considered position is

the word “in”, understood in the first place in the metaphysical sense.

Panentheism is situated between traditional theism (God is a personal, eternal being, qualitatively different from the beings who are His creations and maintaining distinctiveness and independence in relation to them, although still present in the world) and pantheism, having its roots in the philosophy of Baruch Spinoza and in the Eastern traditions (God cannot be distinguished from the

<sup>1</sup> Artykuł w języku polskim: <https://www.stowarzyszeniefidesetratio.pl/fer/2022-2Twardo.pdf>

world, God = world). In literature, a distinction is made between the Christian and non-Christian versions of panentheism. The difference between these versions is that Christians emphasize the Holy Trinity and the incarnation of Jesus Christ as the core of God's salvific presence in the world, while non-Christians present a more general approach (Cooper, 2006, p. 321).

The concept of panentheism is not an invention of the Christian West. Its ideas can be found in Eastern religious traditions, such as Hinduism, Confucianism, Jainism or Buddhism. Some even search for a version of panentheism that could go beyond specific religious traditions, and thus be more open to dialogue between different environments and favour multiculturalism, currently so fashionable. However, the most in-depth and lively discussions on panentheism are conducted in the environment of Christian theology and philosophy.

Until the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Western thinkers emphasized the almost complete transcendence of God to avoid an open conflict with the then-dominant mechanistic philosophy (referring to the mechanics of Newton) (Clayton, 2017, p. 1045). Although the term itself was coined by the German philosopher Karl Christian Friedrich Krause in 1829 (in the work *Vorlesungen über die Grundwahrheiten der Wissenschaft*), panentheism as a philosophical view explicitly appeared twenty years earlier, in 1809, in Friedrich Schelling's work on freedom: *Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der Menschlichen Freiheit und die damit zusammenhängenden Gegenstände* (Biernacki, 2014, p. 3; Bracken, 2014, p. 1). The philosopher Charles Hartshorne (1897-2000) largely contributed to the revival of panentheistic thought in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Clayton, 2010, p. 184). Numerous different versions of panentheism have been developed, containing substantial suggestions (from the most conservative to the most liberal ones) for the reconciliation of theological theses with scientific knowledge.

Particularly interesting contemporary discussions on panentheism take place among theologians and philosophers open to the natural sciences. One of the best-known participants of this debate is the American theologian and philosopher Philip Clayton

(1956–). This esteemed author of numerous books and scientific articles in the field of the relationship between science and religion forges the essential foundations of his version of panentheism using various historical and contemporary sources. Among the former, the philosophy of George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel is of great importance to Clayton, and when it comes to contemporary inspirations, the American theologian and philosopher uses, among others, the theological achievements of Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jürgen Moltmann and Arthur Peacocke.

Hegel in his work *Wissenschaft der Logik* states that "infinity in itself contains finiteness" (Hegel, 2011, p. 197). Elsewhere, he writes: "So, infinity is not found as something ready over finiteness, so that finiteness would still exist and last beyond or below infinity" (Hegel, 2011, p. 171). Infinity must include finiteness as, otherwise, something would stand outside it and it would not be de facto infinite, as - by definition - nothing can be added to it (Kowalczyk, 1991, p. 136). From Pannenberg – his academic teacher – Clayton, as he confesses, learned the basics of theology. He also used his instructions when writing *God and Contemporary Science* (Clayton, 1997, p. xii). The book by this theologian, which Clayton uses in his defence of panentheism, is entitled *Theology for a Scientific Age*. In support of his concept of the relationship between God and the world, Clayton also refers to the reflections on the relationship between God and space contained in Jürgen Moltmann's book *Gott in der Schöpfung. Ökologische Schöpfungslehre*. According to Moltmann, the created world exists in the "space of God", specially convened for this purpose during the creative act. The German theologian summarizes his concept in the following way: "The world does not exist in itself. It exists in the granted world space - the presence of God. [...] The world space corresponds to the Divine world presence that initiates this space, limits and permeates" (Moltmann, 1995, p. 279). Finally, Clayton repeatedly refers to Arthur Peacocke's views, especially in his work *Theology for a Scientific Age*, in which he defends God's panentheistic relationship with the world.

It is worth mentioning at the very beginning that Clayton, in his analyses of the relationship between God and the world, uses the theory of emergencies,

which draws inspiration from philosophy, natural sciences and neuroscience. According to the idea of emergence, the whole emerges from its components, but it is not a simple sum of its parts (the whole has its ontological status, separate from the parts' status). Matter tends to self-organise – due to its inherent properties, it forms into increasingly complex systems (Clayton, 2001, p. 208-209). As their complexity increases, the systems begin to exhibit new features which were not present at earlier stages.

This article attempts to reconstruct Philip Clayton's views on God's relationship with the world. To accomplish this task, using selected source materials, it is helpful to outline the broader context of the relationship between theology and natural sciences according to the American theologian and philosopher. The framework of this study was devoted to the version of panentheism preferred by the discussed author. The final part attempts to respond to this proposal and sketch an alternative concept.

So far, in the Polish scientific community, issues related to panentheism have been relatively rarely addressed, especially from the philosophical perspective. Clayton's philosophical and theological achievements did not reverberate our native philosophical and theological environment either. A valuable exception is Tomasz Maziarka's book from 2020, presenting the concept of the emergence of an American thinker discussed in the context of the human mind. This study is a modest attempt to reflect on another substantial issue, strongly embedded in the rich legacy of the American thinker, the relationship between God and the world.

## **1. Clayton's understanding of the relationship between theology and the natural sciences**

For centuries, there has been a belief in public space that theology and natural sciences remain in conflict. Many scientists opt for extreme naturalism, i.e. the view that the universe and material objects contained in it are everything that exists, and the knowledge about these objects comes only from scientific research (Clayton, 2012, p. 2-3; Clayton, 2001,

p. 208). The need, or even the possibility, of divine interventions in the world, is questioned. Related terms are materialism and physicalism. According to the former one, everything that exists consists of matter and energy and the laws governing them, while the latter assumes the reducibility of everything that exists to elementary particles and forms of energy, as well as the laws governing them. For Clayton, the fundamental issue is how much one can approach the postulates of naturalism, materialism and physicalism, yet remain in harmony with faith in God and Christian theology (Clayton, 2006c, p. 547).

On the other extreme of his views, Clayton places traditional theism, which assumes the existence of God as the creative source of everything that exists, the ultimate principle that gives rise to the world and that goes beyond the world (Clayton, 2012, p. 2-3; Clayton, 2001, p. 208; Clayton, 2006d, p. 630-631). God is described here as a personal being, possessing all qualities in the superexcellent degree (omniscient, omnipotent and omnibenevolent). Traditional theists advocate for specific ways of cognition (different from science), such as intuition or enlightenment, thanks to which man can learn more about God and His nature, and believe that God created the world, divinely directs it and reveals himself in it. The divine interactions in nature are either in harmony with the natural law or constitute a deviation from them (miracles).

Clayton sees the fundamental difficulties of traditional theism. As its advocates understand God as a completely discarnate, spiritual being, they have difficulties in precisely determining His relationship to the world (Clayton, 2006d, p. 631-632). Such a position encounters difficulties in perceiving a clear analogy between the action of God as an “unembodied causative factor” and the causative action of man as an “embodied causative factor”. Since His activity in no way resembles the activity undertaken by man, then, according to the American thinker, theists have a problem with demonstrating that God acts in the world at all.

Nowadays, both the demands made by representatives of the theory of intelligent design (“ID”) and the claims of supporters of new atheism have contributed to the exacerbation of the conflict between theology and natural sciences. Both represent two extreme

poles as far as the relationship between religion and science is concerned. This circumstance could not escape the attention of such an insightful researcher as Clayton (Clayton, 2012, p. 3, 11-12, 17-18, 32-34, 41). At first glance, the theory of intelligent design seems to support a primary claim (shared by Jews, Christians, and Muslims) that there is God whose creative intention lies behind the universe. However, in "ID", this elementary religious belief is combined with the feeling that modern science, especially evolutionary biology, has become the key opponent of faith in God. First of all, the leaders of this movement argue that the standard Darwinian image of the evolution of life is inconsistent with any belief in God and even directly hostile to it. However, as Clayton observes, the 'ID' supporters are inconsistent in this belief; on the one hand, they maintain the anti-scientific (anti-evolutionary) attitude, and on the other, offer their own, alternative position, emphasizing that it constitutes a scientific proposal (they treat God's action as a scientific hypothesis). All this makes the theory of intelligent design unacceptable to an American researcher. New atheists, in turn, claim that science (biology) definitively excludes the idea of God, because religious faith is incompatible with the scientific way of thinking. Clayton notes that they reject all significant concepts of God, leaving at the same time rudimentary ideas fragmentarily selected from the theological message. In "ID" and new atheism, however, he notes a common feature: both positions rely on scientific evidence to justify religious claims on the one hand or arguments against religion on the other.

By distancing himself from both positions, Clayton proposes his own, which is to avoid the above difficulties and remove some of the crucial tensions between theology and science (Clayton, 2017, p. 1044; Clayton, 2006d, p. 632-633). In his opinion, assuming that the world is in God, it is easier to understand the influence of God in nature. From such a perspective, all physical phenomena occurring in the world can be perceived as an expression of the action of God himself. In contrast to traditional theism, which is extremely dualistic due to its understanding of the relationship between God and the world, panentheism leans towards specifi-

cally understood monism. This position reduces the ontological gap between God and natural processes occurring in nature and thus indicates the existence of a deeper level of connections between theology and science (Clayton, 2001, p. 209). Although every position identifying itself with Christianity is obliged to maintain an ontological distinction between the world and God as two different orders of existence (we cannot identify God with processes occurring in nature as God remains their source), this distinction should be understood appropriately.

The American thinker points to the need for readiness to subject theological thought to critical expert opinions of representatives of other sciences (Clayton, 1997, p. 7). He argues that basing theology on the Greek category of "substance" closes it definitively to the actual description of the relationship between God and the world. The concept proposed by him, which he calls "open panentheism", stands in the middle between the static, substantive approach of traditional theology and the contemporary process theology, referring to Alfred North Whitehead's (1861–1947) process philosophy (one of the leading contemporary representatives of the process theology is David Ray Griffin (1939–) (Sokołowski, 2015, p. 221-242). Such panentheism - as intended by its author - is to be an attempt at a creative revision of traditional Christian doctrines in the light of modern science. Thanks to such reconstruction, theology has the opportunity to return to its roots, remaining at the same time in line with the decisions of modern sciences.

In particular, modern theology is to be compatible with neurosciences. The guiding question in the dialogue between them and theology is: how far can we go towards the basic assumptions of physicalism, which are the basis of empirical brain research, without denying simultaneously (or simply rejecting) the foundations of Christian theology? The position Clayton advocates for is, therefore, a form of compatibility: although neurobiology data do not directly confirm (or deny) theology, they are consistent with it (they coincide with each other) (Clayton, 2006c, p. 550-553). According to this view, the results of specific sciences (including neurobiology) and theological theses should coincide with each other so that an internally coherent theory can be created on their basis.

Clayton does not acknowledge the thesis of some contemporary researchers that neurobiology (now or in the future) is capable of explaining all issues related to a human person (Clayton, 2006c, p. 554-555). He continues to insist that some aspects of the human person will forever remain inaccessible to scientific methods (including neurobiology) and open only to philosophical speculation. In this way, he undermines the ultimate self-sufficiency of the specific sciences (including neurobiology) regarding the possibility of a final explanation of a human being.

In various fragments of his works, Clayton argues that the productive discussion between theology and the natural sciences requires finding a “third field”, within which similarities and differences between their two sets of conclusions can be clearly expressed (Clayton, 1997, p. 82-83). In his opinion, a close-up between theology and science is possible as part of the philosophical theory of emergencies. Using this theory, he tries to open theology more to the sciences, suggesting specific ways in which traditional Christian doctrines can be creatively reformulated in this context.

## 2. God versus the world according to Clayton

According to Clayton, two of the most difficult questions faced by contemporary theologians are: how to imagine God's relationship with the world? and how to imagine God's influence in nature? (Clayton, 1997, p. 9). He argues that to be able to answer these questions, it is necessary to refer to the results of modern detailed sciences. He writes: “[...] if contemporary theology is to exist at all, it cannot be developed without taking into account the results of natural sciences, even the most advanced ones” (Clayton, 2006d, p. 599). In his opinion, theology closed to these sciences deserves even stricter criticism than the other extreme – physicotheology (theology combining physics with God). Theology, which will not attempt to confront the results of detailed sciences, might be threatened with extreme subjectivity. The ambition of this researcher is, therefore, to formulate such a concept of the relationship between

God and the world, which would be, on the one hand, the result of theological reflection, and on the other, would remain consistent with the results of modern sciences. “If we do not work side by side with those – writes Clayton – who rigorously study nature in all its manifestations, listening to these specialists at least as much as we ask to be listened to, then we have no chance of creating an adequate theology of nature” (Clayton, 1997, p. 16). The attempt to create a theology of nature in the light of modern science requires, on the one hand, openness to the results of scientific research, and on the other, openness to the revision of some existing theological conclusions (Clayton, 1997, p. 7-8).

According to Clayton, traditional dualistic theism is inadequate for the full description of this relationship. In contrast, panentheism, i.e. thinking about the world as belonging to God and at the same time different from God, is to be more compatible with the results in physics and biology and the emergent structures characterizing them (Clayton, 2004c, p. 73).

### 2.1. Clayton's version of panentheism

In the narratives of creation found in the Bible, the American thinker recognises an unequivocal message that Christians should neither identify God with creation nor separate Him completely from it. From the Old Testament, the absolute transcendence of God towards the world comes to the fore (Clayton, 1997, p. 17, 21, 23-24; Clayton, 2005, p. 251). Nothing in the world can limit God's action, everything that He does (including the creation of the universe) has its basis in His free decision. God is the source of everything that exists in the world (inanimate and animate beings, laws governing them, and even time and space). However, the creative act of God cannot be limited to the initial action as we deal with continuous creation (*creatio continua*), consisting in intermediary God's guidance of natural processes taking place in the created world, through natural laws.

In turn, when moving to the New Testament, Clayton points to several passages that indirectly lead to panentheism. Saint Paul uses the phrase “in Christ” more than 90 times, the Gospel of John suggests that believers exist in the Spirit and participate in it, St. Paul,

speaking at the Areopagus in Athens, quoted a Greek poet to confirm that God is the One in whom “we live, move and are” (Clayton, 2010, p. 186). Referring to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the American theologian and philosopher claims that God is not an isolated, infinite perfection, but a community, and His nature is love (Clayton, 1997, p. 62-65). He understands the omnipotence of God as the omnipotence of love, which cannot conflict with the freedom of creation. Likewise, God’s omnipresence encompasses both the creation by Him of a space in which creatures can exist and meet Him and His unceasing loving presence throughout creation. Finally, omniscience manifests itself in the fact that God fully knows and fully cares for all creatures at all times.

The above analyses shall lead to an unequivocal conclusion that the biblical descriptions of the relationship between God and the world, crucial to all Christians, fully correspond only to the panentheistic model. Theology, which places God “outside” the creation, significantly deviates from this ideal. The biblical texts demand to go beyond the highly dualistic approach of God’s relationship to the world.

In Clayton’s opinion, the metaphysics of substance, which dominated at the time when the Christian doctrine was shaping, does not favour the correct approach to this relationship (Clayton, 2010, p. 186-187). Such ontology focuses on individual things as substances, perceiving them as existing “in themselves and by themselves”. Contrary to this perspective, the discussed author defends the view that what appears to be a separate individual is, in fact, a part of or manifestation of one divine reality. Although “substance thinking” has dominated Christian theology, “panentheistic thinking” is gradually beginning to revive. Clayton puts even forward the bold thesis that, in twentieth-century theology, practically every significant new system had such a colouration. Today, the traditional image of God existing outside the created physical order and interfering with it only when necessary to achieve God’s own natural or salvific goals is not accepted (Clayton, 2001, p. 208-209). As the gaps in human knowledge about the natural world shrink, the prospect of possible action for such an understanding of God becomes narrower.

According to Clayton’s concept, before the creation of the world, there was an absolute, empty space, which God, by virtue of his free decision, began to “fill” with creatures (Clayton, 1997, p. 89). The finite space of the world is contained in absolute space. If space is the space of God, the world is not “outside” Him but in Him. Clayton argues that all beings are located in God’s presence, and God is present in all points of space.

The world is contained in God, although it is not identical to Him (Clayton, 1997, p. 90). God has ontological precedence over the world. At some point, it was created *ex nihilo* and then sustained in existence by God. “We are not God,” writes Clayton, “because in our fundamental nature we are different from God. Therefore, it does not matter where we are - within the superior divine presence, or even (in a sense) within the divine essence itself, we remain the created product of God, the work of His hands” (Clayton, 1997, p. 90). The Absolute is present throughout the material world and in every single thing contained therein. Space may even turn out to be infinitely large, and within it, there may be an uncountable number of objects (e.g. atoms), but even it could be contained in God, not being identical with Him (God embraces an infinite (created) space, being itself an absolute space) (Clayton, 1997, p. 90). In Clayton’s view, creation is a “kenotic act”: God freely limits His infinite power to allow all other beings to exist (Clayton, 2005, p. 250-254; Clayton, 2015, p. 184-192).

In Clayton’s concept, panentheism is more than just philosophy (Clayton, 2010, p. 191). Similarly to traditional theism, associated with characteristic forms of spiritual practices, also panentheism has its own spirituality, which contributes to the store of spiritual practices of the world. Moreover, the author claims that panentheism also has a practical application. In his opinion, in the present world, there is no stronger motivation to protect the environment than the affirmation that each organism has its separate agency, and there is, at the same time, an infinite value of the supreme and all-encompassing Divine Being in each of them.

The researcher is aware that panentheism is not a “magic pill” for all problems of philosophy or theology and encounters numerous difficulties that

require further in-depth reflection (Clayton, 2010, p. 191). However, it is, he claims, an extremely reliable model for contemporary attempts to understand the relationship between God and the world.

## 2.2. The impact of God on nature according to Clayton

According to Clayton, the panentheistic perception of the world, located inside God, provides the right framework for reflections on the divine acts (Clayton, 2004c, p. 73-74). The researcher points out, however, that it is arduous to give a satisfactory answer to the question about the divine influence on nature due to the “presumption of naturalism”, which is deeply rooted in the scientists’ consciousness (Clayton, 1997, p. 171-174). To explain specific events and regularities in the natural world, their causes are first assumed to be natural. It is only through this assumption that progress in science becomes possible. Calling every event we do not understand from the point of view of science a miracle would mean defining every gap in our knowledge about the world as a place of God’s interference (*God of the Gaps* concept) (Clayton, 1997, p. 177-181). As a consequence, it would lead to the elimination of all claims about divine activity in the world, as any progress in scientific knowledge would further limit the scope of what God can do. On the contrary, believers can express their conviction, based on their personal experience from the relationship with God, that it was God, who contributed to the occurrence of a specific event. The presumption for scientific explanations in the natural sphere and the subjective element for each specific miracle prevent Clayton from using the word “knowledge” in relation to miracles.

In order to present his concept of God’s activity in the world, Clayton refers in particular to the philosophy of the mind. The basic thesis articulated by this researcher is as follows: the question about the relationship of God to the world, and thus the question about how to interpret divine action, should be considered in the context of the theories we have about the relationship of our minds to our bodies (brains) (Clayton, 1997, p. 233). The key to the argumentation of the American thinker is the assumption about the irreducibility of mental phenomena to physical phe-

nomena. In his opinion, in contemporary debates in the field of philosophy of mind, Christian theology, clearly distancing itself from reductionism, which postulates the reduction of the mind to the brain and mental events to neuronal ones, must stand on the side of anti-reductionism (Clayton, 2009a, p. 243). He gives an important reason for such a preference: if minds were reduced to physical processes, God would have to be reduced similarly.

The American thinker tries to understand the relationship between God and the world as highly analogous to the relationship between mind and body (brain) in humans (“panentheistic analogy”) (Clayton, 1997, p. 234). It reaches to the analogy of the influence of the human mind on the body (brain) to explain the causal relationship of God to the world. Although God does not have a body, His relationship to the world can be understood by analogy to the relationship of mind to body. The “mind” is not simply a part of the body, but it is also not completely separated from the body (Clayton, 2008, p. 107). Similarly, God should not be understood as separate from the world. According to the position defended by Clayton, God can act on every part of the world in a way similar to the action of our minds on our bodies, simultaneously, he goes beyond the world and will exist long after the universe ceases to exist (Clayton, 1997, p. 264). In other words, just as mental properties can be a direct cause of changes in the physical world (in the brain), God influences the world in a similar way (without supernatural intervention) (Clayton, 1997, p. 258). On the other hand, God cannot fail to respond to what random beings (which He loves) do. Creatures influence God as He “is present in every physical interaction and every point of space, every interaction is a part of His being in the broadest sense [...]” (Clayton, 1997, p. 101). Therefore, God remains in a certain dependence on the world.

The strength of this analogy is to consist in the fact that mental causality becomes something more than physical causality, and yet it is still a part of the natural world (Clayton, 2004c, p. 83-84). No law of nature is broken here. Therefore, this analogy offers the possibility of imagining divine influence without violating the laws of nature. Clayton is aware, how-

ever, that many attributes of God cannot be deduced from the above analogy. God is not dependent on the world because He preceded and created it (Clayton, 1997, p. 260). The attributes of God that other beings lack are eternity, omnipotence, and moral perfection.

“Panentheistic analogy” refers to the principle of emergence, taking for the highest level of complexity known to us – emerging from the most complex biological structure, which is the human brain – the level of mental properties (Clayton, 2004c, p. 83-84). It is impossible to reduce mental phenomena to their physical basis and their causal rights (reduction monism), and at the same time, the existence of a separate and unnatural form, devoid of connection with the physical sphere (substantive duality), should be excluded (Clayton, 2004a, p. v; Clayton, 2006c, p. 546-547). The ontological view he advocates, Clayton calls “emergent monism”: what emerges gradually, through the continuous interaction of the parts, from some primal reality, are not only new properties of existing elements that are not reducible to what was before, although they are continuous with it but also newly constituted objects (Clayton, 2006c, p. 589). According to the researcher, thoughts and feelings cannot be detached from the physical substrate because of a deep bilateral relationship between them, regarding the deepest areas of brain functioning (Clayton, 2006c, p. 546). This relationship is confirmed by the modern achievements of neurobiology.

The American thinker distinguishes the “weak” and “strong” versions of emergencies, opting for the latter. Supporters of “weak” emergencies maintain that seemingly qualitative differences regarding some level of complexity are possible to explain under lower-order structures (Clayton, 2006a, p. 4, 7; Clayton, 2006b, p. 312; Clayton, 2006e, p. 294-295; Clayton, 2009b, p. 57-58). Although new patterns appear, the underlying causal processes are ultimately physical in nature. The differences between the levels are epistemological, not ontological. In turn, “strong” emergentists claim that in the course of evolutionary history, entirely new factors or causal processes emerge. At higher levels of the organization, the world of nature manifests new forms of causal agency that cannot be viewed only in terms of the aggregation of physical causes. The “strong” version of emergence

assumes the occurrence of downward causality at many different levels in nature (the behaviour of parts is determined by the behaviour of the whole – the opposite of the principle of reductionism), bringing not only a quantitative but also a qualitative increase in complexity. For example, human minds may be perceived as influencing brain chemistry and body behaviour, and not just as resulting from brain and body components. This causal impact of the emergent structure on the constituent parts contradicts the claim that all causality issues should be analysed in their entirety in relation to physical causes.

In research on the mind, according to Clayton, one should not focus on individual phenomena, but on higher-order individuals (Clayton, 2006c, p. 563). These higher units (ending with a person) should be treated as truly existing, and not as wholes formed from their components. “In particular,” Clayton writes, “one must think of people as separate units of action, as entities capable of having intentions, making references and having subjective experiences in the sense described above” (Clayton, 2006c, p. 563). Neurobiology alone is not sufficient either for a holistic description of individual stages of a person’s emergence or for explaining the effects of the interaction of the mind with the environment (Clayton, 2006c, p. 563-565). He characterizes his position in the following words: “The causal thread leads “upwards”: from physical stimuli and the environment to the mental level, then along the thread of mental causality – the influence of one thought on another – and then “downwards”, affecting other physical activities, causing new memories and synaptic connections in the brain, leading to new verbal behaviours, and so on” (Clayton, 2006c, p. 567). The entire described system does not refer to any external spiritual substances; it is entirely physical (monism).

Clayton uses the concept of supervenience to describe a person, which prevents the reduction of mental phenomena to physical ones while ensuring the independence of the former, based on the physical basis (Clayton, 2006c, p. 571). It gives the following definition: “B-properties supervene upon A-properties just in case no two situations can be identical concerning A-properties and different with respect to B-properties” (Clayton, 2006c, p. 572).



Supervenience does not concern the relationship between substances, but the properties or complexes of phenomena (Clayton, 2006c, p. 571-572). “Extreme” supervenience, which Clayton does not support, assumes the relationship between mental states and physical factors: mental states at the stage of formation and subsequent behaviour are directly and fully determined by physical factors. Such a position is in conflict with theology. In turn, the “weak” supervenience, which Clayton approves, although it allows the relationship of mental states’ dependence on physical factors, limits it only to the stage of the initial emergence of the former (Clayton, 2006c, p. 574). Physical causes do not fully determine the content of mental life. Mental properties (as a type of property rather than a new form of substance) are not fully reducible to physical phenomena, although there is an obvious relationship between them. There are mental reasons, fundamentally different from physical ones. “The causal history of the mind – Clayton writes – cannot be told only on the basis of physical concepts, and the result of mental events is not determined solely and exclusively by phenomena on the physical level” (Clayton, 2006c, p. 574). In this way, supervenience is the basis for Clayton to formulate an emergent theory of personality. According to this theory, in the case of a comprehensive description of an emergent set of phenomena, it is not enough to refer to the physical states determining it (Clayton, 2006c, p. 576). Emergent features are in part explainable by themselves. This happens in the case of the mental properties of a human person: although the mental and physical levels remain in a relationship of dependence, mental properties do not boil down to physical ones, being able to act causally on their own within new, emergent levels (Clayton, 2006c, p. 579). There are many levels of explanation of the human person (epistemological pluralism) relating to particular aspects of it: physical, biological, psychological, spiritual (ontological pluralism), irreducible to each other, although dependent on each other (Clayton, 2006c, p. 591).

Clayton understands the history of the universe as a process of continuous development (Clayton, 2006c, p. 591-595). At each stage, within one and the same order, new properties emerge, which cannot

be reduced to those previously existing. Nevertheless, developmental continuity is maintained. In the case of man, emerging mental states, together with physical ones, form a psychosomatic unity. “Mental functions supervene upon their psychological base, and these two sets of properties are interrelated, showing causal interactions running in both directions” (Clayton, 2006c, p. 592). Only a position based on psychological explanations (assuming the existence and causality of consciousness or mind) will be able to provide a full description of the human person. Clayton assures that both physicalism, treating all mental states as a manifestation of neural processes, and dualism cannot offer such a description.

The American theologian and philosopher considers mental or spiritual states as a new type of phenomena existing within the natural world around us (Clayton, 2006c, p. 580-581). There is not one type of objects in the world, although there is only one natural order. Although mental causality does not boil down to physical causality, it is itself natural and not supernatural (it does not add new energy to physical systems). Clayton describes the world not as divided into two types of properties, but filled with a wide spectrum of properties (plurality of properties), conditioned by their position in the hierarchy (Clayton, 2006c, p. 594). The entire ontology he assumes is, therefore, monistic.

### **3. Discussion around Clayton’s concept of panentheism**

John W. Cooper formulates a number of theological and philosophical arguments against panentheism in general, including the version proposed by Clayton, expressly declaring his attachment to Christian theism (Cooper, 2006, p. 319). Therefore, it is worth analysing first the theological and then philosophical reservations, formulated by this author against the pantheistic approach to the relationship between God and the world.

Cooper does not find any biblical text that directly suggests that the world is a part of God (Cooper, 2006, p. 323-324). Although the Scriptures (mainly the Old Testament) sometimes refer to God in

carnal terms (His mouth, eyes, face, heart, breath, hand, and arm), no passage represents the world as the body of God or any creature as part of the body of God. In the opinion of the discussed author, all such anthropomorphisms emphasize the otherness of God in relation to the world, presenting Him as a separate being referring to other beings, and not to a part of Himself. Pantheistic models: part-whole and soul-mind-body (which Clayton in particular advocates) do not express this otherness – as the quoted author argues – in the way the Scriptures do. The New Testament, speaking of Christ as the “head” of the Church, which is His “body,” means “the ruler,” not the head of the cosmic divine body. So this is not the kind of ontological “being-in-the-world” that Pantheism refers to. The exegesis of the biblical language, therefore, does not provide Cooper with the basis for pantheism.

The discussed thinker does not approve of the pantheistic concept of God’s freedom (Cooper, 2006, p. 325-326, 337). On the one hand, the pantheists emphasize that His creative activity is full of love and free, but in reality (consciously or unconsciously) they adopt a compatible view of God’s will, according to which the act can be both free and determined (freedom and determinism are compatible). God’s love for creation is, according to this position, to some extent satisfying His needs. Cooper argues that such a concept of freedom does not entail the possibility of a real choice among alternative solutions. Cooper concludes that the pantheists seem lost and incoherent in their views on God’s freedom.

Modern pantheism tends too strongly towards immanence, even though – according to this concept – it is supposed to “balance” transcendence and immanence. This is another allegation made against this position by Cooper (Cooper, 2006, p. 328-329). The concept so strongly links the existence of God with the world that his transcendent being becomes a mere abstraction. The real balance between transcendence and immanence of God in pantheism gets shaken.

Since the pantheists claim that God ontologically encompasses the world, they cannot confirm His perfect holiness (Cooper, 2006, p. 332). Although

pantheism proclaims that God never wants or does evil (the nature and will of God are holy), the acceptance of this position inevitably leads to the conclusion that sin and the evil of the world are somehow present ontologically in God either as an undesirable part of a larger divine whole or as the result of interaction between God and the world. In the author’s opinion, no variation of pantheism (including Clayton’s) can recognize the perfect holiness of God.

Cooper notes that most contemporary pantheists take a sceptical stance towards supernatural miracles (Cooper, 2006, p. 334). In the spirit of fidelity to current scientific standards, they do not allow any possibility of such events in the world. By presenting the immanence of God in the world as completely consistent with the order of nature, they even deny the very legitimacy of thinking about miracles.

Cooper is particularly critical of Clayton’s “pantheistic analogy,” which is to provide the right framework to understand how God relates to the world (Cooper, 2006, p. 337-339). The model of mind-body for God’s relationship with the world is, in the opinion of the discussed thinker, a weak analogy. He admits that it should only be used as a (very limited) metaphor. He supports his critical assessment with two arguments. First, there are far more differences than similarities between how the mind relates to the body (brain) and how the God of the pantheists relates to the world. Man can control the processes taking place in the body in a very limited way, which is in clear contrast to the ability of God’s influence in nature, referred to by Clayton. Secondly, people refer to the world that is external to them, while a pantheistic God does not have an external world. Cooper concludes that the mind-body relationship is not a good philosophical model of God’s relationship with the world.

In support of his position, Clayton (like other pantheists) refers to the argument from infinity – since God is absolutely infinite, nothing can be completely different from Him or be outside Him, otherwise, God would be limited by it, i.e. non-infinite (everything must be inside Him) (Cooper, 2006, p. 339). Cooper admits that the argument of infinity is correct in a formal meaning: in a sense,

there can be nothing “beyond” God, but it does not prove panentheism as theism also confirms this conclusion but interprets it differently. In panentheism, infinity is understood in terms of ontological “being-in-the-world”, and theists explain it in terms of voluntary immanence of God: all forms of finite existence are contained in the knowledge and power of God as possibilities that He can decide to implement. This alternative shows that not only panentheism is implied by the argument of infinity.

According to William Lane, Craig Clayton erroneously concludes that if something is infinite, there can be no finite existence “beyond” that something (Craig, 1999, p. 494-495). His argument is based on the questionable equation of “infinity” with “everything that exists”. According to Craig, Clayton misinterprets the closeness of God in terms of spatial closeness, not personal community.

Joseph A. Bracken claims that the price that Clayton pays for his concept of the God-world relationship is dualism – although it is not the mind-body dualism of early-modern philosophers, but ontological duality between infinite God and finite world (Bracken, 2015, p. 221). However, Clayton's goal was to eliminate all kinds of dualism. Similarly, Carl Gillett expresses the opinion that Clayton's position, accepting the existence of non-physical properties, adopts a form of dualism – although less radical than traditional substantive dualism, but still contrary to scientific findings (Gillett, 2003, p. 14). As a consequence, the Claytonian approach to divine action is not entirely consistent with science and this is what he aimed for.

William Lane Craig, who accuses Clayton of an inconsistent approach to the mind-body problem, expressed a similar opinion. (Craig, 1999, p. 497). On the one hand, he rejects material dualism, while on the other hand, advocates property dualism, equipping intellectual properties with the specific capabilities of an intangible substance. Such an approach has no basis in scientific facts. Moreover, Clayton denies, for one thing, the material dualism about the soul and body but considers God to be ontologically separate from the world and the Creator of the world, and he is additionally forced to recognize the material dualism in relation to

God and the world. Such a move completely destroys the explanatory power of the “panentheistic analogy”. In this way, it confirms the substantive dualism Clayton tries to distance himself from in his declarations.

According to Willem B. Drees, Clayton's use of the analogy of God-world/mind-body gives rise to a theological problem: whether God is the analogue of the brain or mind (Drees, 1999, p. 521). Clayton adheres to a view that distinguishes panentheism from pantheism. According to him, God has ontological precedence over the world. This panentheistic primacy of God over the world – according to Drees – makes God more analogous to the brain than to the mind. If, however, God – as Clayton claims – is an analogy of the mind, it leads us to accept God as ontologically secondary to the world.

In the author's opinion, Clayton's arguments for “mental causality” are insufficient (Drees, 1999, p. 521). He asks: “But why would a defender of panentheism separate what is mental from what is material?” (Drees, 1999, p. 515). Drees believes that Clayton's position is more naturalistic than he would have liked (Drees, 1999, p. 524-525). In his opinion, the analogy drawn from the philosophy of the mind did not provide the expected theological fruits, because in the philosophical discussion the mind remains a natural, emergent phenomenon, while Clayton tries to present arguments for God as a non-emergent and non-natural being. Clayton's conclusions do not convince Drees. “Even if Clayton opposes naturalism and panentheism,” he writes, “he is ultimately a panentheist who is a naturalist in the understanding of physical processes in the world; to be consistent, it seems to me that he should also be a naturalist (though not a reductionist) in the understanding of mental processes” (Drees, 1999, 525).

William Lane Craig expresses his critical view that Clayton makes no argument for traditional theism to be inconsistent. Instead, he offers a controversial statement that the historical “trajectory” from polytheism to monotheism should be extended to include panentheism (Craig, 1999, p. 494). Craig notes that the panentheistic doctrines were well-known and unequivocally rejected already by medieval theologians.

Edward T. Oakes expresses surprise at Clayton's rare reference to Darwinism (and biology in general) (Oakes, 2000, p. 142-143). This seems particularly incomprehensible to this author in the context of Clayton's particular interest in naturalism. According to Oakes, the focus should be on biological rather than physical naturalism. Modern arguments in favour of a naturalistic "credo" come almost entirely from the Darwinists.

Clayton's position is criticised by Antje Jackelén (Jackelén, 2006, p. 626). His approach to emergence and transcendence is perceived by this theologian as a reworked version of the five ways of Thomas Aquinas to prove the existence of God. The only difference, he claims, is that where Thomas emphasized God as the beginning and source of everything (top-down), Clayton's discourse prefers the opposite direction (bottom-up). Regardless of the direction, we remain with God residing at the top of the ladder, and this clearly contradicts the relativity, which is the core of emergence theory. If God is imagined in terms of continuum from physics, through chemistry, biochemistry, biology, and consciousness to divinity, there is not enough room for a radical difference between God and the world, according to Jackelén.

William Desmond has no doubt that Clayton's entire undertaking is based on rejecting the dualism of more traditional approaches and accepting the idea of the whole as setting the right framework for theology (Desmond, 2003, p. 362). According to Desmond, the stronger sense of divine transcendence that we find in the biblical tradition, has been completely abandoned here. Desmond asks, "But what kind of God are we to worship? And if God is not the subject of adoration, is He really God?" (Desmond, 2003, p. 362).

## Conclusion

In our time, stunning advances have been made in many areas of life. Contemporary man, using various achievements of science and technology, often finds it difficult to see God, His greatness, majesty and power. Pantheism is to help a man of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to imagine God, immersed up to his ears

in matter and temporality. However, despite the hard efforts of the promoters of this view, the idea that all things are in God, and God is in all things, although he goes beyond them, still remains completely unknown to the average person (especially the European). A slightly different situation exists in the environment of theologians and philosophers, although even here – contrary to the hopes of its spokespersons – pantheism still remains a silenced, marginalised concept.

Clayton's proposal is one of the more interesting ideas for how to integrate religion and theology with other sciences so that they can be noticed and accepted by modern people. In the opinion of the author of this study, however, this thinker did not go too far in developing the Christian doctrine, and at some points, one can even get the impression that, theologically, he has moved away from it. In the philosophical sphere, he did not resolve beyond any doubt whether God's relationship with the world is sufficiently analogous to our relationship of mind to the body (brain). Regardless, Clayton's efforts to develop a modern model of God's relationship with the world should be appreciated. It is necessary to notice his openness in the conducted philosophical and theological speculations to the achievements of modern sciences. This is undoubtedly a great advantage of the analyses made by this insightful researcher.

This position (compared to other versions of pantheism) remains relatively balanced. Clayton does not cut himself off from Christian roots, attempting to derive his ideas from the pages of Scripture or accepting the image of God as an interactive personal Trinity, closely involved in his creation act. He places his concept (declaratively) in the Christian trend, and, at the same time, adapts it to the contemporary scientific context. In this way, he is convinced that he is developing and defending the model of God's relationship to the world and the model of God's activity in the world, which he considers to be the most reasonable way of combining modern science with the Christian faith. As he emphasized numerous times, the success of modern science in the naturalistic explanation of physical phenomena has made the development of such a model an urgent issue. In his opinion, the view that the world is in

God but God is also something more than the world, can be formulated in such a way as to respond to the challenge posed by modern science while remaining faithful to Christianity. His concept is to show that one can be faithful to the Christian tradition and at the same time open to the settlements of contemporary detailed sciences. Clayton shows how science can contribute to the development of theology, as well as how scientific conclusions need a theological framework of interpretation.

For the author of this study, despite the undoubted advantages of the discussed concept, the argument that panentheism corresponds one hundred per cent with Christianity, is not entirely convincing. The panentheistic concept of God's freedom, emphasizing very strongly and binding God the Creator with the world-creation, is of particular concern. Mentioning universal spirituality (going beyond traditional religions), which is to be implied by panentheism, only reinforces this anxiety. In addition, Clayton's thesis about the obsolescence of the traditional (theistic) view of God's relationship to the world seems to be greatly exaggerated. In contrast, thinking in terms of theism, strongly embedded in Revelation and Tradition, is still firmly rooted in the consciousness of the vast majority of followers of monotheistic religions. Cutting off these traditional roots and trying to replace them with a new vision of religion threatens to undermine the stable foundations of the entire morality that grows from this source. Undoubtedly, theism offers a philosophical-theological approach to the relationship between God and the world that is more faithful to Christian doctrine (consistent with the Bible).

On essential points, the author of this article agrees with the concept of (open) theism outlined by Cooper (Cooper, 2006, p. 321-329). Theism in

such a version remains open to the detailed science and is consistent with their settlements, and at the same time clearly distinguishes the Creator and the created world (this cannot be subject to discussion for any theologian and philosopher identifying with Christianity). Such a version of theism, recognizing that God has a full life above and beyond creation, reflects a much more solid view of the true divine transcendence than panentheism. Every aspect of the world is de facto completely different from God. The actual existence of God infinitely surpasses His immanence in the world, and there is no ontological "balance" between transcendence and immanence (contrary to what the pantheists claim). The Christian believes that all things are eternally present and subject to God in the sense that He eternally knows all that He has created. God does not need or depend on anything other than Himself. The creation of the world by God is a truly free choice, which also includes whether and how to maintain the world that he created. Our world (and all possible worlds) is "in God," but is not a part of Him. An important implication of God's ontological independence is that He remains totally loving and gracious in granting existence to creatures. Humans are free entities that engage in personal relationships and initiate personal activity in the world, not just "parts" of a larger (divine) whole.

All of that makes it necessary to be very careful in accepting all theological and philosophical novelties, regardless of the doctrine with which they identify themselves as a fundamental option in their declarations. Theism, proven for centuries, listening to the voice of representatives of modern sciences, especially natural sciences, seems to be the safest way for a Christian.

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## Il metodo educativo di don Luigi Giussani: una risposta valida all'urgenza formativa dei nostri giorni

Don Luigi Giussani's educational method:  
valid response to the formative urgency of our days

Metoda wychowawcza księdza Luigiego Giussaniego:  
ważna odpowiedź na potrzebę formacyjną naszych czasów

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**Abstrakt:** The coronavirus pandemic particularly affected younger generations, exacerbating the educational crisis. Recognizing that educating young people remains priority in our post-pandemic society, this article is contribution to today's educational challenge. It presents and analyzes the new approach to education that was proposed by Luigi Giussani (1922-2005), Milan priest and founder of the Communion and Liberation movement. His educational method can be summed up in four basic words: tradition, authority, verification and risk. In the first part of the article, we want to show how tradition represents everything in which pupil is born, so it is starting point, or rather working hypothesis as defined by Giussani. This tradition must be lived in the present, guided by authority (second part of the article), which helps the young person to experience that everything he has received meets the deepest needs of his heart. The educator is an authority when he communicates himself, that is, shows that the tradition he transmits to the young person has been realized above all in him. Finally, the consequence of this is education for criticism and verification (part three). For Giussani only in this way becomes the educational relationship source of freedom and the possibility of true knowledge and authentic critical awareness. Giussani proposes pastoral care and education that is strongly focused on freedom, which manifests itself precisely in the capacity for verification and criticism. The pupil, living in freedom, constantly striving towards his destiny, is called to constantly verify whether this working hypothesis, that is, the tradition that has been handed down to him, is true, whether it really responds to the deep needs of the ultimate truth of his heart. And it is in freedom, that is, in the awareness of the paradox of dependence, that verification can be fully accomplished. This is the educational risk, which we'll cover in Part Four.

**Keywords:** authority, education, educational risk, tradition, verification

**Abstrakt:** Pandemia koronawirusa dotknęła sposób szczególnie młodsze pokolenia, potęgując kryzys edukacyjny. Mając świadomość, że edukacja młodych ludzi pozostaje priorytetem naszego post-pandemicznego społeczeństwa, artykuł ten stanowi wkład dzisiejsze wyzwanie edukacyjne. Przedstawia analizuje nowe podejście do edukacji, które od lat pięćdziesiątych XX wieku proponował ks. Luigi Giussani (1922-2005), mediolański kapłan założyciel ruchu Komunia Wyzwolenie. Jego metodę wychowawczą można podsumować czterema podstawowymi słowami: tradycja, autorytet, weryfikacja ryzyko. Pierwszej części artykułu będziemy chcieli pokazać, jak tradycja reprezentuje wszystko, czym uczeń się rodzi, jest więc punktem wyjścia, raczej hipotezą roboczą, jak definiuje ją Giussani. Tę tradycję trzeba koniecznie przeżywać teraźniejszości, kierując się autorytetem (druga część artykułu), który pomaga uczniowi doświadczyć, że wszystko, co otrzymał, odpowiada najgłębszym potrzebom jego serca. Wychowawca jest autorytetem, kiedy komunikuje siebie, to znaczy pokazuje, że tradycja, którą przekazuje młodemu człowiekowi, została urzeczywistniona przede wszystkim nim.

Wreszcie konsekwencją tego jest edukacja do krytyki, weryfikacji (część trzecia). Dla Giussaniego bowiem tylko ten sposób relacja wychowawcza staje się źródłem wolności możliwości prawdziwego poznania autentycznej świadomości krytycznej.

Giussani proponuje duszpasterstwo wychowanie mocno skoncentrowane na wolności, która przejawia się właśnie zdolności do weryfikacji krytyki. Wychowanek, żyjąc wolności, nieustannie dążąc ku przeznaczeniu, jest wezwany do ciągłego weryfikowania, czy ta robocza hipoteza, to znaczy tradycja, która została mu przekazana, jest prawdziwa, czy rzeczywiście odpowiada na głębokie potrzeby ostatecznej prawdy jego serca. to właśnie wolności, to znaczy świadomości paradoksu zależności, weryfikacja może dokonać się pełni. Na tym polega ryzyko wychowawcze, które omówimy części czwartej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** autorytet, edukacja, ryzyko wychowawczy, tradycja, weryfikacja

## Introduzione

La pandemia da coronavirus che negli ultimi due anni ha colpito tutto il mondo e dalla quale stiamo lentamente uscendo, ha inferito in modo particolare nelle giovani generazioni impedendo loro di vivere una normale dimensione relazionale e affettiva, proprio nel periodo della loro vita nel quale più ne avevano bisogno. L'emergenza Covid ha amplificato, inoltre, le lacune del sistema educativo, provocando quello che Papa Francesco ha drasticamente chiamato la "catastrofe educativa" (Francesco, 2020); sistemi educativi di tutto il mondo – continua il Papa – "hanno sofferto la pandemia sia livello scolastico che accademico" (Francesco, 2020). problemi sociali e interpersonali emersi durante la pandemia, hanno mostrato una volta ancora quanto sia essenziale il livello educativo che rappresenta "una delle vie più efficaci per umanizzare il mondo e la storia" (Francesco, 2020). L'educazione dei giovani rimane, infatti, una delle sfide maggiori per la nostra società post-pandemica e tecnologicamente avanzata nella quale il progresso informatico e tecnologico non vanno pari passo con il progresso umano. Questa sfida educativa tocca in modo particolare la Chiesa nel difficile compito di educare alla fede l'uomo moderno, secolarizzato e araldo di una comprensione illuminata da una ragione issata principio fondamentale dell'esistenza.

Davanti all'educatore stanno delle domande fondamentali: come educare il giovane del XXI secolo? Con quale metodo? Può esistere un'educazione completa senza la dimensione assiologica come vorrebbe una parte della società moderna? In che modo la Chiesa può contribuire nello sviluppo integrale dell'uomo?

In questo articolo desidero rispondere questi quesiti come pure all'appello di Papa Francesco che sottolinea il bisogno "di una rinnovata stagione di impegno educativo" (Francesco, 2020), presentando ed esaminando il nuovo approccio all'educazione proposto, partire dagli anni '50 del XX secolo, da don Luigi Giussani (1922-2005), sacerdote milanese e fondatore del movimento di Comunione e Liberazione (cfr. Savonara, 2013). Anche se il pensiero pedagogico-educativo di Giussani, chiamato dal Borghesi "il più grande tra gli educatori del '900 in

Italia" (Ventorino, 2014, p. 105-106) è volto alla trasmissione della fede in Cristo all'interno della Chiesa cattolica, sono convinto che possa aiutare ed ispirare oggi molti genitori ed educatori anche di altre sensibilità religiose e filosofiche, nella difficile sfida di un'educazione integrale dei giovani loro affidati.

Per approfondire il metodo educativo di Giussani ci si avvarrà di un testo fondamentale nella bibliografia giussiniana: *Il rischio educativo* che sarà d'aiuto per tentare un approccio di schematizzazione del suo modo di intendere l'educazione. Appoggeremo questo tentativo di schematizzazione tre parole base: tradizione, autorità, verifica (cfr. Campagnaro, 2017, p. 211-232). Nella prima parte si vorrà dimostrare come la tradizione rappresenti tutto ciò in cui l'educando nasce, è dunque il "punto d'uscita" meglio l'ipotesi di lavoro. Questa tradizione va necessariamente vissuta nel presente, seguendo un'"autorità" (seconda parte dell'articolo) che aiuti l'educando sperimentare che tutto ciò che ha ricevuto corrisponde alle esigenze più profonde del suo cuore. Infine, conseguenza di ciò, è l'educazione alla critica, alla verifica (terza parte), il chiedersi continuamente ragione di ciò che si apprende. Per Giussani, infatti, solo così, il rapporto educativo diventa fonte di libertà e possibilità di vera conoscenza e di autentica coscienza critica. Da qui nasce il rischio educativo che esamineremo nella quarta parte, essenziale per un'educazione completa che mostri "l'attinenza e la corrispondenza alle esigenze della vita" (Giussani, 2005, p. 30).

## 1. Il confronto con la tradizione

Giussani intende la tradizione come quel dato originario nel quale l'educando nasce e cresce. La tradizione porta con se inoltre una struttura di valori ben precisi, sviluppatasi durante secoli, con quali ci si scontra indipendentemente dalla propria volontà e attraverso quali la società funziona. Lo stesso Giussani ricordava agli studenti che "la tradizione cristiana è la prima ipotesi di lavoro che noi la natura ha dato tra le mani" (Giussani, 2007, p. 109). All'uomo non rimane che essere leale con questa



tradizione. Infatti, per Giussani non esiste educazione senza un sincero rapporto con tutta quella ricchezza di significato che la tradizione, nella quale l'uomo si trova vivere, porta con sé. Questo rapporto con la tradizione è fondamentale per Giussani nello sviluppo della sua opera educativa, è la base da cui può svilupparsi un'educazione seria che vada fino in fondo alla verità della realtà. In questo contesto risulta interessante l'osservazione che fa Scola il quale nota che la tradizione di cui parla Giussani, "non ha nulla che fare con la mera trasmissione di un sistema di concetti di dottrine che, come una zavorra, vincolerebbe educando ed educatore al passato" (Scola, 2010, p. 74). Citando Blondel (1992, in: Scola, 2010) Scola afferma, invece, che per Giussani la tradizione è un luogo di pratica e di esperienza che l'educatore ha vissuto e può dunque proporre. Pertanto la tradizione, continua Scola, così intesa "è per sua natura aperta tutte le domande che incombono sul presente". Essa, continua Scola garantisce un processo generativo "di paternità-figlianza – imprescindibile condizione per suscitare civiltà" (Scola, 2010, p. 74). Per Scola, dunque, il concetto giussiniano di tradizione si accorda con il processo generativo necessario per lo sviluppo della civiltà. Come processo generativo Scola intende quella relazione tra educando ed educatore caratterizzata da una trasmissione viva da parte del maestro (educatore) di un sapere che è già stato vagliato e verificato nella propria esperienza e ritenuto come valido e portatore di senso. Per Giussani in questo si manifesta l'umanità del maestro: nell'offrire ai discepoli quell' 'idea di significato' che sia, per l'educando, adeguatamente solida, intensa e sicura (cfr. Giussani, 2010, p. 69). Giussani spiegava questo concetto ai suoi educandi facendo riferimento al concreto della società italiana degli anni '60 e '70 nella quale l'ipotesi di lavoro rappresentata dalla tradizione cristiana coinvolgeva ogni ambito sociale. La tradizione, spiegava Giussani, "ci è data come un seme che deve maturare e identificarsi con tutta la nostra persona. È proprio attraverso questa maturazione che avviene il passaggio dalla tradizione inconsapevolmente accettata alla convinzione" (Giussani, 2006, p. 170-171). Ecco allora che il processo generativo, di cui accennava Scola,

può realizzarsi se il seme della tradizione che ci è stato dato viene aiutato a maturare, nella libertà, da educatori saggi e coerenti.

Si vogliono ora sviluppare, brevemente, due aspetti concernenti la tradizione e la sua trasmissione. Il primo, positivo, è la famiglia: il primo e fondamentale luogo dove ci si scontra con la tradizione. Il secondo, negativo, tratta delle conseguenze drammatiche che porterebbe in generale, nella scuola e nella famiglia, la negazione del concetto di tradizione.

### **1.1. L'importanza della famiglia nella trasmissione della tradizione**

Come ci ricorda Papa Francesco, la famiglia rimane "il primo e indispensabile soggetto educatore" (Francesco, 2020). Il nostro Autore ribadisce lo stesso concetto sottolineando che nel processo educativo del giovane, un ruolo fondamentale ha la famiglia dove genitori trasmettono ai figli la visione del mondo, la tradizione che possiedono. Per Giussani genitori sono primi educatori che hanno il dovere di far presente ai figli che esiste un significato di tutto ciò che li circonda. Infatti per Giussani, la famiglia realizza appieno il proprio compito educativo verso figli quando li educa al senso della vita (cfr. Giussani, 2003, p. 115). Purtroppo però, Giussani è consapevole che, "non è così ovvio come potrebbe sembrare che il fatto educativo sia preso sul serio in una famiglia che viva il clima sociale attuale" (Giussani, 2003, p. 115). Nella società attuale l'educazione dei figli, riscontra Giussani, non è più un compito genitoriale fondamentale; è diventato secondario "rispetto ad altre preoccupazioni come la salute, la preparazione ad acquisire un buon posto nel lavoro e quindi nella società" (cfr. Giussani, 2003, p. 115-116).

La prima e fondamentale preoccupazione educativa che genitori dovrebbero avere nei confronti dei propri figli, rimane, per Giussani l'introduzione dei figli alla conoscenza del reale, precisando e sviluppando la tradizione che essi stessi hanno ricevuto. Infatti, per Giussani, non si riesce a comprendere la realtà se prima non si afferma che esiste un significato tutto (cfr. Giussani, 2010, p. 70). Partire dalla tradizione poi, genitori dovrebbero introdurre figli alla coscienza del loro destino, del fatto che sono chiamati da Dio

compiere una missione nel piano d'amore di Dio. Giussani è però convinto che la famiglia, restando pure il luogo privilegiato d'educazione, vada aiutata; essa non può rimanere sola di fronte all'aggressività della società moderna che tende diseducare giovani, togliendo loro la capacità di afferrare il senso profondo delle cose, attraverso un relativismo concettuale sempre più diffuso. Che cosa fa la famiglia, si chiedeva Giussani "di fronte tutta la forza di una società che ha in mano tutta l'area della famiglia attraverso la televisione?", e concludeva: "una famiglia non può resistere da sola" (Giussani, 2010, p. 118). Per questo motivo, secondo il sacerdote milanese, si deve aiutare la famiglia affinché stabilisca "rapporti che creino una trama sociale che si opponga alla trama sociale dominante. Questo ha come luogo proprio la comunione della Chiesa" (Giussani, 2010, p. 118). Il ruolo primario della famiglia nell'educazione si manifesta, dunque, nell'introduzione del ragazzo nel mistero della Chiesa.

### 1.2. La negazione del concetto di tradizione

Se da una parte quanto detto dimostra la centralità del concetto di tradizione nel pensiero educativo di Giussani, dall'altra egli sottolinea la drammaticità delle conseguenze che potrebbe portare la negazione di tale concetto. Per Giussani, infatti, la concezione razionalistica e laicista moderna attacca la concezione di tradizione, in quanto, secondo queste correnti di pensiero il soggetto andrebbe lasciato libero da qualsiasi tipo di influsso esterno, essendo esso completamente indipendente, non dipendente cioè da nulla e nessuno. Luigi Negri (1995, in: Ventorino, 2014, p. 94) assicura che nel pensiero di Giussani la modernità, una volta dissoltasi la luminosa cultura cristiana medievale, ha tolto dal centro della discussione antropologica il concetto di persona, per sostituirlo con l'idea di *soggetto*, meglio di un soggetto chiuso in se stesso, incapace di vivere 'per'. Il soggetto umano pensato dalla modernità è quindi "l'unico protagonista della sua storia – continua Negri – e dell'intera storia dell'umanità. Per attuare questa soggettività intrascendibile, e per sviluppare tutta la sua straordinaria potenzialità, il soggetto umano ha disposizione la sua originaria energia, il

suo 'potere': intellettuale, morale, scientifico e tecnologico" (Ventorino, 2014, p. 94). Proprio questa concezione errata della persona, come soggetto assolutamente distaccato da qualsiasi condizionamento, porta inevitabilmente alla negazione della necessità della tradizione come condizione ad una educazione integrale. La modernità, infatti, per Giussani, "è una grande istanza di liberazione e di autorealizzazione umana negata da una premessa errata: che l'uomo è originalmente autosufficiente e non ha quindi bisogno di Dio" (Ventorino, 2014, p. 94).

Secondo Giussani negare la tradizione porta ad uno smarrimento del giovane. La personalità dell'educando può, infatti, crescere e svilupparsi solo se gli si dà la possibilità di giudicare e scegliere in libertà. Ma per giudicare e scegliere è necessario un criterio ben preciso che è dato dalla tradizione del luogo in cui si nasce e cresce. Se il giovane non ha una chiara misura per giudicare la realtà, sarà inevitabilmente portato crearsela da sé. Questo, per Giussani, ha conseguenze disastrose sul carattere dei giovani. Crescere senza un criterio valido ricevuto dalla tradizione porta all'indifferenza o, come amava dire Giussani "ad una tremenda carenza di impegno con la realtà che assume così spesso aria di smarrita amaramente distaccata derisione per ogni serio invito quell'impegno" (Giussani, 2010, p. 72). Il giovane non può avere in se stesso il criterio della sua maturazione, come vorrebbe la concezione modernista: in Giussani è fondamentale il fatto che il criterio viene dato, offerto da una 'storia' 'tradizione'.

Giussani vedeva questa mentalità laicista nel mondo della scuola italiana degli anni sessanta e settanta. La scuola, infatti, invece di essere il luogo "dove nasce la risposta, dove s'accenna la scoperta" (Giussani, 2002, p. 52), il luogo, cioè, dove il giovane è aiutato rispondere al senso delle cose partire da un criterio ben definito, si riduce ad una vastità di contraddittorietà nei programmi che lascia lo studente pieno di incertezze. Lo studente ha bisogno di un educatore che lo aiuti scoprire che esiste un significato che spieghi la realtà nel suo complesso. Giussani dà proposito un esempio illuminante: secondo lui lo studente carente di un criterio unificante è come un bambino intelligente "che entrando in una stanza trovi sul tavolo una grossa sveglia. Egli è intelligente,

e curioso, perciò afferra la sveglia e pian piano la smonta tutta” (Giussani, 2010, p. 76). questo punto però, “egli si smarrisce e piange: ha lì tutta la sveglia, ma la sveglia non c’è più; gli manca l’idea sintetica per ricostruirla” (Giussani, 2010, p. 76). Come conseguenza della mancanza di questo principio sintetico vi è l’assenza, anche nell’insegnamento dei maestri cristiani, della figura di Cristo come chiave di volta di tutta la realtà (cfr. Giussani, 2010, p. 78). Nella scuola laica, afferma Giussani, per garantire la libertà dello studente, si deve permettere che egli scelga da solo fra le varie teorie un criterio che risponda al senso delle cose. Per questo motivo gli insegnanti, proponendo una varietà di impostazioni ideologiche, metterebbero il giovane in una condizione di libera scelta, senza alcun condizionamento. Per Giussani questo modo di procedere è errato: l’esperienza infatti insegna, secondo il nostro Autore, “che il risultato del prematuro confronto con contrastanti idee sui problemi fondamentali dell’interpretazione della vita disorienta il giovane, non lo orienta” (Giussani, 2010, p. 80) e lo porta ad un atteggiamento scettico nei confronti dell’autorità e delle proposte di vita che essa propone. Giussani afferma che una libertà vera ed un’educazione completa può essere data esclusivamente da una scuola ideologicamente qualificata (cfr. Giussani, 1997, p. 29). Una scuola libera, infatti, è quella “nella quale il ragazzo sia aiutato provare quei valori in cui genitori lo hanno fatto nascere. È questo il concetto di scuola ‘pluralistica’ che non implica affatto uno sviluppo limitato e chiuso della coscienza, imprigionata da paraocchi: infatti solo la consapevolezza matura della propria idea può renderci capaci di vera apertura, di vero dialogo, e perciò di vera democrazia” (Giussani, 2006, p. 172); per questo motivo Giussani insiste “sulla priorità dell’educazione cristiana prima di qualsiasi altra preoccupazione e impegno” (Giussani, 2006, p. 172).

Analogamente anche nella famiglia si possono sperimentare le gravi conseguenze della negazione della tradizione. Giussani ritiene necessario che genitori impongano con coraggio ai loro figli le idee fondamentali che essi stessi hanno sperimentato. Solo così il giovane potrà crescere con una chiara idea di realtà che conseguentemente verificherà nell’impatto con in mondo adulto. Prescindere da questo

dovere genitoriale provoca un ‘qualunquismo’ familiare che è motivo di molti contrasti generazionali. Ai genitori spetta la trasmissione ai figli della lealtà alla tradizione ricevuta. Questa lealtà, per Giussani, è “nerbo centrale di ogni educazione responsabile” (Giussani, 2010, p. 82).

## **2. Il ruolo fondamentale dell’autorità**

Quanto detto sulle conseguenze della negazione della tradizione, ci introduce al secondo concetto base del metodo educativo di Giussani, l’autorità. Non esiste una vera educazione senza l’autorità, che come ricorda Giussani etimologicamente significa “ciò che fa crescere” (Giussani, 2010, p. 83). Per Giussani l’autorità, intesa negativamente nel pensiero moderno come fattore esterno che vincolerebbe la libertà umana, è, al contrario, ciò che più evidenzia l’io dell’uomo: l’autorità, infatti, è quella persona che, essendo piena di conoscenza della realtà, rivela al giovane la profonda verità su se stesso (cfr. Giussani, 2010, p. 126). La persona autorevole è colei che ha già sperimentato, come vera e portatrice di senso, la tradizione ricevuta. Può così trasmetterla aiutando il giovane capire il senso vero della propria esistenza. Giussani chiama quest’incontro con l’autorità un incontro “con un’esperienza evidentemente più forte della mia, nella quale io mi ritrovo, io scopro me stesso” (Giussani, 1997, p. 26). E continua spiegando da dove proviene la necessità che ha l’educando di una figura autorevole: “Quando noi incontriamo un’esperienza genuinamente umana, e umanamente più potente della nostra, noi per forza ci sentiamo devoti; da qui nasce il senso dell’autorità. L’autorità è quella ipotesi di lavoro, quel criterio di sperimentazione dei valori assoluti, dei valori universali che la tradizione mi dà” (Giussani, 1997, p. 26). Ed è proprio per questo che Giussani afferma che l’autorità “in un certo senso è il mio io più vero” (Giussani, 1997, p. 26).

Da qui l’urgenza di aiutare il giovane rendersi conto della necessità di una dipendenza dall’autorità. Dipendere dall’autorità, significa seguirla, riconoscendo il proprio limite, che cioè non ce la faccio da solo capire il senso delle cose. Ho bisogno

assoluto di una persona autorevole, attiva e rispettata (cfr. Giussani, 2006, p. 113), che mi introduca alla realtà. Per Giussani “solo nel gesto concreto di lasciare il proprio limite per aderire appassionatamente all’ipotesi di senso totale che l’autorità traduce è davvero possibile procedere in avanti verso la completezza della nostra personalità” (cfr. Giussani, 2006, p. 50). Giussani arriva addirittura ad affermare che un’educazione priva dell’autorità è “impossibile per natura, giacché lascia solo chi deve essere educato. Solo, cioè provvisto del proprio limite, per superare il proprio limite. Un simile processo educativo è del resto impossibile anche praticamente giacché: è impossibile che la nostra umanità non venga attratta da null’altro che da se stessa” (cfr. Giussani, 2006, p. 113). Secondo Scola, questa forte sottolineatura del valore essenziale dell’autorità nel pensiero educativo di Giussani, fa sì che si eviti di giungere ad una educazione puramente razionalistica. Il razionalismo nell’educazione consiste per Scola “nell’attrezzare l’educando fornendogli una serie sempre più articolata di principi con cui affrontare la realtà (competenze); dall’altra nel considerarlo come una sorte di monade autosufficiente, sciolto da ogni legame” (Scola, 2010, p. 75). Per Scola la genialità educativa di Giussani sta proprio nell’evidenziare che una vera educazione si basa sull’incontro con una persona autorevole che dimostra all’educando, con la sua vita, “la possibilità di compiersi integralmente vivendo la realtà secondo la totalità dei suoi fattori” (Scola, 2010, p. 75).

L’educatore, il testimone della veridicità della tradizione, deve essere, inoltre, una persona coerente. La coerenza è fondamentale nel processo di introduzione del giovane alla realtà. Infatti, “una certezza originaria che non potesse continuare riproporsi nella coerenza di una evoluzione, finirebbe con l’essere sentita astratta, un dato fatalmente subito, ma non vitalmente sviluppato” (Giussani, 2010, p. 84). Solo la coerenza all’ipotesi di lavoro iniziale può rendere credibile la soluzione del problema. Giussani, quando parla di coerenza dell’educatore non intende una coerenza etico-pratica (come se egli non dovesse mai sperimentare delle debolezze dei dubbi di fede) ma parla di una ‘coerenza ideale’: essere coerenti, cioè, con l’ipotesi iniziale come fondamento di tutta la vita e riferimento continuo

in tutto ciò che intraprende. Il principio teorico, alla base della tradizione in cui vivo, deve diventare “parametro per giudizi particolari che la vita richiede” (Giussani, 1995, p. 159). Per questo, anche la coerenza morale dell’educatore “non è letta dai giovani come documentazione della possibilità di applicazione del principio e quindi come verifica della sua validità reale. È una espressa logicità che colpisce la coscienza del giovane fissando termini ideali dentro la stoffa della sua ‘ratio’” (Giussani, 1995, p. 159). In altre parole, la coerenza ideale dell’educatore fa sì che le sue scelte etiche (la usa coerenza morale) non siano per il giovane esempio moralistico di fedeltà ai principi, di fronte ai quali può sentirsi incapace di realizzarli e per questo entra in una frustrazione che può portarlo a rifiutare principi stessi. La sua moralità diverrà invece la logica conseguenza della sua scelta di vita, razionalmente giusta, in quanto rispondente alle esigenze più profonde del proprio cuore. Questo attira il giovane, ed è il vero ruolo di una sana autorità.

Le prime autorità per il giovane sono genitori, che possiedono un’autorevolezza inevitabile nei confronti dei figli, il che comporta una grande responsabilità. Essi, infatti, per Giussani “rappresentano nella vita dell’adolescente la permanente coerenza dell’origine con se stessa, la dipendenza continua da un senso totale della realtà, che precede ed eccede da ogni parte il beneplacito dell’individuo” (Giussani, 2010, p. 85). Secondo Giussani nell’ambito del cristianesimo, questa autorevolezza assoluta dei genitori verso propri figli viene valorizzata pienamente nella comunità della Chiesa. Proprio nella Chiesa, infatti, genitori cristiani attingono alla sorgente della tradizione, dell’ipotesi di lavoro iniziale secondo la quale hanno generato ed ora educano figli. Per Giussani dunque Genitori e la Chiesa “sono per il cristianesimo la garanzia ultima della coerenza necessaria ogni educazione” (Giussani, 2010, p. 85). Una sana educazione, dipende, in gran misura, dalla consapevolezza che genitori hanno della propria missione ad essere autorità, cioè testimoni credibili, di ciò che essi stessi hanno ricevuto. In questo senso Giussani vede una debolezza di base del sistema educativo moderno, propria nella mancanza di autorità da parte dei genitori, che, con in pretesto di lasciare libero il figlio, non gli danno uno strumento valido affinché egli possa giudicare

la realtà che lo circonda ed in questo modo capire se stesso. In questo senso il ruolo della comunità ecclesiale è fondamentale sia come possibilità di autorità per il giovane sia come luogo dove trovare le motivazioni necessarie per una attiva coerenza alla tradizione ricevuta.

### **3. L'impegno personale: la verifica**

Il terzo elemento del processo educativo proposto da Giussani consiste nella personale verifica, critica, di ciò che viene proposto dall'autorità. Per il nostro Autore non basta che sia proposta credibilmente la tradizione da una autorità: questo resta fondamentale, ma se non c'è un interesse vivo nell'educando verificare tale proposta, il processo educativo non può essere completato efficacemente. In questo, il giovane è assolutamente autonomo: nessuno può sostituirlo in questo compito, l'iniziativa deve uscire da lui stesso (cfr. Giussani, 2010, p. 87).

Il processo di verifica, è un aspetto molto caro al sacerdote milanese. Per Giussani, infatti, il giovane non può subire passivamente quanto gli viene trasmesso dal maestro: egli deve impegnarsi seriamente con la proposta che gli viene presentata. Per verificare davvero, infatti, "occorre impegnare tutta la propria persona con attenzione chiara e aperta" (Giussani, 2007, p. 111). Da qui, infatti, e solo in questo modo può nascere una vera convinzione: essa deriva "dal fatto che l'idea abbracciata ricevuta viene scoperta in connessione vitale con le proprie situazioni, pertinente alle proprie esigenze e progetti. La convinzione sorge come verifica in cui l'idea la visione di partenza si dimostra chiave di volta per tutti gli incontri, profondamente riferita ciò che si vive, e quindi luce risolutiva per le esperienze" (Giussani, 2010, p. 87). Giussani intende fortemente sottolineare, che senza un impegno sincero ed esistenziale dell'educando, non potrà avvenire una sana educazione. Proprio in questo punto sta la genialità del metodo educativo di Giussani. Scola commenta questo passaggio del libro *Il rischio educativo* sulla necessità di verifica, facendo presente che Giussani non intende solamente presentare un metodo educativo che sia più vicino al desiderio di autonomia del giovane. Per Scola qui si

tratta di qualcosa di molto più profondo. Si tratta, afferma Scola, "di riconoscere la struttura ultima del rapporto tra l'io e la realtà. In forza di tale struttura, se la libertà dell'uomo non si mette in gioco, gli è negato l'accesso alla verità. Infatti, se la verità è l'evento in cui la realtà ed io si incontrano e se tale evento si dà sempre e solo nel segno, non esiste, ultimamente, possibilità di conoscere il reale (verità) senza una decisione" (Scola, 2010, p. 79). Quanto sottolineato da Scola mostra, come la ricerca della verità o, usando il gergo giussiniano, l'introduzione del giovane alla realtà tutta, non può avvenire senza un impegno decisionale, senza, cioè la volontà del giovane. In questo senso è fondamentale che l'educatore faccia nascere questa voglia di impegno nell'educando perché egli decida liberamente di verificare la proposta ricevuta in modo serio e sincero. Per Giussani educare non può ridursi ad una semplificazione di alcune idee all'arida trasmissione di concetti. È necessario qualcosa di più: occorre quello che Giussani chiama 'energia della libertà'. Con questa energia "posso far aderire tutto il mio essere all'idea e al programma dell'intelligenza" (Giussani, 2010, p. 89). In altre parole il giovane deve poter arrivare coinvolgersi talmente con la proposta di vita presentatagli, da arrivare al punto massimo di impegno, all'amore. Prescindendo da quest'impegno amoroso con la proposta di verità offerta dall'autorità, il giovane seguirà qualsiasi proposta solo fino ad un certo punto. Non potrà mai arrivare al significato ultimo della proposta, in quanto svogliato dalla stessa mentalità moderna che lo circonda. Riassumendo questo concetto Giussani afferma che la convinzione (la scoperta, cioè, che quanto appreso ha veramente che fare con la realtà, con ciò che mi accade) "sorge dalla scoperta che l'intelligenza propone come ipotesi unitaria, ma che l'amore verifica nella dedizione all'esistenza" (Giussani, 2010, p. 92). Per questo, da una parte sta l'intelligenza (dimostrare che esiste un senso unitario che spieghi la realtà) e dall'altra sta l'amore (impegnare tutta la propria vita in una verifica esistenziale di questo 'senso').

Questo vale per ogni educazione, anche per l'educazione religiosa. Giussani afferma che l'ipotesi di base del cristianesimo, offerta ai giovani perché la verificchino, è che Dio si è fatto carne in una giovane Vergine e c'ha rivelato la verità che il senso religioso,

proprio dell'uomo, cercava e che ha riconosciuto come pienezza di senso. Ora, se quest'ipotesi viene trattata come una delle tante e non diventa quel criterio grazie al quale il giovane può giudicare la realtà, allora, l'educatore non può mostrare la pertinenza di Cristo con tutte le cose. Questo porta ad una trasmissione intellettualistica di concetti, incapaci di formare profondamente l'esistenza del ragazzo. Da qui la necessità di un educatore che aiuti seriamente il ragazzo criticare il dato religioso ricevuto: per Giussani, infatti, "non si può convincersi del cristianesimo studiandolo solo astrattamente come una teoria qualsiasi: ci si può convincere che è vero solamente confrontandolo con tutta la propria esperienza di vita e verificando che risponde tutti problemi" (Giussani, 2008, p. 171). Ma, continua Giussani, "occorre che ci sia qualcuno ad aiutarci fare questo confronto, nel momento in cui più se ne ha l'urgenza" (Giussani, 2008, p. 171). Questa mancanza di serietà nei confronti del criterio di base porta ad un errore che, per Giussani, viene fatto molto spesso: voler comprendere prima di impegnarsi (cfr. Giussani, 2010, p. 93). Ciò significa apprendere concetti senza confrontarli con la vita. È il caso di tanti giovani, che vivono la propria fede in modo vuoto e superficiale in quanto essa non ha nulla che fare con la loro esperienza di tutti i giorni. Dunque, per Giussani se l'educando non coglie il legame tra la tradizione ricevuta e la vita rischia di incorrere in tre atteggiamenti ostili alla fede cristiana: l'indifferenza, il tradizionalismo "nel quale la gente più buona meno vivace si arrocca rigidamente per non guardare ciò che sta fuori e per non sentirsi turbare nella propria fede" (Giussani, 2010, p. 93) e l'ostilità, "perché un Dio astratto è certamente un nemico, del quale, come minimo, si può dire che ci fa perdere tempo" (Giussani, 2010, p. 93-94). Per questo la responsabilità dell'educatore di portare l'educando ad un impegno esistenziale è tanto più necessaria quando si parla di educazione religiosa. Ed è nell'età adolescenziale che questa responsabilità dell'educatore diventa molto più grave: per Giussani se nell'età adolescenziale il giovane "non è aiutato capire come l'idea cristiana sia capace di chiarire i suoi interessi e di dare un senso ciascuno di essi, egli perderà forse per sempre questa possibilità" (Giussani, 2008, p. 171-172).

Secondo il nostro Autore, questo impegno alla verifica è tanto necessario per una educazione completa necessita di tre condizioni fondamentali:

- a. **Il proprio ambiente.** Innanzitutto, Giussani afferma che l'educando va aiutato ad impegnarsi secondo la tradizione data nel suo ambiente. Come ambiente, egli non intende solamente un luogo fisico: esso "è un ambito, cioè tutto un modo di vivere una trama di condizioni della esistenza" (Giussani, 2006, p. 169). Questa condizione risulta fondamentale soprattutto nell'età adolescenziale, che è il momento decisivo per una sana impostazione della coscienza: è allora, infatti, che viene crearsi tutta una serie di rapporti ed esperienze che segneranno la vita del giovane e saranno la base di molte sue decisioni. In questo periodo di vita, la famiglia e la scuola sono come due colonne che mantengono in piedi l'ambiente del ragazzo. Da qui la loro importanza da cui deriva una forte responsabilità (cfr. Giussani, 2006, p. 35).
- b. **La comunità.** Altra condizione per una verifica efficace, è che essa venga fatta a livello comunitario. La comunità è infatti quel luogo nel quale posso verificare in modo più diretto la veridicità della proposta che la tradizione mi impone. È assieme ad altre persone, anch'esse impegnate in una continua verifica che, secondo Giussani, si può arrivare in modo più sicuro all'affermazione che quanto appreso è vero. La comunità, infatti, "è un modo di concepire le cose, è un modo di affrontare il problema dell'essere, come dello studio della storia, dell'amore" (Giussani, 2010, p. 96)
- c. **Il tempo libero.** La terza condizione è una conseguenza delle due appena descritte: solo se impegnato nel proprio ambiente ed inserito in una comunità, il giovane nel suo tempo libero, in quel tempo cioè in cui il suo impegno creativo può esprimersi liberamente senza alcun obbligo esterno, verificherà liberamente la proposta educativa offertagli, riconoscendola affascinante. Per Giussani, il modo in cui i giovani trascorrono il proprio tempo libero è chiaro segnale di come è condotta la loro educazione. Se anche nel tempo libero l'educando non si comporta

secondo la proposta educativa che riceve dalla famiglia dalla scuola, significa che tale proposta non ha plasmato la sua vita, egli non la intende come significato di tutte le cose. Per Giussani «attraverso l'impegno con l'ideale nel tempo libero, l'adolescente imparerà perseguire la sua ipotesi anche nel restante tempo» (Giussani, 2010, p. 99). Nel tempo libero, infatti, il giovane è se stesso, autentico. Per questo un'educazione efficace dovrà portare il giovane ad avere, nel suo tempo libero, atteggiamenti coerenti quanto gli viene proposto dalla famiglia e dalla scuola.

- d. Nel pensiero educativo di Giussani e nel suo metodo di trasmissione della fede, è basilare stimolare l'educando ad un impegno serio di verifica. Non si può trasmettere la fede, per Giussani, senza permettere coloro che ricevono l'annuncio cristiano di verificarlo. Questo aspetto, nel processo di trasmissione della fede, tanto caro Giussani, sembra molto spesso assente nell'educazione familiare e scolastica (catechesi) in questo può sembrare scomodo per l'educatore, difficile da gestire in quanto esige innanzitutto che l'educatore stesso sia impegnato seriamente con la proposta cristiana. Infatti, proprio in questa libertà nell'educazione emerge quello che Giussani chiama il 'rischio educativo'.

#### **4. L'elemento fondamentale dell'educazione: il rischio**

Scola afferma che la chiave per capire il metodo educativo di Giussani è il concetto di libertà. Per Scola lo sviluppo che il concetto di libertà assume nel pensiero educativo di Giussani, rende questo concetto unico. Giussani infatti individua il vertice della proposta educativa "nell'esperienza del rischio che è intrinseca alla libertà" (Scola, 2010, p. 84). Il rischio educativo, per Giussani, è conseguenza naturale della struttura ontologica dell'uomo: l'uomo è libero, e nel processo educativo deve poter scegliere liberamente, in modo autonomo. La sua scelta, grazie alla libertà con cui viene presa, diverrà responsabile. L'educando va dunque condotto

saggiamente dall'educatore verso l'autonomia di giudizio e di verifica della proposta. Questo processo comporta un rischio di negazione della proposta, di non accettazione di quanto appreso; questo rischio è, per Giussani, elemento inevitabile per un processo educativo efficace. Giussani ci tiene sottolineare che il rischio non è necessariamente irrazionale solo perché rifiuta la proposta dell'educatore. Per Giussani esso consiste in una spaccatura tra la ragione e la volontà (cfr. Giussani, 2010, p. 180). Non mancano, cioè, all'educando le ragioni razionali per aderire alla proposta educativa che l'educatore presenta come verità e criterio per giudicare la realtà. Le ragioni ci sono ma manca la volontà di aderirvi, perché esse rimangono astratte, non toccano profondamente il soggetto. Quest'esperienza del rischio che fa l'educando, Scola la chiama "paura di affermare l'essere" (Scola, 2010, p. 85). Questa paura, questo rischio, è inevitabile e dev'essere saggiamente guidato dall'educatore. Non si tratta infatti di fare dell'educazione un processo totalmente autonomo, caratterizzato dal permissivismo esagerato, lasciando l'educando in preda ai propri istinti senza un criterio unitario. Per Giussani, al contrario, il metodo educativamente migliore è "quello che vive della promozione della vittoria del bene nel mondo. 'Nel mondo' significa nel confronto con la realtà intera, confronto 'rischioso' (cfr. Giussani, 2010, p. 96). Questo comporta, senza dubbio, un impegno maggiore dell'educatore che dev'essere in grado di comunicare se stesso, coerente alla proposta che trasmette. Per questo l'educatore, nel pensiero giussiniano, deve diventare testimone per essere credibile, testimone di una verità sperimentata e verificata nella propria vita. L'educatore-testimone, per Giussani, deve condurre il processo educativo del giovane, così da vigilare sulla sua libertà, sul rischio che essa comporta: vigilare amorevolmente, non impedire decidere per lui. È fondamentale che il giovane possa arrivare decidere autonomamente, ad affermare in piena libertà che ciò che viene testimoniato dall'educatore, si realizza, si verifica veramente nella realtà. Solo così può nascere un rapporto di fiducia tra il maestro e l'allievo. Il maestro, infatti, non trasmette se stesso ma rimanda ad una verità che viene da fuori di lui. La figura del maestro testimone per Giussani appunto per questa sua discrezione si

nasconde dietro la Verità e “il suo insegnamento e la sua direttiva diventano dono di testimonianza” (cfr. Giussani, 2010, p. 107).

Il metodo educativo di trasmissione della fede porta, inevitabilmente e necessariamente alla Chiesa che, in Giussani è il metodo sublime scelto da Dio per comunicarsi noi (cfr. Giussani, 2003, p. 10). E rimane pure il metodo migliore per trasmettere la fede in quanto in essa l'uomo può fare esperienza di Dio, vivo nella compagnia che si è scelto perché sia sua continuazione nel mondo. La comunità (la Chiesa) è descritta da Giussani, come “la dimensione e la condizione perché il seme umano dia il suo frutto” (Giussani, 2010, p. 183). Nella Chiesa, si realizza in pienezza il metodo educativo appena descritto: innanzitutto, in essa il giovane trova quell'ipotesi di senso totale della realtà che viene da una tradizione secolare (il *depositum fidei*) e che diviene il criterio con il quale può con certezza, giudicare, il mondo; nella Chiesa, inoltre, l'educando trova quell'autorità che lo fa crescere e che, grazie alla sua coerenza, gli fa capire che l'ipotesi è possibile da realizzare. La comunità ecclesiale dà al giovane la possibilità di verificare l'ipotesi nell'esperienza concreta, perché possa convincersi che quanto ha ricevuto è vero.

Una volta educato il giovane, cioè introdotto nella realtà totale, l'educatore deve permettergli di proseguire la ricerca “nella salda convinzione della positività delle cose e dell'esistenza della loro spiegazione” (Giussani, 2010, p. 109). L'educatore non ha concluso il suo compito, ma inizia con l'alunno un percorso nuovo nella realtà della Chiesa, “è il tempo in cui si lavora insieme, fianco fianco, per un destino che tutti riunisce (Giussani, 2010, p. 109).

## Conclusioni

Questo articolo ha voluto presentare un metodo educativo originale, frutto dell'esperienza pastorale e pedagogica di don Luigi Giussani, valido soprattutto oggi e capace di contribuire ad accendere “la passione per un'educazione più aperta e inclusiva, capace di ascolto paziente, dialogo costruttivo e mutua comprensione” (Francesco, 2019) come auspica Papa Francesco.

Quello che mi ha colpito fin dall'inizio nel pensiero di Giussani e che ho sviluppato anche nel mio lavoro di dottorato cui rimando (cfr. Campagnaro, 2017, p. 211-232), è proprio la sua passione educativa. Egli ha speso tutta la sua vita perché giovani potessero arrivare ad una comprensione esistenziale, personale della tradizione che veniva loro insegnata e la verificassero, la criticassero facendola propria. Non si tratta dunque dell'incomprensibilità dell'oggetto, cioè di ciò che viene insegnato, ma della formazione del soggetto! Julian Carron, ex Presidente della Fraternità di Comunione e Liberazione come successore di Giussani, testimonia questa preoccupazione pastorale ed educativa di Giussani: “Tutti gli altri si preoccupavano di altre cose, pur giuste, ma davano per scontato il soggetto che avrebbe dovuto affrontare problemi” (Carron, 2015, p. 70). E conclude: “egli ha speso se stesso per generare adulti come lui, così traboccanti della presenza di Cristo, così lieti della loro esperienza di Cristo, da potere testimoniare davanti tutti chi è Cristo” (Carron, 2015, p. 70). Ed è proprio per questo motivo che per formare il soggetto è necessario che l'educatore sia autorevole, dimostri cioè che la tradizione che comunica si è realizzata prima di tutto in lui.

Ecco allora che le parole chiave di questo metodo, come si è dimostrato in questo lavoro, sono: tradizione, autorità, verifica e rischio. Un'educazione così imposta è infatti rischiosa, come la definisce Giussani, perché basa sulla libertà del soggetto; è sì rischiosa, ma è anche l'unica possibilità soprattutto nella società odierna di poter formare integralmente giovani. Papa Francesco ci ricorda infatti in *Evangelii Gaudium* (in seguito EG) che viviamo “in una società dell'informazione che ci satura indiscriminatamente di dati, tutti allo stesso livello, e finisce per portarci ad una tremenda superficialità al momento di impostare le questioni morali” (EG 64). Proprio per questo “si rende necessaria un'educazione che insegni pensare criticamente e che offra un percorso di maturazione nei valori” (EG 64).

L'educazione per Giussani è un'educazione alla critica: il giovane infatti fin da piccolo riceve dagli educatori (genitori, maestri) molte nozioni ed esperienze che lo formano, perché chi “ama il bambino mette nel suo sacco quello che di meglio



ha vissuto nella vita” (Giussani, 2010, p. 17). Ad un certo punto però bisognerà insegnare al giovane mettere questo ‘sacco’ davanti agli occhi, e far sì che egli possa paragonare la tradizione ricevuta “con il proprio cuore e dire: ‘è vero’” (Giussani, 2010, p. 17). Questo metodo ha caratterizzato Giussani fin dall’inizio del suo ministero sacerdotale. Ai ragazzi del liceo *Berchet* dove insegnava disse: “Non sono qui perché voi riteniate come vostre le idee che io vi do, ma per insegnarvi un metodo vero per giudicare le cose che io vi dirò” (Giussani, 2010, p. 20).

Il pensiero di Giussani, definito da Scola un pensiero “sorgivo” (Scola, 2010, p. 53) che “apre una nuova via di accesso all’esperienza umana elementare” (Scola, 2010, p. 53), non è rinchiudibile in schemi artificiosi ma è fonte di ispirazioni continuamente nuove. Proprio per questo sono convinto che esso possa essere d’ispirazione sia per il mondo dell’educazione sia per la pastorale della Chiesa.

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## Education for Ecological Awareness. Based on research of periodicals devoted to nature in the II Republic of Poland (1918-1939) on the example of a “Free Addition to natural sciences monthly for youths *Orli Lot* (*Eagle Flight*) devoted to the environmental protection issued by the National Council of Environmental Protection”

Wychowanie do świadomości ekologicznej. Z badań nad czasopiśmiennictwem przyrodniczym II Rzeczypospolitej (1918-1939) na przykładzie „Bezpłatnego Dodatku do miesięcznika krajoznawczego dla młodzieży *Orli Lot* poświęconego ochronie przyrody wydawanego nakładem Państwowej Rady Ochrony Przyrody”  
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**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to present the subject of education for ecological awareness on the example of a “Free Addition to natural sciences monthly for youths ORLI LOT [*Eagle Flight*] devoted to environmental protection, issued by the National Council of Environmental Protection”. The structure of this article is based on chronology and issue analysis. It is made of three parts: paper devoted to environmental protection, care about establishing school circles of League for Nature Conservation, activity of youths sightseeing societies in the scope of environmental protection and education for ecological awareness.

**Keywords:** II Republic of Poland (1918-1939), history of education, ecological awareness, education, mass media

**Abstrakt:** Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie tematyki wychowania pośredniego do świadomości ekologicznej na przykładzie „Bezpłatnego Dodatku do miesięcznika krajoznawczego dla młodzieży ORLI LOT poświęconego ochronie przyrody wydawanego nakładem Państwowej Rady Ochrony Przyrody”. Artykuł ma strukturę chronologiczną i rzeczową/problemową. Składa się z trzech części: artykuły o tematyce ochrony przyrody, w trosce o zakładanie szkolnych kół Ligi Ochrony Przyrody, działalność kół krajoznawczych młodzieży w zakresie ochrony przyrody i wychowania do świadomości ekologicznej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** II Rzeczypospolita (1918-1939), historia edukacji, świadomość ekologiczna, wychowanie, mass media

### Introduction

The Polish Sightseeing Society as a community of persons interested in sightseeing was formed in Warsaw in 1906. It organized trips and speeches, it dealt with environmental protection, it had regional museum shows and from 1910 it published a monthly

“Ziemia” [*The Earth*] and a periodical “Orli Lot” [*Eagle Flight*] from 1920. When in Spring 1920 there was an initiative to publish the “Orli Lot” - a Sightseeing Monthly of the Youths Sightseeing Circles of the Polish Sightseeing Society”<sup>1</sup> (full title) edited by

1 Subtitle: Sightseeing monthly: entity of the PTK youths sightseeing societies. Second subtitle: Entity of youths sightseeing circles of the Polish Sightseeing Society.

Leopold Węgrzynowicz, the following message to young people was given in the first issue: “we wish to light (...) the sparkle of love of the fatherland” („Orli Lot” 1920/1-2, p. 1), which was also reminded to the youths on the tenth anniversary of the periodical” (compare “Orli Lot” 1930/1, p. 2).

The periodical was issued in the years 1920–1950<sup>2</sup>. In the annuals: 11 and 12 (for the years 1930–1931) five free inserts were included: Additions to the monthly devoted to the subject of environmental protection (issued by the National Council of Environmental Protection). Articles on environmental protection were published in them<sup>3</sup>, information on the activity of the League for Nature Conservation<sup>4</sup> and activity in the field of environmental protection of the youths sightseeing circles<sup>5</sup>. Environmental reserves were also discussed therein<sup>6</sup>, educational shows (Czarnowski, 1931/2, p. 6-7), spreading the idea of environmental protection in the annual entitled “Environmental Protection” (Niemcówna, 1930/1, p. 3; Niemcówna, 1931/1, p. 3). Young people were encouraged to participate in gathering news on monumental trees and glacial erratic’s (Głowińska, 1931/1, p. 2-3). There was information on the activity of nature lovers societies (Kochanowski, 1930/2, p. 3-4), new publications in the field of environmental protection, for exam-

ple J. J. Karpiński’s. *Białowieża Wilderness and the Białowieża National Park*, Krakow 1930) (*Nowe wydawnictwa...*, 1931/2, p. 8) and devoted to the subject of a proper organization of trips for school youths, which serve the education for ecological attitudes (*Sources...*, 1930/3, p. 3-4). What is more, in the Addition to the sightseeing monthly there was a list of Sightseeing Circles of the League of Nature Conservation Youths Societies Union (as of 2 July 1930, generally 15) (“Free Addition...”, 1930/3, p. 4).

## 1. Articles devoted to the issues of environmental protection

In the Addition to the sightseeing monthly several works were published by a botanist, Władysław Szafer, the Jagiellonian University professor, who is the author of numerous scientific publications devoted to the issue of environmental protection. Władysław Szafer added to the formation (compare Szafer, 1969, p. 5) of a Temporary Commission of Environmental Protection in 1919 by the Ministry of Religions and Public Enlightenment<sup>7</sup> which was transformed into the National Council of Environmental Protection in 1925. It is also worth mentioning that in the period of II Republic of Poland Władysław Szafer (from 1920)

2 Since 1924 the editor-in-chief was Tadeusz Kiełpiński, and in 1938 Tadeusz Seweryn took over. The address of the editing house: Section of Sightseeing Circles of the Polish Sightseeing Society.

3 Władysław Szafer’s articles were published, entitled: *Wisent comeback to the Białowieża Wilderness, Pieniny - the treasure of the Polish nature, Forest Reserve of Władysława Orkan in Gorce*; by Stanisława Niemcówna entitled “*Environmental Protection*” *Entity of the National Council of Environmental Protection*; Walery Goetel’s piece entitled: *Crystal cave in Wieliczka*; Klaudyna Chylińska’s work entitled. *Stefan Żeromski’s commemoration*; January Kołodziejczyk’s entitled *Nowogród Świtez*.

4 The League of Nature Conservation was discussed in: “Free addition to the Sightseeing Monthly “Eagle Flight” dedicated to environmental protection, issued by the National Council of Environmental Protection” No. 1 of March 1930, p. 2.

5 The activity of youths’ sightseeing circles in the field of environmental protection was described in: “Free addition to the Sightseeing Monthly “Eagle Flight” dedicated to environmental protection, issued by the National Council of Environmental Protection” No. 1 of March 1930, p. 23.

6 An example may be Władysław Szafer’s work entitled *Forest reserve of Władysława Orkan in Gorce*, published in: “Free addition to the Sightseeing Monthly “Eagle Flight” dedicated to environmental protection, issued by the National Council of Environmental Protection” No. 2 of June 1932, p. 5.

7 In the Decree on caring for the monuments the art and culture of 1918 announced that care for the monuments (of culture, nature) was the responsibility of the Ministry of Religions and Public Enlightenment. Therefore the Ministry issued dispositions concerning environmental protection, list of monuments and a prohibition of moving them out of Poland, organizing the National Museum of Nature (after a name change: the Polish National Museum of Nature) and introducing an obligatory holiday of trees planting in schools (in relation with patriotic education of youths and children). In a Law of 10 March 1934 on environmental protection (which was co-formed by the members of the National Environmental Protection Council) it was announced that the management and supervision over the completion of environmental protection in the Republic of Poland would be the of the Ministry of Religions and Public Enlightenment and the authorities of general administration were the nature conservationists appointed by the Minister of RPE (with the Minister of Agriculture and Agricultural Reforms). It should be added that the Ministry of Religions and Public Enlightenment, in the area of environmental protection, cooperated not only with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Reforms, but also with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, State Treasury, Foreign Affairs Ministry, Military Affairs Ministry, Communication Ministry, Social Care Ministry. Compare Wolter E., *Edukacja ekologiczna w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University Editing House Warsaw 2013, p. 437.

was a member of the Polish Skills Academy. In the years 1925-1937 he was a delegate of the Minister of Religions and Public Enlightenment for Environmental Protection (the position corresponding to a further position of Nature Conservationist). He chaired the National Council of Environmental Protection, which was the advisory body of the Minister of Religions and Public Enlightenment. As the NCEP chairman he also participated in summoning (in 1928) the League of Nature Conservation. In the years 1936-1938 he was the rector of the Jagiellonian University. Władysław Szafer's great achievements in the area of environmental protection should be emphasized. Thanks to his involvement in chapter 10 (article 99) of the Law of March 17, 1921 of the Polish Constitution there was an entry on permitting a limitation of ownership in the scope of a free use of land, waters, minerals and other treasures of nature. On professor Szafer's initiative several dispositions of the President of the Republic of Poland were announced to protect, among others: mountain pine, wisent, beaver, groundhog, black stork, forest areas and game, and in 1921 a nature reserve was organized in the Białowieża Wilderness (compare Pieczyńska, Spodniewska, 1979, p. 12).

Władysław Szafer in the article entitled *Wisent comeback to the Białowieża Wilderness* wrote that the last wisent died in the Białowieża Wilderness because of hunger and local poachers (Szafer, 1930/1, p. 1). He reminded that wisent (*Bison europaeus*) was protected in Poland already in the Middle Ages and hunting for them was reserved only for the Polish kings. Wisent became the symbol of Białowieża Wilderness, it was even called the royal game. To rescue the special animal against total extinction, the Polish government managed to buy several wisent. In effect of this effort, on September 19, 1929, two wisent were brought to the Białowieża Wilderness and on October 10, 1929 two next wisent (females). Władysław Szafer signaled that there were plans to bring two more wisent and in this way, as he put it, the "Royal Wilderness regained its whole majesty" (ibidem, p. 2).

The Addition printed also an article entitled *Pieniny – the treasure of the Polish nature*, in which Władysław Szafer described the beauty of the Pieniny

landscape and he emphasized that the magic of the landscape inspired many poets, such as Wincenty Pol, Adam Asnyk, Maria Konopnicka (compare Szafer, 1930/2, p. 1). He emphasized that the variety of flora in Pieniny corresponds to the variety of fauna. The permanent dwellers of that area are: badger, pine marten, weasel and among rodents, the dormouse is particularly interesting. In unavailable caves and dark rock cracks there are bunches of rare bats and owls (eagle owl too) (compare ibidem, p. 2). Władysław Szafer explained that in 1929 the Polish government bought from private owners the most beautiful part of Pieniny with their highest mountain top: Trzy Korony (Three Crowns) in order to protect the specific treasure of nature in Pieniny and to prevent any destructions there. In this way "that wonderful part of the Polish land gained an always untouchable reserve (...) the Polish youths, during trips, will be able to enjoy the beauty of magnificent, well maintained nature" (ibidem, p. 3). Whereas in the article entitled: *Forest reserve of Władysław Orkan in Gorce* Władysław Szafer not only described the beauty of nature in Gorce, but he also explained the meaning of the idea of environmental protection in the process of Polish youths education (Szafer, 1931/2, p. 5-6).

Walery Goetel - geologist, traveler, environmental protection activist, professor (since 1920) of the Mining Academy in Krakow, in the article entitled *Crystal Cave in Wieliczka* described the salt mine in Wieliczka, original beauty of huge crystals of pure Wieliczka salt, which are admired in numerous museums all over the world (among others in the British Museum in London and the National Museum in Vienna). The most beautiful group of crystals was put in the Minerals Faculty of the Jagiellonian University (Goetel, 1930/3, p. 1). Walery Goetel emphasized that during the search of crystals in the Wieliczka mine a group of especially wonderful crystals was found (before the war), covering the walls of a bigger chamber (crystal cave). Thanks to the efforts of the National Council of Environmental Protection and many Polish scientists and nature lovers, a reserve was established: "The Polish Government, who is the owner of the mine in Wieliczka, agreed to change that crystal cave into an untouchable reserve. It is a special reserve, because it is underground, in the mine, the

first one of this type in Poland and one of very few in the world (...) miracle of Poland's still nature, crystal cave in Wieliczka" (Goetel, 1930/3, p. 1-2).

January Kołodziejczyk (author of works devoted to environmental protection) in an article entitled *Świtez nowogródzka* he described a landscape of the Świtez Lake near Nowogródek (also known thanks to a famous ballad *Świtezianka* by Adam Mickiewicz). Kołodziejczyk emphasized that the plants in the Świtez lake are dying out and "the lake in effect of this has a significant meaning for the problems of plants geography (...) keeping one of the most interesting and the most beautiful lakes in Europe in the form of a nature park is one of the postulates of protection issues in Poland" (Kołodziejczyk, 1931/1, p. 2).

Whereas Stanisława Niemcówna was an advocate of ecological and educational activity in the sightseeing circles. She wrote about the obligation to take care about birds, she recommended to youths and children to keep notes with information on plants, park stands and city gardens and reading the printed publications in the "Environmental Protection" annual issued by the National Council of Environmental Protection. She stated that the annual should (completely) be in the library of every Youths Sightseeing Circle, because "thanks to this publication we can get acquainted precisely with such monumental environment in the Polish land, which deserves special attention thanks to its inherent nature. What is more we inform how people work in the scope of environmental protection in other countries" (Niemcówna, 1930/1, p. 3). She wrote that it was very precious that protected areas were recognized by sightseers wanderers, because it adds both to the development and popularizing the idea of environmental protection as well as the development of active ecological attitudes.

According to Stanisława Niemcówna "inhaling the idea of environmental protection by young sightseers is the need of the moment, even stronger than so many mistakes were made in the past when in various fields of nature so much wealth was stolen" (ibidem). Since the sightseeing circles deal with recognizing the country in direct contact, also with the nature of the fatherland, that is why in her opinion it is a must to know the subject of environmental

protection and discuss its particular areas during walks, among others in the Tatras, the Pieniny and in the Beskidy Mountains. It is also necessary to set up sections of environmental protection lovers and to discuss the purposes of environmental protection at the meetings of particular units, to get acquainted with the status of environmental protection in Poland (in particular the protected areas in the local environment), comparison of the status of protection in Poland and in other countries (compare ibidem, p. 3-4). Stanisława Niemcówna, when she emphasized the immense meaning of the idea and practical activity in the scope of environmental protection recommended the following articles to the members of sightseeing circles: by prof. Władysław Szafer, prof. Adam Wodziczko (also printed in the annual entitled "Environmental Protection") (compare Niemcówna, 1931/1, p. 3). She emphasized that in Poland the idea of environmental protection becomes particularly important due to "war devastations" (ibidem p. 4) and post war devastations.

## **2. Efforts to establish school circles of League of Nature Conservation**

The League of Nature Conservation was established on the initiative of the National Council of Environmental Protection. In the area of Pomorze and Wielkopolska the League of Nature Conservation functioned from 1925 already, but on January 9, 1928 there was the first convention of the society of higher public utility, general national organization. In the first years of its activity the League of Nature Conservation dealt with buying out land for future protected areas (compare Simondes, 2008, p. 340). Private persons and institutions were the members of the League. The purpose of the League of Nature Conservation, first of all, was to popularize environmental protection, to promote harmonious relations with nature among common school students, but also among scouts.

In the "Free Addition to the Sightseeing Monthly for Youths - the Eagle Flight - devoted to the environmental protection issued by the National Council

of Environmental Protection” it was written that the League of Nature Conservation had its headquarters in Warsaw (al. Ujazdowskie 6-8), and its branches are in several bigger cities in Poland. It is a social organization, which popularizes the idea of environmental protection among the Polish society, especially school youths (compare *Liga Ochrony Przyrody*, 1930/1, p. 2). The already existing societies and school youths unions may enter the League of Nature Conservation and then they should pay thirty groszs a year for its purposes (every member of the society enrolling to the League). The readers were explained that the League of Nature Conservation also organized its own branches and circles based on the statute, which it sends to persons interested in this document. The editors of the discussed Addition emphasized the educational value of the activity of the League of Nature Conservation, because it “connects the Polish children with their land (...) and that the League of Nature Conservation should be in every Polish school. Organize the League circles and enroll as its members” (ibidem).

### **3. Activity of youths sightseeing circles in the scope of environmental protection and education for ecological awareness**

One of the most important tasks of the youths sightseeing circles was environmental protection. The circles regulations contained a provision that their purpose was to care about the monuments of nature and culture. The issue of environmental protection was always accounted for at the conventions, even that the youths sightseeing circles should belong to the League of Nature Conservation (compare *Koła krajoznawcze...*, 1930/1, p. 2). It may be added that the members of sightseeing circles prepared reports of their activity. The following may serve as examples: numbers from 1929, which meant that among 98 only 30 circles proved that they were interested in environmental protection, and only 16 of them belonged to the League of Nature Conservation. They were circles operating in the Female Seminar in

Bochnia, Female High School of Blessed Jolanta in Gniezno, Male Seminar in Łowicz, Female Seminar of Benedictines in Przemyśl, Female Seminar and Male High School in Sandomierz, Male Seminar in Sennica (compare ibidem). It was stated in the report that the following schools also worked on a partial development of the idea of environmental protection: Male Seminar in Czarnków, Female Seminar in Krakow, Male Seminar in Leszno, II Female Seminar in Tarnów, Male Seminar in Chrzanów, Male High School in Rogoźno, Male High School and Female High School in Tlumacz, Senior High School in Krzemieniec, Common School in Piaski Luterskie, Common School No. 3 and No. 5 in Włocławek (compare ibidem p. 3).

A piece of a report of the Youths Sightseeing Circles at the Female Seminar in Sandomierz, as a positive example of activity, was cited in the analyzed periodical. The report had it that the Circle enlisted to the League of Nature Conservation and every of its members paid the annual fee in the amount of 30 groszs. The readers were also informed that two delegates of the circle were sent to the Convention of the League of Nature Conservation, which was held on February 2-3, 1929 in Warsaw. What is more, there was a public reading in the school devoted to the issue of environmental protection and the members of the circle regularly read texts of the National Council of Environmental Protection (available in the school library), and they also gather food for birds, they build bird houses for them (compare: ibidem), which constitutes an implication of the process of shaping ecological attitudes among young people.

In the analyzed Addition to the sightseeing monthly it was written that on the initiative of the National Council of Environmental Protection of the Commission of Sightseeing Circles of School Youths on: 26 April - 16 May 1931 an exhibition was organized in Krakow devoted to environmental protection (compare Czarnecki, 1931/2, p. 6). A grand opening of the exhibition was made by the Chairman of the National Council of Environmental Protection and the Delegate of the Minister of Religions and Public Enlightenment, professor Władysław Szafer, who said in the speech about the meaning of environmental protection, he appealed

to young people not to destroy nature, especially its most precious monuments. PhD Tadeusz Seweryn, president of the Circle of Krakow Sightseeing Circles Society also participated in the exhibition opening (compare *ibidem*, p. 7).

There were also texts about the activity of the Circle of Nature Lovers, which acted from 1921 in the national high school of Adam Mickiewicz in Grodno. The circle gathered students of all classes (54 members in 1929), the meetings were held twice a month in the school garden or outdoors, in the nature. During the meetings, the members discussed the matters of nature protection, especially how to care about birds, how to feed them in winter, how to build bird houses for them and how to prepare nests. In the autumn the members planted trees and bushes and then they took care of them. One of the students IV grade gave a speech entitled *Let us protect our nature* (compare Kochanowski, 1930/2, p. 3).

Members of the Geographical Circle in the National Female High School of Blessed Kinga in Kielce (which was formed in 1928) besides knowing the fatherland, the monuments, also worked on environmental protection. On May 24, 1930 the Geographic Circle celebrated uncovering of a monumental stone (compare Chylińska, 1930/2, p. 3), exhibited on their own cost in the outskirts of the fir wilderness, on the way leading to Łysica. During the celebrations there were talks about Stefan Żeromski, who, "in his 'Fir Wilderness' announces that lumberjacks will come to cut those saint trees, which lived so many years and have seen so many things" (*ibidem*, p. 2-3).

Besides, in the discussed Addition there were appeals to young people so that they gather information about monumental trees in Poland. It was justified that materials may be used by the National Council of Environmental Protection<sup>8</sup>, which intends to issue an illustrated *Polish Trees Memoir* like similar publications in other countries. It was recommended to obtain information from foresters or other persons, who know well the area of the vacation stay, in particular big and beautiful specimen of trees in the

park, in the forests, nearby roads. Young people were encouraged to describe every monumental tree, based on the following categories: the Polish name of the tree, address of the tree owner, exact measurements (height, diameter on the level of 1,5 meter from the ground, trunk diameter measured on the ground), an approximate age of the tree, analysis if the tree is healthy, if it has hollows, how big and whether they are empty or filled in. It was recommended to obtain information if the tree is at risk of being cut and what is the level of its security. And also, whether a cross or a shrine is hanged on it, is there a legend related with it. The youths were motivated to make efforts to gain a photograph or to draw it with a pencil (W. S., *Zbierajcie...*, 1930/2, p. 1). There was also a text on the need to gather information on glacial erratics. It was explained that especially big blocks should be protected, those with special shape, material quality, specific value as a monument of nature or a monument of special events, or as boundary stones (Głowińska, 1931/1, p. 2).

## Conclusion

The Ministry of Religions and Public Enlightenment recommended for school use many periodicals, among which there was the "Eagle Flight", because knowledge on geography, nature and culture was popularized in this periodical, especially in the scope of sightseeing trips<sup>9</sup>. It should be emphasized that "Free addition to the Sightseeing Monthly "Eagle Flight" dedicated to environmental protection, issued by the National Council of Environmental Protection" fulfilled the educational and informative function. It served to educate for ecological attitudes in the process of ecological education in common schools and high schools in the Second Republic of Poland, which was then strictly connected with the idea of environmental protection and it was realized during classes on nature, biology and geography. The youths were explained on the consequences of

<sup>8</sup> Address: ul. Lubicz 46, Krakow/Kraków.

<sup>9</sup> Compare New Files Archive in Warsaw. Files: Ministry of Religions and Public Enlightenment Organizational unit: II Department of General Education, Upbringing Section. Circulars, personal composition End dates: 1931 -1939, file No. 219 (microfilm number: B-9214), p. 28-29.

killing animals (for profits, for furs). Attitudes of respect were developed towards birds, especially the ones, which eliminate destructive insects. Students of general schools were educated not to be cruel for animals and not to torment them. Active ecological attitudes were shaped and students were taught how to care about animals, feed them in winter, build bird houses and boxes for bird nests. The students learned about natural rights of nature (birds wandering), organisms in their natural habitat, thanks to which they were able to understand the connection of the construction of particular beings with their ways of

life. They were also taught about the meaning of pure air and drinkable water for human life. They were explained the meaning of natural treasures, among others, mineral healing waters, original forests for natural environment and bio-geographical landscape in the area of the Second Republic of Poland, such as: the Tatra Mountains with Podhale, Świętokrzyskie Mountains, Wieliczka. They learned about original wilderness in the Świętokrzyskie Mountains, Polesie, Podlasie, Vilnius areas and the scope of protection of animals at the risk of extinction such as wisent, beaver, elk.

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## Competences of academic tutors – research among participants of the project “Masters of Didactics”

Kompetencje tutorów akademickich – badania wśród uczestników projektu „Mistrzowie dydaktyki”<sup>1</sup>

*Happy are those who have someone near them who acts for their good,  
who offers his time and can lead to interesting places!*

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**Abstract:** The aim of the research was to identify and then characterize the self-assessment of the level of tutoring competences of academic teachers participating in the project “Masters of Didactics” – *implementation of the tutoring model*. The tutoring competences were described on the basis of the “European competence matrix for tutors” developed as part of the Certification for Mentors and Tutors (Certi.MenTu) project which focused on the certification of the competences of mentors and tutors according to the European Standard EN ISO 17024. The selected tutoring competences described in this project were applied to the academic environment. The competences were grouped into seven areas. These included: communication and relationships, cooperation with tutees and provision of support for them, effective learning, monitoring tutees’ progress, evaluation of tutoring. The research questions concerned the overall picture of the tutoring competences and the developmental nature of these areas. We were also interested in socio-demographic factors that may differentiate the level of competence of tutors. The method used was a diagnostic survey and the technique was an online survey with open and closed questions. The research was conducted among 78 lecturers from the Polish academic community. The results indicate that academic teachers perceive themselves as adequately prepared to carry out the tutoring process, while being aware of the need to improve, especially in terms of knowledge, organization and evaluation of the tutoring programme at the university. Tutoring competences are independent of gender and academic degree of academic teachers but differentiated by academic discipline.

**Keywords:** academic education, adult learning, tutoring competences, tutoring

**Abstrakt:** Celem przeprowadzonych badań było rozpoznanie, a następnie dokonanie charakterystyki samooceny poziomu kompetencji tutorskich nauczycieli akademickich uczestniczących w projekcie „Mistrzowie Dydaktyki” – *wdrożenie modelu tutoringu*. Podstawę opisu kompetencji tutorskich stanowiła „Europejska matryca kompetencji dla tutora” opracowana w ramach projektu Certification for Mentors and Tutors (Certi.MenTu) ukierunkowanego na certyfikację kompetencji mentorów i tutorów według Europejskiej Normy EN ISO 17024. Wybrane kompetencje tutorskie opisane w tym projekcie aplikowano do środowiska akademickiego. Stworzono siedem obszarów tych kompetencji. Były to m.in: komunikacja i relacje, współpraca z tutees i ich wspieranie, efektywne uczenie się, monitorowanie postępów tutees, ewaluacja tutoringu. Pytania badawcze dotyczyły ogólnego obrazu kompetencji tutorskich, rozwojowości tychże obszarów. Interesowały nas również czynniki socjo-demograficzne mogące różnicować poziom kompetencji tutorów. Zastosowaną metodą był sondaż diagnostyczny, a techniką ankieta internetowa zawierająca pytania otwarte i zamknięte. Badania przeprowadziliśmy wśród 78 wykładowców z polskiego środowiska akademickiego. Wyniki wskazują, że nauczyciele akademicy postrzegają siebie jako właściwie przygotowanych do realizacji procesu tutoringowego, mając jednocześnie świadomość konieczności doskonalenia, zwłaszcza kompetencji w zakresie wiedzy, organizacji oraz ewaluacji programu tutoringu na uczelni. Kompetencje tutorskie są niezależne od płci oraz stopnia naukowego nauczycieli akademickich, ale zróżnicowane ze względu na dyscyplinę naukową.

**Słowa kluczowe:** edukacja akademicka, kompetencje tutorskie, tutoring, uczenie się dorosłych

1 Artykuł w języku polskim: <https://www.stowarzyszeniefidesetratio.pl/fer/2022-2Duda.pdf>

## Introduction

Looking into the issue of *academic tutoring*, we refer to the idea that assumes an individualized and personalized<sup>2</sup> approach to the student. In tutoring, the student is called a tutee. In terms of form, tutoring means working together in a way adapted to the student's abilities (by discussing the reading materials that the student has read, the essays that he or she has written or research and artistic projects created and completed by the student, etc.) in a one-tutor – one or several tutees settings. The relationship between the teacher (tutor) and the student (tutee) should be characterized by authenticity, trust and a sense of being safe. In such optimal conditions, in line with the assumptions of educational constructivism, which may serve as a theoretical basis for tutoring, it is possible to stimulate reflection and social development of the student. The tutoring provided at the university may take a scientific form – then it manifests itself as increasing the level of knowledge and developing subject-specific skills, and/or it may take a developmental form – then support is provided for the tutee working on his or her personal development and acquiring social skills – organizational and communication skills, more broadly – civic skills (Brzezińska, Rycielska, 2009, p. 19-20). Therefore, the tutor should not only be an expert in his or her field of study and discipline, but also be fluent in the “language” of interpersonal competences. “The main goal of tutoring is to build a relationship in which both the intellectual and socio-emotional development of the student will be possible and safe. All tutorial work is aimed at integrating these two areas of learning into one experience” (Wojciechowska, 2020, p. 219). It not only shows the professionalism of the tutor, but is

also associated with a practical consequence: the social and emotional support provided by the tutor has a clear positive effect on the student's cognitive abilities (De Smet et al., 2008, p. 219).

Academic tutoring is usually thought to be a didactic method, however – as in the case of most concepts in social sciences, theorists are not unanimous in its definition (Jendza, 2016, p. 43). Not only are there many different definitions of tutoring as a method<sup>3</sup>, but neither is there unanimity as to whether tutoring is actually a didactic method at all. “It is difficult to call it a method [...] or solely a philosophy, a paradigm, because it is neither one nor the other on an exclusive basis. It is a holistic approach to education and to the student / person under your charge, requiring a specific attitude and competence on the part of the tutor in each individual case” (Karpińska-Musiał, 2016, p. 106). Supporters of this view believe that the aim of the tutoring education cannot be tantamount to expecting a specific result or final effect (e.g. performance of the assigned work), because it would impoverish or even block the phenomenon of tutoring. Rather, this goal could be described as a certain sense emerging from relations and interactions, devoid of directive demands or orders from the tutor (often commonly associated with the traditional concept of academic teaching). Instead, the tutoring relations should be characterized by negotiated decisions and contracts, based on conscious and verbalized needs, as well as by a system of meanings developed jointly by both parties (Brzezińska, Rycielska, 2009, p. 24; Fingas, 2015; Jendza, 2015, p. 40). A particularly important aspect of this subjectively understood relationship (or even a two- or multi-subject relationship) are

2 The debate over the distinction between the two concepts is still ongoing. It is assumed that a personalized approach (“tailored”, personalized for a given unique person) is more than individualization (it is based on the assumption that we work with students individually, but we do not necessarily differentiate the curriculum depending on the pupil/student). More: Czekierda, Fingas and Szala 2018, 24 and 126. There are also conceptual ambiguities concerning the word “tutor” itself, which in English means not only a tutor or a guardian, but also a private teacher (Štastný et al., 2021).

3 For example: “Tutoring is one of the methods of individualized education which is based on the direct meeting of the tutor with the pupil or student. A tutor is a person who has knowledge, experience and appropriate formation, and is able to work on a one-to-one basis. Tutoring is most often a long-term process of cooperation (covering at least one term), targeted at the integral development of the tutee—encompassing knowledge, skills and attitudes” (Budzyński et al. 2009, 5) or: “It can be assumed that [tutoring] is a specific method of pedagogical influence that involves cooperation of the tutor with the tutee or with a small group of tutees. This cooperation consists in planned, formal, informal and spontaneous activities which lead to the development of the persons participating in it” (Sarnat-Ciastko 2015, 10).

the values shared by all participants of the tutorial process as well as the knowledge, experience and the views that they have, because it is these views that will be confronted with the topics discussed during tutorials (Sipowicz, Pietras, 2020).

What results are achieved by caring for the knowledge, skills and social competences (attitudes) of tutors? According to the definition contained in the Recommendation of the European Parliament (*Appendix 1 to Recommendation ... 2017*, point i)<sup>4</sup>, competences mean “the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development”. In the case of tutoring, this is applicable both to the student and the tutor. Conducting research as part of an international team, Brdulak et al. (2020) concluded that out of the three fundamental components of the National Qualification Framework (NQF) – social competences (abilities) are at a strong disadvantage. They are rarely perceived as an important goal of education, on a par with professional knowledge or skills. Rather, they are treated as a positive “side effect” of other carefully planned educational activities. It is not beneficial both from an individual and a social perspective. In addition, it does not have to be like that (after all, at least theoretically, social competences have a guaranteed place as one of the “learning outcomes” of particular subjects taught at universities). Thorough and systematic teaching of social skills can be a valuable educational activity (Brdulak et al., 2020, p. 117), at the same time providing a space for pursuing the missions of the university. Incidentally, for several decades, various digital tools have come to aid in this respect. We observe the development of these tools also in the area of tutoring – in connection with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic (cf. Castro-Schez et al., 2021; Escobar Fandino, Silva Velandia, 2020).

Agnieszka Żur points out that social competences consist of knowledge, skills and experience. “A man has specific competences only when he uses them in practice, has experienced being able to do something and is aware of it” (Żur, 2016, p. 142). He wants to engage in reflection and to take action when he feels ready to do so – able to think independently and to evaluate the reality. Tutoring appears here as a kind of remedy – it is within the framework of tutoring activities that the above-mentioned competences undergo a specific and unconstrained process of change.

The importance of the shaping of tutoring competences<sup>5</sup> is beyond dispute. The involvement of students-tutees, which is such an essential component of effective learning, largely depends on the social attitudes of the tutor. “Young people appreciate the teacher-master’s attitude of openness, honesty, integrity, authenticity, involvement in the performed work, as well as the ability to notice and take interest in every student and to treat him or her as a subject. (...) The characteristics of the teaching and learning process that become apparent in tutorials, such as: multi-directionality, criticality, holistic approach, theoreticality, dialogicality or historicity, largely depend on the teacher too” (Śleziński, 2014, p. 195-196).

The authors looking into the topic of benefits that result from the implementation of the tutoring model in higher education, emphasize in particular its developmental and educational character. Both practitioners and researchers indicate that in connection with the inclusion of tutoring in the curricula of educational institutions (including work on social competences), one can expect more frequent manifestations of self-regulated learning among pupils/students (including responsibility for their own learning process, internal, positive motivation and commitment), a growing sense of being safe and building deeper, less aggressive interpersonal relationships. Instead, these relationships will be more focused on dialogue and on transformation

4 *Annex 1 to the COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 22 May 2017 on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and repealing the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning* (2017/C 189/03). <https://europa.eu/europass/system/files/2020-05/Legal%20text-PL.pdf>

5 For the purposes of our research project, we assume, in line with the European Competence Matrix “Tutor”, that these competences relate to the following areas: building good relationships with the learner in the tutoring process; developing an on-the-job training programme; working together with a coach and supporting the mentor; designing, planning and negotiating an on-the-job training programme; supporting and motivating the learner in the workplace; monitoring progress and providing feedback; evaluation of the training programme. See Table 1 to find out more about the competences in particular areas.

of the culture of the (higher) education institution into a learning organization. In addition, the implemented tutoring programmes are reported to prevent professional burnout of teachers-tutors, because they often work in a tutoring team and this in turn has an effect on the support group and on the perceptions of one's own personal and professional development (Brzezińska, Rycielska, 2009, p. 20; Budzyński, 2009, p. 32). In this way, tutoring becomes the foundation for strengthening the culture of team-based mutual support of tutors. The workplace is thus transformed into a community – a learning organization.

## 1. Knowledge, skills and social competences of tutors

For the purposes of the “Masters of Didactics” project, it was assumed that the universities introducing tutoring should focus in particular on four areas. These are: tutoring models, modern methods and tools in educating students, institutional support for students, professional development of academic teachers. Modern methods and tools in educating students include technological issues, as well as broad achievements of pedagogical sciences. Institutional support for students consists in the individualization of teaching, taking into account both talented students and those who need support. An area that has been considered to be of special importance is the improvement of the teaching competences of academic teachers. At the same time, this area is thought to require a special strengthening at Polish universities (Brdulak et al., 2019). Therefore, the project “Masters of Didactics” brings academic teachers into the foreground.

A comprehensive description of the tutoring competences used in this research was prepared for the project *Certification of Mentors and Tutors* (Certi.MenTu). The aim of the project was to develop a support model for two professional groups – mentors and tutors. The project was in tune with wider activities in the European area of vocational education and training – *Work-Based-Learning*. The area is developed within the framework of support for continuous vocational

education and provides a foundation for social cohesion, stimulating the development of current and future employees (Religa, 2014).

The Certi.MenTu project focused on tutors referred to as representatives of educational institutions. On a daily basis, they were to play the role of trainers, teachers and student counsellors, supporting adults in their personal and professional development. The project did not define academic tutors directly. The general competences of the tutor specified in Certi.MenTu concerned a person who was to work with adults. Tutors were assumed to play a key role in the process of education and vocational training, contributing significantly to an increase in the quality of both.

The developed standardized competence profile of tutors corresponded to the structure of the European Qualifications Framework. It defined learning outcomes, each assigned with a set of the necessary knowledge, skills and social competences. A specific learning outcomes matrix was developed (European Competence Matrix “Tutor”, 2012, Project LLP-LDV-TOI-12-AT-0015). The matrix contained seven areas. These were: building good relationships with the learner in the tutoring process; developing an on-the-job training programme; working together with a coach and supporting the mentor; designing, planning and negotiating an on-the-job training programme; supporting and motivating the learner in the workplace; monitoring progress and providing feedback; evaluation of the training programme.

Each of the areas contained an extensive description of knowledge, skill and competence-related effects. Some of them could, to a certain – greater and lesser – extent, be applicable to the practice of academic tutors. Other effects – being exclusively relevant in the work environment – could not be applied in the academic environment. In practice, the European Competence Matrix “Tutor” from the Certi.MenTu project became the starting point – an inspiration for the creation of a list of competences of academic tutors. The compiled list included seven areas. These were:

communication and relationships, organization, cooperation with the tutees and providing support for them, cooperation with others and providing support for them in the work environment, effective learning, monitoring the progress of the tutees and providing feedback, evaluation of the tutoring programme at the university.

The area of *communication and relations* integrated the competences and communication skills of tutors. Particular attention was paid to active listening and building professional relationships with the tutees. Basically, this area related to the tutor-tutee relationship, but it also included universal indicators of good communication, such as the understanding of the role of students, lecturers and governing bodies in the environment of a university. We also paid attention to the knowledge of theories, models and methods of communication, assuming that a “good” tutor should possess such knowledge.

Considering that the tutor always functions in an institution which has its specific culture and atmosphere, we decided that efficient functioning in the university environment is an important competence of the tutor. The area “Organization” includes such elements as knowledge about the university as a learning and tutoring environment. A highly competent tutor is characterized by an ability to act efficiently and effectively at his or her university. He or she has knowledge about the conditions of the functioning of the institution, about the people who make it up and about their responsibilities.

The main goal of tutoring is to work together with the tutees and to provide support for them. The first stage of working together within the framework of academic tutoring is the recruitment process. For this reason, we have given priority to the knowledge of the rules concerning the selection of future tutees as a competence which is important for their future cooperation. This cooperation begins with establishing a good contact. In the next stages, it is essential to build and to maintain authentic relationships. In order to care continuously for the quality of good relationships, it is essential to design cooperation and to provide assistance with solving problems.

The area *cooperation with others and support in the work environment* is the fourth prioritized area of the tutor’s competences. Undoubtedly, building and maintaining a “network of the closest co-workers” is a basic skill of a tutor working with a project method, but not only. In the current socio-cultural conditions, teamwork in a higher education institution is a prerequisite for success. Academic tutoring likewise requires action taken by the community.

During tutoring, there is a learning process whose stakeholders are both academic teachers and students. Effective learning is another key area of academic tutoring where specific competences of the tutor have been highlighted. Some examples include: knowledge of learning styles and opportunities and the ability to plan a learning process using different methods. The special task of the tutor is not only to “take care” of his or her own learning, but also to support tutees in effective learning. An important element of this area is the readiness to take responsibility for the ongoing process of tutees’ learning.

Academic tutoring is a process which involves many people (tutors, tutees, governing bodies of the university, administrative staff), but the most important pair is the tutor and the tutee. Another challenge in terms of the tutors’ competences is the ability to monitor the progress of the tutees, including the ability to provide them with feedback. This area focuses on being capable to systematically review and constantly monitor the progress of tutees in terms of broadly understood development (learning, personal development). The ability to provide meaningful feedback is quite a challenge too, especially if the feedback is to be constructive.

The project “Masters of Didactics” is to be evaluated at each university taking part in it. Tutors are obliged to take part in this practice, and this requires knowledge of evaluation methods and tools, as well as the principles of documenting evaluation results. Another competence included in the area “Evaluation of the tutoring programme” at a university is the ability to analyse the results of evaluation and use them to identify areas that require support.

Each of the seven mentioned areas was described with several specific statements – expected to provide an indication of a tutor’s competences.

Table 1: Exemplification of the statements assigned to areas of the tutor's competences

Name of the area	Examples of statements – descriptions of competences belonging to a given area
Communication and relationships	I know and understand theories, models and methods of communication. I have the ability to communicate effectively with tutees, using practical communication tools and techniques. I am ready to maintain a professional relationship with the tutee, helping her/him achieve his/her academic and professional goals.
Organization	I know and understand the characteristics that a university should have in order to provide a conducive learning environment. I know and understand the characteristics of my higher education institution as well as the tasks and competences of selected employees that can help me to provide the tutoring. I can optimally use the possibilities of my higher education institution (e.g. infrastructure, available human resources) in the provision of the tutoring.
Cooperation with and support for tutees	I can maintain the interest of the tutees cooperating with me and I can solve problems arising in our relationship in a creative way. I know and understand the principles of designing and implementing cooperation between me and my tutees. I can support tutees and help them with solving problems reported by them.
Cooperation with others and support in the work environment	I can build and maintain my "network of my closest co-workers". I know and understand the principles of designing and implementing cooperation between me and my colleagues. Working with others, I am not afraid to raise problematic issues and I can do so.
Effective learning	I can discuss and design the learning process together with the tutee. I can set commitments and reach agreement concerning goals, methods and procedures of supporting tutees in their professional development. I am ready to apply the principles of professional evaluation of my actions and take responsibility for performed work. My actions do not require direct supervision.
Monitoring progress of the tutees and providing feedback	I can review the progress made by the tutees at regular intervals. I can agree the next steps in the tutoring process with the tutees. I can help the tutees to reflect on their own activities and work, in order to identify development potential and take appropriate action.
Evaluation of the tutoring programme at the higher education institution	I know and understand the principles, methods and tools of evaluation. I can use evaluation methods (such as interviews and questionnaires). I can design and use tools and techniques to analyse the evaluation data.

## 2. Methodological aspects of research concerning the tutoring competences of the academic teachers participating in the "Masters of Didactics" programme – implementation of a tutoring model

The research, the results of which are presented below, has an exploratory, descriptive and explanatory character (cf. Pilch, Bauman, 2001). It was aimed to identify and then characterize the self-assessment of the level of tutoring competences of the academic teachers participating in the project "Masters of Didactics" – implementation of the tutoring model. In addition, the conducted explorations are intended to provide premises that will make it possible to formulate conclusions regarding the determinants of the

academic tutors' competences in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes (social competences). In pursuit of the above goals, the following main problem was put forward: "What is the specificity of the tutoring competences of the academic teachers participating in the implementation stage of *The Masters of Didactics* programme?", as well as three specific questions:

1. What is, in the opinion of the tutors themselves, the level of their competence in each area of the tutoring competences?
  - 1.1. In which area, in the opinion of the tutors themselves, are their competences at the highest level?
  - 1.2. In which area, in the opinion of the tutors themselves, are their competences at the lowest level?

2. What is, in the opinion of the tutors themselves, the level of their competence in terms of each of the competency components (knowledge/skills/attitudes)?
  - 2.1. Which of the competency components (knowledge, skills, attitudes) are at the lowest level in the opinion of the tutors themselves?
  - 2.2. Which of the competency components (knowledge, skills, attitudes) are at the lowest level in the opinion of the tutors themselves?
3. Are there any factors, among those taken into account in the research, that differentiate the level of the tutoring competences of academic teachers?

Given the subject and the objectives of the performed explorations, as well as the properties of each of the research methods and techniques (cf. Pilch and Bauman, 2001; Rubacha, 2008), it was decided that research would be conducted on a quantitative basis, using the method of the diagnostic survey and the research technique of the questionnaire. The constructed questionnaire entitled “*Masters of Didactics*” – *knowledge, skills and social competences of tutors* consisted of three main parts. The first one contained information on the researchers, goals and principles for participation in the studies. The next one consisted of the following six components identical to the previously indicated areas of competence of the tutors (1) Communication and relations, (2) Organization, (3) Cooperation with tutees and provision of support for them, (4) Cooperation with others and provision of support in the work environment, (5) Effective learning and (6) Monitoring the progress of tutees and providing feedback. Within each of the areas, the respondents first gave their opinions using a 5-point scale (1-strongly disagree, 2-rather disagree, 3-hard to say, 4-rather agree, 5-strongly agree) to the statements describing their competences (examples of statements have been presented in the previous section), and then, by answering an open question, they could share additional reflections on

the development of their competences in each of these areas. The third part consisted of demographics questions that provided researchers with information on socio-demographic variables. Before designing the questionnaire, variables and indicators were adequately conceptualized to suit the formulated research questions. The indicators of the variables concerning the level of the tutors’ competences with respect to each of the earlier-mentioned areas of the coaching competences, as well as to the knowledge, skills and attitudes, were the arithmetically averaged responses of the respondents to the statements corresponding to/representing them. The indicators of the variables related to the factors that could potentially differentiate the tutoring competence level were the frequency of selection of the answers included in the cafeterias assigned to the questionnaire questions concerning each of the variables.

The research procedure, designed to obtain data that would make it possible to formulate conclusions for the formulated research problems, consisted of several steps. The research procedure began with the identification of universities taking part in the implementation stage of the “Masters of Didactics” project, based on the materials available on the website of the Ministry of Science and Education (formerly the Ministry of Science and Higher Education). Then, the website of the higher education institution was searched for information on the persons responsible for coordinating the project. To initiate cooperation, we sent an e-mail to those persons, requesting them to forward a link to the Forms to the tutors who were conducting tutorials under the project. 78 academic teachers responded to the request positively and exactly this number was included in the research sample. Its characteristics are presented in the table below.

Regardless of the dominance of specific groups of individuals in the research sample (men, PhD holders, and representatives of science and social sciences), the sample can be considered relatively heterogeneous and one can conclude that each gender, field of science and each academic degree were represented in it.



Table 2: Characteristics of the research sample

discipline	gender	Title / gender					In total
		no data	master of arts/science	PhD	PhD with habilitation	professor	
humanities	female	-	5 (6.4%)	5 (6.4%)	1 (1.3%)	1 (1.3%)	12 (15.4%)
	male	-	0	0	2 (2.6%)	2 (2.6%)	4 (5.2%)
exact sciences	female	-	0	10 (12.8%)	7 (9.0%)	0	17 (21.8%)
	male	-	0	8 (10.2%)	5 (6.4%)	0	13 (16.6%)
	other	-	1 (1.3%)	0	0	0	1 (1.3%)
social sciences	female	-	0	13 (16.7%)	5 (6.4%)	0	18 (23.1%)
	male	-	0	8 (10.2%)	2 (2.6%)	0	10 (12.8%)
	other	3 (3.8%)	0	0	0	0	3 (3.8%)

### 3. Research results

78 respondents took part in the self-assessment of the level of tutoring competences. The mean of the obtained results encoded on a five-point scale was  $M = 4.08$ ,  $SD = 0.27$ . The reliability of the measurement questionnaire estimated with the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient was 0.93. For particular areas diagnosed with the questionnaire, the reliability was as follows, respectively: Communication and relationships  $\alpha = 0.89$ , Organization  $\alpha = 0.84$ , Cooperation with the tutees and providing support for them  $\alpha = 0.87$ , Cooperation with others and providing support for them in the work environment  $\alpha = 0.91$ , Effective learning = 0.89, Monitoring the progress of the tutees and providing feedback  $\alpha = 0.92$ , Evaluation of the tutoring programme at the university  $\alpha = 0.92$ . The reliability for particular components of the competences diagnosed with the questionnaire was as follows, respectively: Knowledge  $\alpha = 0.93$ , Skills  $\alpha = 0.95$ , Social competences  $\alpha = 0.90$ .

Descriptive statistics for the respondents' answers concerning particular areas of competences are presented in Table 3. Academic teachers assessed their competences relatively highly, the average self-assessment oscillates around the score 4 "I rather agree".

The area in which, according to the self-assessment of the tutors, their competences are at the highest level is "Cooperation with tutees and provision of support for them" ( $M = 4.27$ ,  $Me = 4.43$ ). In this area, a high score was also obtained in the minimum category ( $M_{min} = 2.14$ ). The tutors' assessment of

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for the respondents' answers concerning particular areas of competence,  $N = 78$

Area	M	SD	Me	Min	Max
Communication and relationships	4.13	0.58	4.17	2.17	5.00
Organization	3.92	0.59	4.00	2.22	5.00
Cooperation with and support for tutees	4.27	0.57	4.43	2.14	5.00
Cooperation with others and support in the work environment	3.99	0.67	4.00	2.00	5.00
Effective learning	4.13	0.65	4.12	0.88	5.00
Monitoring progress of the tutees and providing feedback	4.29	0.59	4.37	1.75	5.00
Evaluation of the tutoring programme at the higher education institution	3.91	0.74	4.00	1.78	5.00

their competences was equally high in the area of “Monitoring the progress of tutees and providing feedback”. The areas in which, as assessed by the tutors themselves, their competences are at the lowest level are “Evaluation of the tutoring programme at the university” ( $M = 3.91$ ,  $Me = 4.00$ ) and “Organization” ( $M = 3.92$ ,  $Me = 4.00$ ).

In order to confirm the above-mentioned relationships and to verify whether the factors selected in the study (gender, academic title / degree, represented scientific discipline) differentiate the self-assessment of particular competence areas, a variance analysis of variance in a mixed scheme (ANOVA) was carried out. Self-assessment in the area of competences (according to Table 3) was adopted as the dependent variable. Particular predictors (gender, academic title / degree, represented scientific field) were adopted as inter-object variables. The analysis confirmed a significant intra-object effect for the area of competences,  $F(6,372) = 3.16$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.05$  ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ,  $1-\beta = 0.89$ ). As assessed by the tutors themselves, area 3 (Cooperation with tutees and provision of support for them;  $M = 4.38$ ,  $SE = 0.09$ ) was rated higher than area 2 (Organization;  $M = 4.05$ ,  $SE = 0.09$ , estimation on the basis of the modified marginal mean for the population),  $p < 0.005$ , 95% CI [0.07;0.61], area 6 scored higher (Monitoring the progress of tutees and provision of support for them;  $M = 4.40$ ,  $SE = 0.09$ ) than area 2 (Organization;  $M = 4.05$ ,  $SE = 0.09$ , estimation on the basis of the modified marginal mean for the population),  $p < 0.005$ , 95% CI [0.07;0.63]. Area 6 (Monitoring tutees’ progress and feedback;  $M = 4.40$ ,  $SE = 0.09$ ) was also rated more highly than area 7 (Evaluation of the tutoring programme for the higher education institution;  $M = 4.05$ ,  $SE = 0.11$ , estimation on the basis of modified population marginal mean),  $p < 0.05$ , 95% CI [0.01;0.68]. The other pairwise comparisons were found to be statistically insignificant,  $p > 0.067$ .

The analyses did not show a significant inter-object effect for the gender factor,  $F(1,62) = 3.12$ ,  $p = 0.082$ , nor for the title/academic degree factor,  $F(3,62) = 0.81$ ,  $p = 0.491$ . However, the scientific discipline factor was found to be significant,  $F(2,62) = 4.28$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.12$  ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ,

$1-\beta = 0.71$ ). A post hoc analysis showed a significant difference in the self-assessment of tutors specializing in humanities ( $M = 4.38$ ,  $SE = 0.15$ ) and exact sciences ( $M = 4.01$ ,  $SE = 0.12$ , with the estimation being based on the modified margin mean for the population),  $p < 0.05$ . The other differences were statistically insignificant,  $p > 0.57$ .

In the study, we also analysed particular components of the competences (knowledge, skills, attitudes). Descriptive statistics for the respondents’ answers concerning particular components are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics for the respondents’ answers concerning particular components of competences,  $N = 78$

Competences	M	Me	SD	Min	Max
Knowledge	3.98	3.98	0.57	2.00	5.00
Skills	4.07	4.07	0.54	1.93	4.86
Attitudes	4.28	4.42	0.56	1.75	5.00

Out of the three highlighted components, the tutors rated their social competences the most highly (attitudes described with statements such as “I am ready to manage crises that affect the tutoring process”) and their knowledge—the least highly.

In order to confirm the above-mentioned relationships and to verify whether the factors selected in the study (gender, academic title / degree, represented scientific discipline) differentiate the self-assessment of particular competences, a variance analysis in a mixed scheme (ANOVA) was carried out. The type of competence (knowledge vs. skills vs. attitudes) was adopted as the dependent variable. Particular factors (gender, academic title / degree, represented scientific discipline) were adopted as inter-object variables. The analysis confirmed a significant main effect for the type of competency,  $F(2,124) = 12.75$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.17$  ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ,  $1-\beta = 0.97$ ). As assessed by the tutors themselves, attitudes were rated more highly ( $M = 4.43$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ) than knowledge ( $M = 4.10$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ , the estimation was based on the modified marginal mean for the population),

$p < 0.01$ , 95% CI [0.17;0.49], and attitudes were also rated more highly ( $M = 4.43$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ) than skills ( $M = 4.19$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ , the estimation was based on a modified margin mean for population),  $p < 0.01$ , 95% CI [0.13;0.35]. The comparison of the pairs of knowledge and skills proved to be statistically insignificant,  $p = 0.138$ .

The analyses did not show a significant inter-object effect for the gender factor,  $F(1,62) = 3.24$ ,  $p = 0.077$ , nor for the title/academic degree factor,  $F(3,62) = 0.79$ ,  $p = 0.505$ . However, the scientific discipline factor proved to be significant,  $F(2,62) = 4.28$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.12$  ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ,  $1-\beta = 0.73$ ). A post hoc analysis showed a significant difference in the self-assessment of tutors specializing in humanities ( $M = 4.41$ ,  $SE = 0.15$ ) and exact sciences ( $M = 4.03$ ,  $SE = 0.12$ , with the estimation being based on the modified margin mean for the population),  $p < 0.05$ . The other differences were statistically insignificant,  $p > 0.57$ .

## Discussion

Both due to the educational value of tutoring, as well as the relatively high participation of Polish universities in the ministerial programme “Masters of Didactics” – *implementation of the tutoring method*, the topic of the tutoring competences of academic teachers seems to be worth exploring. It seems that the knowledge, skills and social competences possessed by academic tutors are a factor that determines the quality of support provided by them, while also contributing to the satisfaction of the two parties involved in this process. Making an empirical exploration of this topic, we decided to adapt the European Competence Matrix “Tutor” from the Certi.MenTu project, creating a list of tutoring competences of academic teachers, and to look into the respondents’ self-assessment of the issues under analysis as a subject of interest.

The research results presented in the previous section, structured according to the specific questions, make it possible to answer the main question: “what are the specific characteristics of the tutoring competences of the academic teachers participating

in the implementation stage of the *Masters of Didactics* programme?”. The tutoring competences of the academic teachers, analysed both in terms of their areas and components, tend to be on a fairly good level. A slight difference between the average results in various areas of the tutoring competences (maximum 0.38) and their components (maximum 0.3) demonstrate relative high consistency. At the same time, it is worth noting that the areas of “cooperation with tutees and provision of support for them” and “monitoring the progress of tutees and providing feedback”, as well as the component relating to social competences, received the highest scores. Given the above-mentioned properties of the tutoring competences, we believe that the academic teachers perceive themselves as adequately prepared to implement the tutoring process. At the same time, they are aware of the need to improve, especially in terms of knowledge, organization and evaluation of the tutoring programme at the university. This conclusion is also confirmed by the responses to open-ended questions:

*“It seems to me that remote work provides a tutor with an area where he or she can practise soft, communicative and relational competences, because the circumstances and patterns of action known to all of us ceased to apply and we had to find our way in the new situation that tended to make communication more superficial”.*

*“Competences OK, but how to implement them effectively? The Ministry of Education and Science does not offer any mechanisms and neither do universities internally”.*

According to some tutors, it is the universities themselves that should provide additional support for the process of developing tutoring competences:

*“Practice, practice, practice ... I am familiar, I know, but why should I use them? The university still follows a classical approach and there is no promotion mechanism for this type of approach. Lack of understanding among decision-makers.*

*“In my opinion, the university fails to provide support in the area of broadly defined didactics”.*

*“I would like my university to (auto)diagnose my competences and to provide training in this area as part of the tutoring programme.”*

Another feature of the tutoring competences of academic teachers is the fact that they are independent from gender and academic degree, but differ depending on the academic discipline.

The above conclusions inspire one to identify problem areas for further research, as well as to formulate recommendations for the implementation of the “Masters of Didactics” programme. As regards the first of these aspects, it would be cognitively interesting and complementary to confront the self-assessment of tutors with the assessments of students regarding the tutoring competences of their academic teachers, and to examine the relationship between the self-assessment of competences and the preferred forms of tutoring. Moreover, it seems absolutely necessary to repeat this research in order to formulate conclusions on the developmental importance of tutorials for the areas and competence components under analysis.

Formulating recommendations, we would like to indicate in the first place that the Ministry of Education and Science must ensure more ways of providing academic teachers with an opportunity to

improve their competences, such as, for example, the conference held in June 2021, entitled “The International Conference Masters of Didactics. Enhancing the teaching competences of academic teachers within the non-competition implementation project entitled “Masters of Didactics” and the Seminar-workshop “Tutoring models and strategies for the development of academic teaching competences” (September 2021). During that seminar, it was announced that teaching excellence centres would be established in particular universities. Furthermore, we consider it worthwhile to conduct research (e.g. by teams implementing the tutoring/coordinators of the “Masters of Didactics” programme at universities) on tutors’ needs concerning the development of their competences and the organization of appropriate forms of education, also in the form of peer tutoring.

Finally, we think that it is important to create a nationwide forum for tutors, which would enable them in future to exchange good practices in introducing tutoring at universities, both in terms of organization and content-related aspects, so that the quality of tutorials can improve. Such cooperation offers an opportunity for joint research activities and organization of scientific events in order to provide space for the development of both the tutors and the tutees. This kind of inter-university cooperation could aid the academic world in making tutoring an educational strategy that is permanently present in Polish institutions of higher education.

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## Motives and importance of using webcams in online higher education

Motywy i znaczenie korzystania z kamer internetowych w trakcie zajęć zdalnych<sup>1</sup>  
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**Abstract:** The pandemic continues to affect teaching and learning in higher education. Universities prefer the synchronous format of lectures and classes based on video-conferencing. The present research was inspired by the observation that university students often do not use webcams during classes. The research presented in this article is part of the broader discussion that organises different methods to improve the educational process. The aim of this research is to identify the motives behind students' use of webcams in remote learning as well as the meanings attached by lecturers and students to such use. The present study involved a web survey with open-ended questions, answered by 119 education (pedagogy) and psychology students and their 19 academic teachers. The sampling was non-probabilistic. The study has found that the majority of students express positive opinions on the use of webcams, saying that this fosters greater engagement during classes, improves communication and helps to build relationships between students and lecturers. However, while some students believe that the use of webcams supports concentration, others report effects such as distraction and believe that webcams hinder knowledge acquisition and competence development. When commenting on the negative aspects, students list the following: violation of privacy, fear of having their appearance and surroundings judged, feeling exposed to having their actions photographed/recorded by other participants, who may then share such content further. Students also point to difficulties arising from technical issues as well as problems in demarcating personal space that would be conducive to participation on online classes. On the other hand, lecturers believe that students' use of webcams helps to: make the contact real, increase student engagement, establish positive relations, improve communication and create a good atmosphere in an online classroom. However, they realise that compulsory use of webcams may cause embarrassment and trigger resistance among students.

**Keywords:** higher education, webcams, online learning, synchronous communication, online classes

**Abstrakt:** Sytuacja pandemiczna nadal wpływa na nauczanie i uczenie się w szkolnictwie wyższym. Akademie preferują synchroniczną formę zajęć z wykorzystaniem wideokonferencji. Zainicjowane badania wynikają z obserwacji, że studenci często korzystają z kamer internetowych w trakcie zajęć. Przedstawione w niniejszym artykule badania stanowią część szerszej dyskusji porządkującej sposoby doskonalenia procesu edukacyjnego. Celem badania jest identyfikacja motywów używania kamer internetowych przez studentów w nauczaniu na odległość oraz znaczeń, jakie wykładowcy i studenci przypisują ich włączaniu. Badania przeprowadzono za pomocą ankiety internetowej z pytaniami otwartymi przesłanymi przez 119 studentów pedagogiki i psychologii oraz ich 19 nauczycieli akademickich. Dobór próby był nieprobabilistyczny. Okazuje się, że większość studentów pozytywnie ocenia korzystanie z kamer internetowych, mówiąc, że sprzyja to większemu zaangażowaniu w zajęcia, lepszemu komunikacji i budowaniu relacji między studentami a wykładowcami. Podczas gdy niektórzy uczniowie doświadczają korzystania z kamer internetowych jako sprzyjających skupieniu uwagi, inni zgłaszają skutki rozpraszania uwagi oraz utrudniania procesu zdobywania wiedzy i rozwijania kompetencji. Komentując negatywne aspekty, uczniowie wskazują: naruszenie prywatności, lęk przed oceną swojego wyglądu i otoczenia, poczucie narażenia na robienie zdjęć / rejestrowanie ich działań przez innych uczestników, którzy mogą następnie udostępnić treści. Uczniowie zwracają również uwagę na trudności wynikające z problemów technicznych oraz problemy z wydzieleniem przestrzeni osobistej sprzyjającej uczestnictwu w zajęciach. Z kolei dla wykładowców włączanie przez studentów kamerki sprzyja: urzeczywistnieniu kontaktu, zwiększaniu zaangażowania uczniów, nawiązywaniu pozytywnych relacji, poprawie komunikacji i tworzeniu dobrej atmosfery na zajęciach online. Zdają sobie jednak sprawę, że nakaz włączania kamerki, może wywoływać u studentów zakłopotanie i opór.

**Słowa kluczowe:** edukacja w szkole wyższej, kamerki internetowe, nauka online, synchroniczna komunikacja, zajęcia online

1 Artykuł w języku polskim: <https://www.stowarzyszeniefidesetratio.pl/fer/2022-2Franko.pdf>

## **Introduction**

The COVID19 pandemic entailed changes in almost every aspect of our lives. One such aspect is the operation of higher education institutions (HEI). We witnessed a rapid transition from the traditional management model to one that enables universities to successfully cope with new challenges. These steps provided an opportunity to adapt to the new situation, especially in terms of pursuing the educational process. Since social distancing was considered to be the most effective preventive strategy that would slow the spread of COVID19 (Rose, 2020), universities decided to undertake online education. University lecturers and teachers had to adapt their teaching methods to the new conditions almost overnight.

As a result, new challenges emerged, especially in the context of the efforts to pursue education in the synchronous mode. They mostly involved the necessity to counteract digital exclusion and to adapt the curricula to the educational process based on online platforms in a way enabling verification of learning outcomes. All this occurred in an atmosphere of insecurity, increased prevalence of anxiety and symptoms of depression (Fruehwirth, Biswas, Pereira, 2021) as well as incidence of illnesses preventing many students and academic teachers from taking an active part in classes.

An urgent challenge emerged to define a framework for the educational process carried out with the use of various video-conferencing tools. Many questions arose as to how to improve the process by adding tools efficiency-enhancing strategies. These questions remain valid since synchronous online education has become an integral part of the education process in HEI.

This article presents research results that fit well into this discussion. The main intention was to explore students' motives for using webcams in remote learning and the meanings they attribute to their use. A decision was made to explore the perspectives of both students and lecturers by inviting both groups to express opinions on the topic. The time of the COVID19 pandemic delineates a specific context, referred to as 'emergency remote teaching' in response to a crisis (Hodges, More, Lockee, Trust, Bond, 2020).

An analysis of the experiences of this period, leading to lessons learnt can foster the construction of a more balanced online learning system in the future.

## **1. Literature review**

For many years, researchers have asked how to make an effective use of online resources in the educational process (Kopp, Gröbinger, Adams, 2019; Leszczyński, Charuta, Laziuk, Galazkowski, Wejnarski, Roszak, Kolodziejczak, 2018). This is certainly facilitated by synchronous online education, which provides opportunities for real-time collaborative learning, greater interactivity and engagement among students, as well as the provision of immediate feedback (Racheva, 2018). Additionally, it helps to satisfy psychological needs (Fabriz, Mendzheritskaya, Stehle, 2021) and to build a sense of community (Lin, Gao, 2020).

Remote education also fosters a sense of belonging, which is linked to the notion of social presence, defined as students' ability to engage in an online learning community (Joksimović, Gasević, Koranović, Riecke, Hatala, 2015), the way they perceive and build a sense of connection with teachers and peers in a virtual environment (Alenezi, 2022). Social presence influences satisfaction and perception of learning (Swan, Shih, 2005).

In this context, one of the most important aspects that fosters interpersonal contact is active participation in video conferences with the use of webcams. It enhances social presence and communication, and increases the sense of belonging and social bonding among participants (Olson, Grinnell, McAllister, Appunn, Waters, 2012). Research confirms that the simultaneous use of multiple tools to supporting social interactions online (webcams, audio, chat) as well as feedback, boosts engagement in the process and autonomous motivation, which in turn is related to the final grades (Giesbers et al., 2013).

Moreover, teachers have the possibility to observe non-verbal responses and tailor the message better on this basis. Finally, synchronous communication

with webcams may counteract the negative effects of social distancing during a pandemic, such as the sense of loneliness, low mood and depression (Huckins, DaSilva, Wang, Hedlund, Rogers, Nepal, Wu, Obuchi, Murphy, Meyer, Wagner, Holtzheimer, Campbell, 2020). On the other hand, the requirement to use a webcam may exacerbate malaise, particularly given that young adults are disproportionately affected by pandemic-induced stress (McGinty et al., 2020). Additionally, researchers emphasise that Internet-mediated communication is more conducive to the transfer of knowledge but less conducive to the acquisition of practical skills (Czeczayński, Kunikowska, 2020).

A decision not to use webcams may be caused by technical barriers. Other reasons may include the lack of comfortable space to participate in classes without hindrances, shyness and embarrassment about one's home environment (Gherheş, Şimon, Para, 2021) or fears related to one's appearance (Castelli, Sarvary, 2021). The non-use of webcams may be related to the nature of the activities, group cohesion, as well as gender and the desire to maintain privacy (Bedenlier, Wunder, Gläser-Zikuda, Kammerl, Kopp, Ziegler, Händel, 2021). Additionally, researchers emphasise that participation in video conferences entails an experience that was hitherto reserved for close relationships, such as looking at each other for long periods of time and seeing other people's faces in a close-up (Bailenson, 2021). Another reason may be that the brain associates prolonged participation in video conferences with fatigue. There is even a recent coinage, namely 'Zoom fatigue', which describes the stress, fatigue, anxiety and concerns that arise from such meetings (Bonanomi, Barello, Villani, 2021). Researchers argue that this phenomenon mainly stems from the complexity of human interactions and high complexity of the processes occurring during video-conferencing (Nadler, 2020). It is related to the need for greater focus and engagement as there is no possibility to read body language, except for signals coming from cropped pictures of faces.

The scarcity of research into the reasons for not using webcams during online classes perpetuates uncertainty as to how academic teachers should behave, and what kinds of rules they should set for online encounters.

## **2. Methodology**

The aim of the present research was to explore university students' motives for using webcams in remote learning and the meanings attributed to their use by academic teachers and students. The research work was centred around the following research questions:

1. What are students' general attitudes towards the use of webcams in remote classes?
2. What are lecturers' general attitudes towards the use of webcams in remote classes?
3. What are the positive aspects of using webcams in class, as identified by students?
4. What are the negative aspects of using webcams in class, as identified by students?
5. What are the positive aspects of using webcams in class, as identified by lecturers?
6. What are the negative aspects of using webcams in class, as identified by lecturers?
7. What are the research participants' suggestions/postulates for the future regarding the use of webcams in class?

The study was based on semi-structured interviews conducted with a questionnaire containing open-ended questions. The use of open-ended questions, unlimited time and uncontrolled expression were intended to enable unrestricted opinions that would help to identify the motives and meanings attributed to students' use of webcams in remote classes. Links to the questionnaires (in the version for students or lecturers, respectively) were provided to 119 education (pedagogy) and psychology students and lecturers at three Polish universities: the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, the Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław and the University of Lower Silesia in Wrocław.



Table 1. Characteristics of the studied group: Students

1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
1S	M	14.06.21	Ps	II	31S	K	14.06.21	Ps	I	61S	K	5.11.21	Ped	II	91S	K	8.11.21	Ped	V
2S	K	14.06.21	Ps	I	32S	K	14.06.21	Ps	I	62S	M	5.11.21	Ps	II	92S	K	8.11.21	Ped	V
3S	K	14.06.21	Ps	I	33S	K	14.06.21	Ps	I	63S	K	5.11.21	Ps	II	93S	K	8.11.21	Ped	II
4S	K	14.06.21	Ps	II	34S	M	14.06.21	Ps	V	64S	K	5.11.21	Ped	II	94S	K	8.11.21	Ped	V
5S	K	14.06.21	Ps	I	35S	K	14.06.21	Ps	V	65S	K	5.11.21	Ped	II	95S	K	8.11.21	Ped	V
6S	K	14.06.21	Ps	I	36S	K	15.06.21	Ps	V	66S	K	5.11.21	Ped	II	96S	K	8.11.21	Ped	V
7S	K	14.06.21	Ps	I	37S	M	15.06.21	Ps	V	67S	K	5.11.21	Ped	II	97S	K	8.11.21	Ped	V
8S	K	14.06.21	Ps	I	38S	K	15.06.21	Ps	I	68S	K	5.11.21	Ps	II	98S	K	8.11.21	Ped	V
9S	K	14.06.21	Ps	I	39S	K	15.06.21	Ps	II	69S	M	5.11.21	Ped	II	99S	K	8.11.21	Ped	V
10S	K	14.06.21	Ps	I	40S	K	15.06.21	Ps	I	70S	K	5.11.21	Ped	II	100S	K	8.11.21	Ped	V
11S	K	14.06.21	Ps	I	41S	M	16.06.21	Ps	I	71S	K	5.11.21	Ped	II	101S	K	8.11.21	Ped	V
12S	K	14.06.21	Ps	I	42S	M	17.06.21	Ps	V	72S	K	5.11.21	Ps	II	102S	K	8.11.21	Ped	V
13S	K	14.06.21	Ps	I	43S	K	17.06.21	Ped	IV	73S	K	5.11.21	Ped	II	103S	K	8.11.21	Ped	V
14S	K	14.06.21	Ps	I	44S	K	17.06.21	Ps	I	74S	M	5.11.21	Ps	II	104S	M	8.11.21	Ped	V
15S	K	14.06.21	Ps	V	45S	M	17.06.21	Ps	I	75S	M	6.11.21	Ps	II	105S	M	8.11.21	Ped	V
16S	K	14.06.21	Ps	I	46S	K	17.06.21	Ped	III	76S	K	6.11.21	Ps	II	106S	K	8.11.21	Ped	V
17S	K	14.06.21	Ps	I	47S	K	17.06.21	Ped	III	77S	K	6.11.21	Ps	II	107S	K	8.11.21	Ped	V
18S	K	14.06.21	Ps	II	48S	M	18.06.21	Ped	IV	78S	K	6.11.21	Ps	II	108S	K	8.11.21	Ped	V
19S	K	14.06.21	Ps	I	49S	K	19.06.21	Ped	V	79S	K	6.11.21	Ps	II	109S	K	8.11.21	Ped	V
20S	K	14.06.21	Ps	I	50S	K	22.06.21	Ps	I	80S	K	7.11.21	Ps	II	110S	K	8.11.21	Ped	II
21S	K	14.06.21	Ps	I	51S	K	25.06.21	Ps	V	81S	K	7.11.21	Ped	II	111S	K	8.11.21	Ps	II
22S	K	14.06.21	Ps	I	52S	K	29.06.21	Ped	II	82S	M	8.11.21	Ped	II	112S	K	8.11.21	Ped	V
23S	K	14.06.21	Ps	I	53S	K	22.07.21	Ps	I	83S	K	8.11.21	Ped	II	113S	K	9.11.21	Ped	III
24S	K	14.06.21	Ps	I	54S	K	1.11.21	Ped	III	84S	K	8.11.21	Ped	III	114S	K	9.11.21	Ped	II
25S	K	14.06.21	Ps	I	55S	M	1.11.21	Ped	III	85S	K	8.11.21	Ped	V	115S	K	11.11.21	Ped	III
26S	K	14.06.21	Ps	I	56S	K	2.11.21	Ped	III	86S	K	8.11.21	Ped	V	116S	K	11.11.21	Ped	V
27S	K	14.06.21	Ps	I	57S	K	2.11.21	Ped	III	87S	K	8.11.21	Ped	V	117S	K	14.11.21	Ps	II
28S	K	14.06.21	Ps	I	58S	K	5.11.21	Ped	II	88S	M	8.11.21	Ped	II	118S	M	16.11.21	Ped	III
29S	K	14.06.21	Ps	I	59S	K	5.11.21	Ped	II	89S	K	8.11.21	Ped	V	119S	K	16.11.21	Ped	III
30S	K	14.06.21	Ps	I	60S	K	5.11.21	Ped	II	90S	K	8.11.21	Ped	V					

1 - Respondent identifier;  
 2 - Gender (F - female, M - male);  
 3 - Date surveyed (dd.mm.yy);  
 4 - Field of study (Ps - Psychology; Ed - Education (Pedagogy));  
 5 - Year of study (I, II, III - respectively: 1st, 2nd or 3rd year at a first-cycle / long-cycle degree programme; IV, V - respectively: 1st or 2nd year at a second-cycle degree programme / 4th or 5th year at a long-cycle degree programme.

Source: Author's own research.

A total of 19 education (pedagogy) and psychology lecturers participated in the study.

The sampling was non-probabilistic, and availability-based. The research was conducted towards the end of the 2020/2021 summer term and the beginning of the 2021/2022 winter term.

Table 2. Characteristics of the studied group: Lecturers

Respondent identifier	Gender (M or F)	Date surveyed (dd. mm.yy)	Teaching experience, in years
1L	M	27.05.21	6-10
2L	F	07.06.21	6-10
3L	F	17.06.21	16-20
4L	F	17.06.21	Over 20
5L	F	18.06.21	Over 20
6L	M	18.06.21	Over 20
7L	F	30.10.21	16-20
8L	F	30.10.21	1-5
9L	F	30.10.21	1-5
10L	M	31.10.21	Over 20
11L	F	31.10.21	6-10
12L	F	31.10.21	Over 20
13L	F	01.11.21	16-20
14L	M	02.11.21	16-20
15L	F	03.11.21	Over 20
16L	F	05.11.21	11-15
17L	M	05.11.21	Over 20
18L	F	05.11.21	6-10
19L	M	07.11.21	Over 20

Source: Author's own research.

### 3. Students' motivations for using webcams in remote learning and the meanings attributed to the use of webcams by students and lecturers

#### 3.1. Students' attitudes towards the use of webcams in remote classes

Participants do notice positive aspects of the use of webcams in the conduct of classes (71 people; 59,7%). They consider such use useful or necessary, or even essential. Even if they had some difficulties using a webcam, became accustomed to it and appreciate positive effects.

Participants (37 students; 31,1%) have a negative attitude towards the use of web cameras, which they express in the following responses: "I don't turn it on, I don't like it, I don't want to" (1S), "it's uncomfortable" (9S), "it stresses me out" (3S), "cumbersome and inconvenient" (84S). These students claim that webcams are "not needed at all" (29S) in the remote learning process and create "an artificial atmosphere" (76S). Others, despite being reluctant, also notice positive aspects and effects of webcam use.

Also, 9,2% students (11 people) indicate that the use of web cameras is not relevant for the quality of their education, e.g. "as an auditory learner, I am a listener in class anyway, with my eyesight controlling the note-writing" (48S).

#### 3.2. Lecturers' attitudes towards students' use of webcams in remote classes

Lecturers point to the necessity or positive aspects of webcam use (16 people). One lecturer believes that "this is not the most important aspect in remote teaching" (3L) and adds "I do not require webcams to be turned on because I believe that students are grown-up people, able to decide for themselves whether they want to participate in the classes and to what extent." Another one states that "turning webcams on in large groups makes no sense" (18L). Another one draws attention to personal image protection and does not recommend the use of web cameras (10L). Four lecturers also demonstrate an under-

standing for non-use of webcams by students, while emphasising the importance of lecturers having their webcam on (1L, 8L, 10L, 16L).

However, there are also other voices: *“At first, I set a requirement that students should turn on their cameras. Later on, I realised that they sometimes fail to do it because of barriers, and circumstances beyond their control. However, I still think it should be a requirement. If, for some reason, a student cannot meet this requirement, they should contact the teacher and explain the situation”* (7L).

### 3.3. Positive aspects of using webcams, as identified by students

The following aspects were most commonly identified by students as conducive to the use of webcams:

- increased focus and engagement in activities (62,2%, 74 people), i.e. attention sustained for longer, increased activity: *“they discipline us and motivate us to take an active part in classes”* (6S); *“in small groups (...), this improves the atmosphere and engagement”* (68S), *“it mobilises people to act, to be active”* (69S), improved remembering and understanding of content, better quality of classes (24S, 87S, 89S), enhanced attractiveness of classes (32S, 82S);
- empathy for the teachers (42,9%; 51 people): *“to make the lecturers feel better”* (21S), *“to offer encouragement to lecturers”* (22S), *“it’s easier to conduct classes when you see faces rather than icons/avatars”* (45S), *“the lecturer also does a better job when they see interest from the audience”* (38S), *“I feel sorry for the lecturers, I get the impression that it makes them feel that no one is listening to them”* (40S), *“I turn it on when I see that the lecturer’s happiness is higher than my discomfort of having it on”* (45S), *“it is easier for the lecturer to verify whether the knowledge they’re conveying is understandable”* (38S);
- better communication (39,5%; 47 people): *“[without a camera] you can’t see people’s reactions”* (7S), *“[when cameras are on] it promotes discussion”* (38S);
- building personal relationships with other students (34,4%; 41 people): *“to know, at least to a small extent, what my fellow students look like”* (6S), *“a way for the group to integrate”* (104S), *“people feel a little closer to one another”* (33S), *“this is necessary for us not to feel like computers, but to feel like humans”* (87S);
- a guarantee of students’ actual participation in class / exams or tests (16,8%; 20 people): *“it verifies the speaker, it’s for identification”* (34S);
- better organisation (10,9%; 13 people): *“through your clothes, tidying up your desk/bedroom etc.”* (47S), *“it forces you to get ready in the morning and get out of bed”* (18S);
- preparation for working with people (5,9%; 7 people): *“it overcomes our fears, fear of public speaking”* (54S), *“I think it’s the first step towards overcoming our own weaknesses, embarrassment in vulnerability”* (18S), *“how is a psychology student going to talk to a patient in the future if they are afraid to show up??”* (13S).

### 3.4. Negative aspects of using webcams in remote classes, as identified by students

Students indicated the following negative aspects of using webcams during remote classes:

- unpleasant feelings (66,4%; 79 people): stress, tension, nervousness: *“they are too stressful in some situations”* (20S), *“it’s embarrassing”* (18S), feeling ashamed: *“we’re ashamed of how we look, afraid of being judged by people”* (9S), *“at first, I was ashamed when doing this”* (19S, 103S);
- technical difficulties (52,9%; 63 people): deteriorating connection quality *“greater technical glitches (the video freezes, the video doesn’t keep up)”* (15S), *“the Internet connection is jammed”* (23S), *“difficulties with keeping the class smooth”* (105S), *“when many people turn their cameras on, this makes it difficult for the teacher because the network is overloaded”* (12 S), *“I decided to change my Internet connection after a year”* (48S); having no camera *“not everyone has a camera in*

*their laptop or computer, and using your phone is neither convenient nor practical, and it can be embarrassing*" (71S);

- uncomfortable conditions at home (45,4%, 54 people): *"what definitely makes it difficult is some hard situation at home, like noisy younger siblings or the fact that they share a room with them, for example"* (12S), *"family members don't care, they walk in and out as they please"* (33S), *"everyone kind of knows they're supposed not to disturb, but my physical presence at home means they think they can interrupt my classes for a while"* (38S);
- fear of one's appearance being judged (42%; 50 people): *"we are ashamed of our appearance and afraid of being judged by people"* (9S);
- invasion of privacy – one's own and household members (27,7%; 33 people): *"I treat my flat as something very private and feel bad when I have to show it to others"* (15S), *"we don't live alone, there might be a roommate (or worse, my dad father) accidentally coming in the background in his underpants, this is already a good enough reason to become a laughing stock"* (45S);
- lack of concentration on the content of classes (12,6%; 15 people): *"instead of focusing on lectures or tutorials, you get distracted by seeing familiar faces on the screen (...), it's easier for us to participate actively in classes when others can't see us"* (25S), *"it's hard to focus on things other than your own image on the screen"* (39S);
- the sense of being watched (12,6%; 15 people): *"when someone is looking at us in a real-life situation, we will notice it, but it's impossible to spot it online, and other people are certainly looking at us"* (68S);
- fear of having one's image captured/recorded (7,6%; 9 people): *"anyone can take a screenshot (...), use the photos for things like memes, especially when the camera freezes and you are stuck with a funny face for a longer while"* (76S);
- fatigue (3,4%; 4 people): *"fatigue from being constantly active, constantly paying attention"* (38S).

### 3.5. Positive aspects of using webcams in remote classes, as identified by lecturers

The surveyed lecturers identified the following positive aspects of using webcams during remote classes: confirmation of contact *"I know that someone is out there at the other end"* (1L), stimulating student engagement *"mobilisation to act, mobilisation to look good, to take care of the space around them"* (12L), improved quality of classes *"when we conduct workshops, absence of cameras makes it virtually impossible to conduct them in a way to achieve the learning goals"* (16L), establishing *"personal relations"* (5L), avoiding anonymity (5L, 7L, 9L, 15L), improving communication *"showing emotions, non-verbal messages"* (10L), *"taking care of non-verbal elements in communication (...), better atmosphere in the class, and better communication"* (12L), *"improved communication, possibility to observe mutual reactions"* (13L).

### 3.6. Negative aspects of using webcams in remote classes, as identified by lecturers

The surveyed lecturers identified the following negative aspects of using webcams during remote classes: deteriorated quality of signal at both ends *"the app freezes, the Internet crashes"* (14L), students' embarrassment *"they are ashamed of their appearance and/or their surroundings, they have no good conditions at home for remote learning"* (12L), *"a sense of being constantly watched"* (13L), *"reluctance about being exposed"* (18S), as well as students' resistance and fatigue: *"if cameras are on for a long time, and constantly switched on, this can lead to fatigue"* (5L).

### 3.7. Respondents' suggestions/postulates for the future regarding the use of webcams in class

Students (56,3%; 67 persons) suggest that the use of webcams during classes should be voluntary: *"I am in favour of webcams not being forced on us, but lecturers can ENCOURAGE us, without pressurising us to do it"* (45S), *"without forcing us but with gratitude :)"* (24S), *"only when someone feels like it"* (2S), *"I think there should be a free choice in this matter"* (25S), *"not*

*forcing people to do it, and accepting that not everyone wants to turn their camera on” (51S), “teachers should be more understanding” (5S), “I’d suggest that lecturers encourage us to turn the cameras on, but not in a pushy, coercive way, and they should also turn them on, as this can be an incentive for students to switch their webcams on” (72S), “they can ask for it at the beginning of the class but they shouldn’t force us” (36S), “this should be voluntary, or the lecturer should tell us at least one day in advance that webcams would be required” (20S).*

Lecturers who understand this expectation express the following opinions: *“I really want the cameras to be on, but I do realise that they are switched off for various reasons. That’s why it is difficult to introduce any rules for their use. Sometimes people may simply have no such camera” (8L), “a flexible approach, but with a preference for having webcams on. It’s very important to have contact with people, also visually” (5L).*

Students suggest that webcams should not be used by people who are not speaking at the moment, and accept the need to use a camera when they are presenting, during an exam, consultation with a lecturer or when attendance is being checked (47,9%; 57 persons).

A group of 21 students (17,6%) favour mandatory, constant use of webcams: *“everyone should have their webcams on” (16S), “it should be compulsory; then we wouldn’t have splits and conformism anymore; coercion means that everyone must conform; and they would grumble and find ways out at the beginning, but then everyone would accept it, and it would be easier for everyone” (33S), “everyone must turn their webcam on during a classes, not only, say, five people in the group” (9S).* These respondents also suggest the following consequences: *“having your webcam on, and if you fail to turn it on a few times, you’ll have to, say, write an essay” (49S, 66S), “[keeping the webcam off] should mean that people get lower final grades” (68S) or “get no credit for the class” (70S), “in order to change the situation with webcams, pressure from the teacher would be needed, and everyone would get used to it over time” (14S).*

Like-minded lecturers expressed the following views: *“everyone has their camera on” (4L), “they should be always on for classes to be effective” (9L), “introducing some top-down regulations that students must attend classes with their cameras on” (11L), “asking, instructing people to do so, making them bear negative consequences as a last resort” (17L).* However, other lecturers demonstrate a different perspective on such requirements: *“I think that asking for cameras to be on will be difficult to enforce. Perhaps talking to students at the beginning of the class, and presenting your opinion about it might get through to them” (6L), “If the university provided students with equipment and access to a fast Internet connection, then students could indeed be required to use webcams, but there are still inequalities in this regard. Even some teachers experience technical problems:)” (1L).*

Furthermore, students themselves called for an understanding in the case of hardware problems: *“if the software didn’t jam with more cameras on, then anyone who feels comfortable about it could have it on” (23S).* They also pointed to a negative effect of compulsory use of webcams, namely resistance: *“if it’s compulsory, I notice that the atmosphere is sour and people are unwilling to take part” (50S).*

The following demands were also expressed by the surveyed students: *“it’s best if either everyone has a webcam or nobody turns them on” (7S), “the imposed rules should also be respected by lecturers; either we all have cameras on, or nobody has. (I had one class where the lecturer asked us to switch on the cameras but he remained invisible, this was very uncomfortable and unfair)” (47S), “voting, the majority wins” (60S), “a teacher without their camera on is pathetic, in my view:)” (116S), “it’s not pleasant when the teacher has their camera off” (9S).* As if in response to these expectations, one lecturer called for *“respecting the decisions of both the teacher and the students who want their personal image to be protected” (10L).*

Both students and lecturers declare the need for individual policies and discussions on the subject. They also suggest training and related preparation for both students and lecturers alike:

- individually, tailored to the subject, activity and group (27 students, 3 lecturers): *“the rules would need to be selected for each specific group, there shouldn’t be any general rules”* (46S), *“I’d expect students to turn on their cameras when speaking but also when performing group tasks”* (79S), *“setting some rules”* (1L), *“these issues are to be decided between the course instructor and the specific student group”* (16L), *“This has to be worked out/agreed on in each group. With our technical potential, rigid adherence to a fixed pattern can only lead to tensions and stress”* (15L);
- training for students and lecturers (2 students, 3 lecturers): *“preparing students to work with webcams on”* (37S), *“training/educating the teaching staff about the use [of webcams] and the possibilities offered by remote teaching”* (48S), *“I’d encourage the university to take up the topic, e.g. by developing some kind of campaign. Additionally, it would be good for the lecturers to discuss good practices in this regard”* (7L), *“to teach and inform people about the consequences of learning with or without eye contact, without a substitute of face-to-face encounters”* (11L).

The primary motive for using a webcam, as revealed by 85,7% (102) surveyed students and 89,5% (17) lecturers, is an explicit request or instruction by the lecturer to do so. Students are not proactive in this respect. Both students and lecturers observe such motives for using webcams as enhanced concentration and engagement in activities, improved communication, building personal relationships or confirming class attendance. Particularly noteworthy is the motive mentioned by students, i.e. understanding, empathy and respect for the lecturer.

Students and lecturers differ in terms of the meanings they ascribe to the very fact of switching the camera on, as reflected in the research findings presented above. Lecturers and some students consider this to be a natural and essential element of the educational process. Students also pointed out that webcam use may play a disruptive role and diminish the quality of their education.

## Discussion and conclusions

The COVID19 pandemic temporarily deprived students of face-to-face learning opportunities, leading to reduced social interaction, which is an important part of the learning process. Although higher education temporarily returned to the on-site mode, in the future universities will integrate online courses as part of education system.

Many studies, including the present one, confirm that remote education can be effective in certain areas. Research has revealed a number of reasons, other than laziness or cheating, why students refrain from using webcams, and this can provide valuable insights for academic teachers. Respondents’ statements also show the advantages of using webcams and how this can be applied in remote teaching. However, it is worth undertaking systemic measures to support academic teachers and students to make sure that the process of education which is partially carried out remotely can proceed without compromising the quality of education and standards required by curricula (UNESCO, 2021). Multiple efforts are needed to this end, such as steps to ensure interactive education. It is recommended that systems should be designed to monitor the needs and required changes in higher education and that research in this area is undertaken (UNESCO, 2021).

A mandatory use of webcams by students is not a recommended strategy, for instance because non-use may stem from extremely sensitive reasons, such as, for example, fear of being judged on the basis of the setting where they pursue their remote learning (Castelli et al., 2021). It seems beneficial to employ multiple methods to encourage students’ participation in the communication process, such as forums, chat or collaborative document editing (Castelli et al., 2021). One useful practice would be to define norms at the start of a course. These conclusions are also supported by the present study. When asked about negative aspects of using webcams during remote classes, students most commonly mentioned the following: fear of their appearance being judged, insecurity, risk of being recorded/having an unfavourable photo taken and shared

further, sense of being observed, unpleasant feelings undermining their sense of comfort, lack of concentration on the content of classes, fatigue caused by continuous activity and constant attentiveness, uncomfortable conditions at home, violation of privacy (their own and their household members'), technical difficulties (unavailability of a webcam or deteriorated connection quality for both sides with the cameras on), and students' resistance. In turn, lecturers identified the following negative aspects: deteriorated connection quality at both ends, and students feeling embarrassed. This study has also confirmed some reasons for not using webcams that have been identified in parallel by other studies, such as technical reasons (lack of a reliable Internet connection or a computer with a working webcam and microphone), lack of a comfortable space for unrestrained participation in classes, shyness and embarrassment about the appearance of one's home (Gherheş, Şimon, Para, 2021), concerns about one's looks (Castelli, Sarvary, 2021), as well as the desire to maintain privacy (Bedenlier et al, 2021) and the phenomenon of "Zoom fatigue" (Bonanomi, Barello, Villani, 2021).

Students do notice positive aspects of running classes with webcams on: it fosters their engagement in activities, enhances communication and relationship-building with other students and lecturers. Lecturers have also indicated positive aspects of webcams being used by both students and lecturers. They also demonstrate an under-

standing for students not using webcams while emphasising the importance of webcam use by lecturers. What seems particularly noteworthy is that many of the surveyed students and lecturers want to build mutual relationships, and students are empathetic and concerned about the well-being of their lecturers. Thus, this research has confirmed that synchronous online education provides opportunities for greater interactivity and engagement among students, constructive feedback as well as real-time collaborative learning (Racheva, 2018), it helps to satisfy psychological needs (Fabrız, Mendzheritskaya, Stehle, 2021), and builds a sense of community (Lin, Gao, 2020).

The research presented in this paper was exploratory in nature: while it sheds light on this new phenomenon, it is certainly not exhaustive. What is definitely an important and new aspect of this study is to show the problem from two perspectives and to find, for example, an insight that was previously undetected, namely that students expect the use of webcams during remote classes to be voluntary, while lecturers understand this expectation. Moreover, both students and lecturers declare the need for introducing individual policies and discussing them, as well as the need for training and related preparation for both students and academic teachers. Thus, the need to develop training in this sphere is a valuable conclusion of the present study.

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# On the pursuit of happiness. Personality underpinnings of life satisfaction of Spanish and Polish university freshmen

W poszukiwaniu szczęścia. Osobowościowe uwarunkowania satysfakcji z życia hiszpańskich i polskich studentów pierwszych lat studiów

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**Abstract:** The aim of the present study was to analyse the relationship between personality traits and life satisfaction among university freshmen. Knowledge about personality determinants of life satisfaction in newly enrolled university students can be used to predict their successful adaptation to new educational requirements. Two groups of students were surveyed: Spaniards studying in Spain ( $n = 164$ ;  $M_{age} = 21.25$ ;  $SD = 1.97$ ) and Poles studying in Poland ( $n = 162$ ;  $M_{age} = 22.85$ ;  $SD = 1.24$ ). The following instruments were used: the Ten Item Personality Inventory (TIPI) and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). The results showed that in the group of Spanish students, life satisfaction correlated positively with Extraversion, Conscientiousness and Neuroticism, while in the group of Polish students, it correlated positively with all personality traits. In both Polish and Spanish students, Extraversion, Conscientiousness and Neuroticism were significant predictors of higher life satisfaction. The Polish and Spanish student groups differed slightly in the patterns of the relationships between personality traits and life satisfaction, however, in both samples, higher levels of Extraversion, Conscientiousness and lower levels of Neuroticism were conducive to higher life satisfaction. The article discusses the educational implications of the reported findings.

**Keywords:** life satisfaction, personality traits, Polish students, Spanish students, well-being

**Abstrakt:** Celem artykułu jest ukazanie związków jakie zachodzą między cechami osobowości a satysfakcją z życia wśród studentów pierwszego roku studiów narodowości hiszpańskiej oraz polskiej. Wiedza na temat osobowościowych uwarunkowań satysfakcji z życia studentów rozpoczynających naukę na uczelni wyższej pozwala przewidywać jakość ich adaptacji do nowego środowiska i wymagań edukacyjnych. Przebadano dwie grupy studentów: Hiszpanów studiujących w Hiszpanii ( $n = 164$ ;  $M_{age} = 21.25$ ;  $SD = 1.97$ ) oraz Polaków studiujących w Polsce ( $n = 162$ ;  $M_{wiek} = 22.85$ ;  $SD = 1.24$ ). Oba kraje pomimo wielu podobieństw, mają inną historię oraz kulturę. Zastosowano następujące narzędzia badawcze: Ten Item Personality Inventory (TIPI) i Skalę Satysfakcji z Życia (SWLS). W grupie studentów z Hiszpanii satysfakcja z życia korelowała dodatnio z ekstrawersją, sumiennością i stabilnością emocjonalną, zaś w grupie studentów z Polski, satysfakcja z życia korelowała dodatnio ze wszystkimi cechami osobowości. W obu grupach narodowościowych ekstrawersja, sumiennosc i stabilność emocjonalna były istotnymi predyktorami wyższej satysfakcji z życia. Grupa studentów z Hiszpanii i Polski różniła się pod względem wzorców powiązań między cechami osobowości i satysfakcją z życia, jednak w obu grupach wyższej satysfakcji z życia sprzyjało wyższe nasilenie cech związanych z wymiarem ekstrawersji, sumiennosci i zrównowazenia emocjonalnego. W artykule przedyskutowano praktyczne implikacje, jakie niesie za sobą wiedza o osobowościowych uwarunkowaniach satysfakcji z życia u studentów dwóch narodowości dla praktyki edukacyjnej na uczelniach wyższych.

**Słowa kluczowe:** satysfakcja z życia, cechy osobowości, studenci polscy, studenci hiszpańscy, dobrostan

## 1. Introduction

Poland and Spain both belong to Western culture and are member states of the European Union (Lipowska, Lipowski, & Jankowska, 2007). Despite these similarities, the two countries differ greatly from one another. The differences regard social, political and historical conditions, and include cultural differences described in the literature of the subject

(cf. Brooks, 2021; Hofstede, 2001; McCrae, 2017). Moreover, Poland and Spain have distinct models of university education and diverse economic situations (Kurantowicz, Nizińska, Padilla-Carmona, & González-Monteagudo, 2017). In both countries, just as in the rest of Europe, measures have been taken to increase the employability of graduates, with each

country adopting a distinct strategy. The reforms adopted in Poland mainly involved the introduction of mechanisms for controlling the quality of education, which was particularly important in the context of the rapid massification of higher education. Spain, on the other hand, focused on increasing enrolment rates, a measure of access to education expressed as a ratio of the number of students enrolled in a given level of education to the size of the population of the age group corresponding to this level of education (Kurantowicz et al., 2017).

For young people who enrol in a higher education institution, the academic environment becomes one of the basic contexts of their daily functioning. This new milieu is to young adults what the school environment is to adolescents or what the workplace is to adults. This means that satisfaction with this area of life may be an important component of their well-being (Wałęcka-Matyja, 2019). The new educational and social setting imposes on students requirements that they need to adapt to, which may temporarily lead to difficulties and potentially lower the level of their satisfaction with life. Effective functioning and coping with challenges at this stage of life is determined, among others, by personality traits (Cabras, & Mondo, 2018; Jovanović, 2019).

### 1.1. Personality traits

According to the Big Five model, personality is a dimension of individual differences which encompasses traits that are responsible for the characteristic ways individuals feel, think and behave (McCrae, 2017; Piechurska-Kuciel, 2020; Yunus, Wahab, Ismail, & Othman, 2018). Moreover, personality traits are viewed as biological dispositions that manifest themselves in how people react in various situations (Andrei, 2020; McCrae, & Sutin, 2018). Although the traits are independent of culture, they can manifest themselves differently depending on the patterns of socialization, values, and moral norms prevailing in a given culture and the type of culture (traditional *vs* western; Bleidorn et al., 2020; Rudnev, Magun, & Schwartz, 2018; Vignoles, Smith, Becker, & Easterbrook, 2018).

The Big Five model comprises five universal personality traits: Extraversion, Neuroticism, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness and Openness to experience. *Extraversion* is related to the quantity and quality of social interactions. *Neuroticism* refers to balance, coping skills and the level of anxiety. *Conscientiousness* involves being ready to work tirelessly and persistently towards distant goals. *Agreeableness* is associated with harmonious coexistence with other people and avoiding conflicts, while *Openness to experience* refers to the desire to experiment, seek novelty and ponder over the world's contradictions. This last trait is also associated with the level of creativity and mental flexibility (Dalpé, Demers, Verner-Filion, & Valleurand, 2019; McCrae, 2017; McCrae, & Sutin, 2018).

### 1.2. Life satisfaction

Life satisfaction is defined as a cognitive component of subjective well-being and is a generalized assessment of one's own life (Heintzelman, & Diener, 2019; Jansi & Anbazhagan, 2017; Tov, 2018; Vladislavljević, & Mentus, 2019). This assessment is made against one's values and social norms (Li, Zuckerman, & Diener, 2019) and covers such aspects of life as work and earnings, level of education, relationships with family and friends, and free time activities (Jansi & Anbazhagan, 2017; Lachmann, Sariyska, Kannen, Błaszczewicz, Trendafilov, Andone, Eibes, Markowicz, Li, Kendrick, & Montag, 2018; Yin, Lepinteur, Clark, & D'Ambrosio, 2021). Some studies indicate that life satisfaction is a relatively constant human quality, as it is largely genetically determined. It has also been shown that age plays an important role in the way individuals assess their life satisfaction (Lachmann, Doebler, Sindermann, Sariyska, Cooper, Haas, & Montag, 2021; Røysamb, Nes, Czajkowski, & Vassend, 2018). Some research indicate that relationship between age and life satisfaction is U-shaped (Batz-Barbarich et al., 2018) as young people view their lives differently than older people, who have experienced more adverse changes or failures in their lifetime. Other studies suggest on inverted U—shaped or linear relationship (Lachman et al., 2021). From this reason a sole age is not the sufficient factor in explaining the level of life satisfaction. The significant correlates of life sat-

isfaction are among all: life events, health, economic status, social interactions and religiosity (Diener, Oishi, & Tay, 2018; Jebb, Tay, Diener, & Oishi, 2018; Szcześniak, Sopińska, & Kroplewski, 2019; Zhang et al., 2021). Some research indicates that gender can also be a variable which can be linked with life satisfaction as men and women differ in some determinants of life satisfaction. Generally, marital status and interpersonal relationships are stronger predictors of life satisfaction in women, whereas employment and education-related factors are more important factors of life satisfaction in men (Joshnloo, 2018). Life satisfaction is also connected to personality traits (e.g. Lachmann et al., 2018; Røysamb, et al., 2018). In this light, it seems that life satisfaction is a product of both biologically determined personal factors and external factors (Diener et al., 2018; Hosseinkhanzadeh & Taher, 2013; Jebb et al., 2018). Among internal, subjective factors, the most important role is played by personality traits (Larsen & Buss, 2020; Røysamb, et al., 2018).

### **1.3. Personality and life satisfaction in students**

Many researchers call attention to relationships between personality traits and life satisfaction (Jovanović, 2019; Lachmann et al., 2018; Steel et al., 2019). The personality traits that are pivotal for subjective satisfaction with life are Extraversion, Neuroticism and Conscientiousness (Ali, 2019; DeNeve & Cooper, 1998; Lachmann et al., 2018; Odaci, & Cikrikci, 2019; Røysamb et al., 2018; Szcześniak et al., 2019). Extraversion characterizes people who are sociable and enjoy interacting with others and therefore are more likely to evaluate their lives more favourably. Neuroticism (low emotional stability), in turn, correlates negatively with life satisfaction, as it promotes such emotions as sadness, irritation, aversion towards others (Kim, Schimmack, & Tsutsui, 2018; Szcześniak et al., 2019). Conscientiousness is associated with making efforts to effectively achieve goals and then drawing satisfaction from them, which also promotes satisfaction with life (Abdullahi, Orji, Rabi, & Kawu, 2020; DeNeve & Cooper, 1998). Agreeableness and Openness to experience are slightly less strongly related to satisfaction with life. Agreeableness influences

satisfaction with life in as much as it allows people to derive satisfaction from being with others. Openness to experience, on the other hand, favours engaging in actions that follow from a person's individual needs (Ali, 2019; Hayes & Joseph, 2002; Sato, Jordan, Funk, & Sachs, 2018; Stephan, 2009), and the possibility of pursuing activities that are in line with one's individual needs and goals increases life satisfaction.

Relationships between the Big Five personality traits and life satisfaction in young people, including students of different nationalities, have been extensively described in the literature. For example, Joshnloo and Afshari (2011), who studied a group of Iranian students, found that Extraversion and Neuroticism explained 25.4% of the variance in life satisfaction. Also, a study conducted in a group of Indian female students revealed that Extraversion, Neuroticism, Conscientiousness and Agreeableness significantly correlated with life satisfaction, but only Extraversion and Neuroticism turned out to be significant predictors of life satisfaction (Jansi & Anbazhagan, 2017). Similarly, Fagley (2012) observed that the Big Five personality traits explained 31% of the variance in life satisfaction in a sample of American students, and that Extraversion, Neuroticism and Conscientiousness were the strongest predictors of life satisfaction. There are studies that show that the influence of personality traits on satisfaction with life is even greater. In Lounsbury, Saudargas, Gibson and Leong's study (2005) of a sample of American students, the Big Five personality traits were found to explain as much as 45% of the variance in life satisfaction. Relationships between personality and life satisfaction have also been shown to be moderated by gender: in a study by Suldo et al. (2014), higher levels of Agreeableness were associated with higher life satisfaction scores in girls, but not in boys. In a more recent study of Ali (2019) conducted on a group of 613 Pakistani students revealed a positive influence of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience on satisfaction with life. Neuroticism was negatively related to life satisfaction. In the research of Altalahin (2021) conducted on 220 Jordanian students revealed that extraversion, openness to experience and conscientiousness were linked with the level of life satisfaction whereas there

was no statistically significant impact of neuroticism and agreeableness on life satisfaction. Cross-cultural studies also point to the importance of the cultural context in evaluating one's own life (Kim et al., 2018; Kryś, et al., 2021; Lachman et al., 2018). Therefore, research conducted in culturally distinct groups may provide interesting and scientifically valuable findings. In the present article, we report the results of analyses of surveys conducted in two groups of students: Poles and Spaniards.

In the literature to date, similarities and differences between Polish and Spanish students have been analysed in regards to selected determinants of life satisfaction, e.g. relationships between morningness and life satisfaction (Días-Morales, Jankowski, Vollmer, & Randler, 2013), relationships between level of stress and quality of life of nursing students (Kupcewicz, Grochans, Kadučáková, Mikla, Jóźwik, 2020), and the role of global self-esteem in predicting life satisfaction of nursing students (Kupcewicz, Grochans, Mikla, Kadučáková, & Jóźwik, 2020). Because Poland and Spain differ in cultural terms, we expected that students from the two countries would show distinct patterns of relationships between personality traits and life satisfaction.

## 2. Present study

Educational mobility of Polish and Spanish students is becoming more and more common in contemporary education. Getting to know Polish and Spanish people's personality determinants of life satisfaction allows for better preparation of academic teachers to work with students representing a different culture, because it makes it possible to optimize their process of adaptation to new educational requirements. Moreover, it also allows to prepare high school students from both countries to start education in the international environment. The aim of the study was to analyse the relationships between personality traits and life satisfaction in two groups of students: Poles studying in Poland and Spaniards studying in Spain. Previous research shows that personality traits are important predictors of life satisfaction (e. g. Steel et al., 2019; Røysamb et al., 2018), although the patterns of de-

pendence between these variables may differ among people coming from different cultural backgrounds (Bleidorn et al., 2020; Hofstede, 2001; Rudnev, et al., 2018; Vignoles et al., 2018). We expected that the Polish and Spanish students would show distinct patterns of relationships between personality traits and life satisfaction (see Hofstede, 2001; McCrae, 2017).

We hypothesized that: a) in the group of Spanish students, life satisfaction would correlate positively with Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness and Neuroticism (Ruiz, 2005) and that b) in the group of Polish students, life satisfaction would be positively associated with Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and Openness to experience (Tychmanowicz, Filipiak, & Sprynska, 2018).

### 2.1. Method

#### 2.1.1. Participants and procedure

We report the results of a survey conducted in November and December 2019 in a sample of Spanish ( $n = 164$ ) and Polish ( $n = 162$ ) freshmen. The group of Spaniards consisted of 164 individuals aged 18 to 23 ( $M = 21.25$ ;  $SD = 1.97$ ), including 125 women and 39 men. They were students of one public university in Valencia and were majoring in psychology ( $n = 152$ ) and occupational therapy ( $n = 12$ ). Most of the respondents came from large cities ( $n = 83$ ), slightly fewer lived in villages ( $n = 43$ ), and the fewest were residents of small towns ( $n = 38$ ).

The group of Poles comprised 162 students of one public university in eastern Poland in Lublin. The group included 145 women and 17 men. The subjects' age ranged from 18 to 24 years ( $M = 22.85$ ,  $SD = 1.24$ ). They were majoring in education ( $n = 95$ ), musical education ( $n = 18$ ), social work ( $n = 38$ ), and special education ( $n = 11$ ). Most of the Polish respondents lived in villages (88 people) and small towns (53 people), and a few came from large cities (20 people). The survey took 30 minutes to complete and was administered in groups on the university campuses. The respondents were asked to fill in two questionnaires and a short questionnaire pertaining to demographic variables. They were informed about the scientific purpose of the study, the confidentiality

of the information provided, voluntary participation, and the possibility of withdrawing from the study at any stage. All respondents signed an informed consent form before participating. The present study was conducted in compliance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and the protocol was approved by the Ethics Committee for Scientific Research (No 19/2019).

**2.1.2. Measures**

The following instruments were used: the Ten Item Personality Inventory (TIPI), which measures the Big Five personality traits, and the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS), which measures life satisfaction.

Two translations of the TIPI (Gosling, Rentfrow, Swann, 2003) were used: the Polish translation by Sorokowska, Słowińska, Zbieg and Sorokowski (2014), and the Spanish translation by Renau, Gosling, Oberst, Rusiñola and Chamarroc (2013). The TIPI consists of 10 items comprising five scales: Extraversion (E), Neuroticism (N), Agreeableness (A), Conscientiousness (C) and Openness to Experience (O). The participants responded to each item on a scale of 1–7 (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). The reliabilities of the subscales in the Polish sample were:  $\alpha = .45$  (E),  $\alpha = .64$  (N),  $\alpha = .23$  (A),  $\alpha = .67$  (C),  $\alpha = .58$  (O). The reliabilities of the subscales in the Spanish sample were:  $\alpha = .61$  (E),  $\alpha = .60$  (ES),  $\alpha = .20$  (A),  $\alpha = .51$  (C),  $\alpha = .48$  (O).

Two language versions of the SWLS (Diener, Emmons, Larson, Griffin, 1985) were used: the Polish translation by Juczyński (2012) and the Spanish translation by Vazquez, Duque and Hervas (2013). The SWLS measures life satisfaction understood as subjective well-being in different aspects of life (Juczyński, 2012). The scale has five items. The respondents rate how each item relates to their life on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). Cronbach's coefficients of reliability for this scale were  $\alpha = .812$  for the Polish sample and  $\alpha = .837$  for the Spanish sample.

**2.2. Data analysis**

Raw results were analysed using the statistical package SPSS v. 24. We first examined the distributions of the variables. Since they did not differ from the normal distribution, the relationships between the variables were analysed using Pearson's correlation coefficient  $r$ ; a linear regression was also performed. Significance of differences between the correlations was tested using Fisher's Z-test. Then, linear regression analysis was performed separately for the Polish and the Spanish sample; personality traits were used as predictors of life satisfaction.

Table 1. Life satisfaction and personality trait levels in Polish and Spanish students

	Spanish students (n=164)				Polish students (n=162)				<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i> Cohen
	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> ) <i>Min-Max</i>	<i>Ske</i>	<i>K</i>	$\alpha$	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> ) <i>Min-Max</i>	<i>Ske</i>	<i>K</i>	$\alpha$			
Extraversion	5.01 (1.40) 1.00–7.00	-.67	.23	.61	5.09 (1.32) 1.00–7.00	-.59	.06	.45	-.55	.580	.006
Agreeableness	5.39 (1.02) 3.00–7.00	-.27	-.87	.20	5.27 (1.06) 2.50–7.00	-.19	-.66	.23	1.09	.278	.011
Conscientiousness	4.76 (1.42) 1.50–7.00	-.21	-.86	.51	3.83 (1.42) 1.00–7.00	-.50	-.09	.67	.27	.791	.002
Neuroticism	4.13 (1.45) 1.00–7.00	-.13	-.60	.60	3.83 (1.42) 1.00–7.00	-.01	-.56	.64	1.88	.061	.002
Openness to experience	5.59 (1.09) 2.50–7.00	-.76	-.07	.48	4.99 (1.31) 1.00–7.00	-.47	.00	.58	4.56	.000	.049
Life satisfaction	25.58 (5.58) 5.00–35.00	-.98	.76	.84	20.56 (5.50) 5.00–35.00	-.44	-.07	.81	8.13	.000	.088

### 3. Results

As a preliminary step in the analysis, we measured the levels of life satisfaction and the Big Five personality traits (Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and Openness to experience) in the groups of Polish and Spanish students. The results of the analyses are shown in Table 1.

Spanish students were better satisfied with their lives and more open to experience than Polish students. The differences in the levels of these two variables were statistically significant, but Cohen's *d* shows that the effect size was very small in both cases. As for the remaining personality traits, the differences between the Spanish and Polish samples were not statistically significant.

Next, we analysed correlations between personality traits and life satisfaction in Polish and Spanish students. The results of these analyses are shown in Table 2.

The data in Table 2 show that in the Polish sample, all correlations between personality traits and life satisfaction were statistically significant. They were mostly weak and very weak correlations. Life satisfaction was most strongly associated with Neuroticism. In the group of Spanish students, life satisfaction was significantly correlated with Extraversion and Neuroticism (a moderate correlation) as well as Conscientiousness (a weak correlation). No differences were found between the two groups in the relationships between personality traits and life satisfaction.

Table 2. Correlations between personality traits and life satisfaction in the Spanish sample (n=164) and the Polish sample (n=162), and differences between correlations

	Life satisfaction			
	Spanish sample	Spanish sample	Z	p
Extraversion	.34**	.22**	1.88	.12
Agreeableness	.08	.23**	-1.39	.08
Conscientiousness	.26**	.24**	0.19	.42
Neuroticism	.31**	.28**	0.30	.38
Openness to experience	.14	.17*	-0.37	.35

Note: \* p < .05 \*\* p < .01

Table 3. Regression analysis for SWLS in the Spanish sample (n=164) and the Polish sample (n=162)

Group	Variables	Beta	β	β Error	t	p
Spanish students	Extraversion	.32	1.33	.29	4.66	.000*
	Agreeableness	-.17	-.10	.40	-.25	.803
	Conscientiousness	.24	1.01	.28	3.65	.000*
	Neuroticism	.298	1.20	.28	4.33	.000*
	Openness to experience	.05	.25	.38	.67	.502
R= 0.522, R2 = 0.273, F(5,159)=12.449, p=.000						
Polish students	Extraversion	.21	.86	.32	2.70	.008*
	Agreeableness	.13	.68	.39	1.76	.082
	Conscientiousness	.16	.68	.31	2.21	.029*
	Neuroticism	.25	.98	.28	3.46	.001*
	Openness to experience	.05	.22	.32	.68	.499
R= 0.439, R2 = 0.193, F(5,157)=7.60, p=.000						

As the last step in the study, we performed regression analysis. The results are shown in Table 3.

In the group of Spanish students, life satisfaction was significantly predicted by Extraversion, Conscientiousness and Neuroticism, which altogether explained 27.3% of the variance in life satisfaction. A similar result was obtained for the Polish sample, though the percentage of variance in life satisfaction explained by the same personality traits was lower at 19.3%.

#### **4. Discussion**

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationships between personality traits and life satisfaction among students of Spanish and Polish nationality. First, we examined whether the two groups of students differed in terms of the analysed variables. A preliminary analysis of the results showed that Spanish students were characterized by significantly higher levels of life satisfaction and Openness to experience compared to Polish students. This finding is consistent with previous studies in which Spaniards demonstrated higher well-being compared to Poles (Marks et al., 2006; Kupcewicz et al., 2020). A study by Marks, Abdallah, Simms and Thompson (2006) showed that Spaniards were characterized by a high level of well-being, while Poles demonstrated a moderate level of well-being. Compared to Spain, Poland has undergone a considerable political change over the past 20 years, associated, among others, with the overthrow of communism, which may have reduced the subjective sense of well-being of Polish citizens. The well-being of citizens is strongly correlated with the Human Development Index (HDI) and the gross national income per capita. The HDI, which consists of three core indicators: life expectancy, education level and standard of living, is higher in Spain than in Poland: Poland was ranked 32 and Spain 22 in the 2019 Human Development Report<sup>1</sup> (Yin, et al., 2021). The finding regarding the Spanish students' higher Openness to experience is interesting, but the literature offers little information on Openness to experience viewed from an intercultural perspective

(McCrae, Costa, Terracciano, Parker, Mills, DeFruyt, & Mervielde, 2002; Woo, Chernyshenko, Longley, Zhang, Chiu, & Stark, 2014). It has been shown, however, that individuals who are more open to experience are more likely to engage in activities that facilitate the fulfilment of their desires and goals, and thus Openness to experience may, indirectly, increase life satisfaction (Christensen, 2020; Hayes & Joseph, 2002; Silvia, & Christensen, 2020; Stephan, 2009). It can therefore be said that Spanish students, compared to their Polish peers, are more versatile and focused on seeking diversity and life experiences related to the achievement of vital goals. This observation has important implications for educators working with university students, especially Polish nationals; it shows that more focus should be placed on improving the well-being of freshmen. Students should be encouraged to actively look for various ways of achieving goals, while being provided with a sense of security and stability in the new educational setting. The results of the present study show that such an approach may contribute to increasing students' life satisfaction.

With regard to the relationships between personality traits and life satisfaction, we showed that there were both similarities and differences between the two groups. However, it should be emphasized that these differences were not statistically significant. In the Spanish sample, all personality traits, except for Openness to experience, correlated with satisfaction with life. This finding is consistent with the data reported by Ruiz (2005), who obtained the same result for the relationships between personality traits and life satisfaction in a group of Spanish students. In the Polish sample, life satisfaction correlated with all personality traits, and the strongest correlation was observed between life satisfaction and Neuroticism. This finding is partially consistent with the results obtained by Tychmanowicz, Filipiak and Sprynska in a sample of Polish students (2018). In their study, only Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and Openness to experience correlated with the respondent's satisfaction with life. Jansi and Anbazhagan (2017) showed that life satisfaction was associated with Extraversion,

<sup>1</sup> [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr\\_2019\\_overview\\_-\\_english.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr_2019_overview_-_english.pdf)



Conscientiousness, Agreeableness and Neuroticism in female students from India. The results of studies conducted by various authors in samples of students of different nationalities clearly show that personality traits are related to students' satisfaction with life, and that these relationships may be affected by cultural factors.

Additional analyses conducted in this present study showed that in the Spanish sample, Extraversion, Conscientiousness and Neuroticism were significant predictors of life satisfaction and altogether accounted for 27.3% of the variance in life satisfaction. The same pattern of results was obtained in the Polish sample, but the percentage of explained variance in life satisfaction was lower (19.3%). Essentially, our results confirm previous reports that life satisfaction is most strongly predicted by three personality traits: Extraversion, Conscientiousness and Neuroticism (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998; Hills & Argyle, 2001; Lachman et al., 2018; Taufik, Prihartanti, & Hamid, 2019). Research on personality-related determinants of life satisfaction in students of various nationalities also confirms the present findings. Fagley (2012) obtained an identical result in a study of American students, in which Extraversion, Conscientiousness and Neuroticism were shown to play an important role in explaining life satisfaction (the percentage of variance was similar to that obtained in the present study in the group of Spanish students and amounted to 31%). Extraversion and Neuroticism were also found to be significant predictors of life satisfaction in a sample of Iranian students (they explained 25.4% of variance in life satisfaction) (Joshanloo & Afsahri, 2011).

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It is also important that personality-related determinants of life satisfaction be well understood by academic teachers and other university employees (e.g. those supervising various student associations) who set up expectations and requirements towards students, and plan other non-educational forms of work with them.

## Limitations

The results obtained in this study shed new light on the problem of the determinants of life satisfaction in Spanish and Polish students, at the same time showing that there is a need for further research in this area. The participants were students of two universities located in two large cities in Spain and Poland, and so the results are not representative of all Spanish and Polish students. Despite the fact that the groups were relatively numerous, future research should be representing various academic centres in Spain and in Poland. It should also be noted that the students surveyed pursued mainly "helping profession" programmes: psychology, education and social work. Another limitation of this study is the fact that we did not analyse other variables that are important determinants of life satisfaction, such as dispositional optimism, personal resilience or preferred values. In future studies, comparisons should be made among more than just two nationality groups of students. Moreover, the present study had been conducted before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. In subsequent studies, it would be worth taking into account the variables that may significantly modify life satisfaction in the times of a pandemic, such as anxiety or the sense of coherence.

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# Impact of practicing extreme sports on family relationships

## Uprawianie sportów ekstremalnych a relacje rodzinne<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** The first attempt to define extreme sports took place in 1955 in the United States of America. Since then, the number of extreme sport athletes has increased year by year. Understanding the phenomenon and the motives for practicing extreme sports is complex. The aim of this study is to analyze the relationship between extreme sports practitioners and their families. Extreme sports are defined as disciplines that involve a particular level of risk and require above-average mental and physical skills. Athletes who choose to engage in high-risk activities are motivated by a variety of internal and external factors. The athletes in question are subjected to natural, physical or mental challenges. Mistakes made while practicing the disciplines can cause injury or death to the participant more often than in the case of traditional sports. Few researchers focus on the family life of athletes. In most cases, their family members live in constant fear for their lives and health. Moreover, too frequent training can lead to addiction, which is often difficult to notice and underestimated, but at the same time significantly affects the daily functioning of the family system, whose individual units form an integral structure. It can be concluded that engaging in extreme sports has a significant impact on family relationships. It is important for the athlete to be aware of the reality of taking up extreme sports and to know that it is the athlete and not the spouse who is responsible for reconciling passion and family.

**Keywords:** behavioral addictions, extreme sports, family, family relations

**Abstrakt:** Pierwsza próba zdefiniowania sportów ekstremalnych nastąpiła w 1955 roku w Stanach Zjednoczonych Ameryki. Od tego czasu z roku na rok przybywa sportowców uprawiających dyscypliny o charakterze ekstremalnym. Zrozumienie tego fenomenu, motywów uprawiania sportów ekstremalnych jest złożone. Toteż jako cel pracy obrano analizę relacji pomiędzy uprawiającymi sporty ekstremalne a ich rodziną. Sportem ekstremalnym określono dyscypliny, które wiążą się ze szczególnym ryzykiem oraz wymagają ponadprzeciętnych umiejętności psychicznych i fizycznych. Natomiast motywatorami do uprawiania czynności podwyższonego ryzyka są różne czynniki wewnętrzne i zewnętrzne. Sportowcy ekstremalni poddawani są naturalnym, fizycznym lub psychicznym wyzwaniom, a popełniane przez nich błędy podczas uprawiania danej dyscypliny mogą powodować obrażenia lub śmierć uczestnika częściej niż ma to miejsce w tradycyjnym sporcie. Mało badaczy koncentruje się na życiu rodzinnym sportowców. W większości przypadków życie członków rodzin osób uprawiających sporty ekstremalne nacechowane jest ciągłym lękiem o życie i zdrowie sportowca. Istotnym aspektem jest także prowadzenie zbyt częstych treningów, które mogą prowadzić do uzależnienia behawioralnego, zjawiska trudnego do zauważenia i bagatelizowanego, jednocześnie znacząco przekładającego się na codzienne funkcjonowanie systemu rodzinnego, którego poszczególne jednostki tworzą integralną strukturę. Zatem można stwierdzić, że uprawianie sportów ekstremalnych ma znaczący wpływ na relacje rodzinne. Ważne jest świadome podejście sportowca do uprawiania sportów ekstremalnych i wiedza, że to właśnie na nim, a nie na współmałżonku spoczywa odpowiedzialność godzenia ze sobą wartości trudnych: pasji i rodziny.

**Słowa kluczowe:** relacje rodzinne, rodzina, sport ekstremalny, uzależnienia behawioralne

## Introduction

The first attempt to define extreme sports happened in 1955 in the USA. ESPN television undertook this task by broadcasting Extreme Games (later known as X-Games), an international competition consisting of, “unusual sports” (Zielinski et al., 2020). Since then, more and more people become extreme sports

enthusiasts, and this type of sport has become a worldwide phenomenon. Understanding this occurrence as well as the motives for practicing these disciplines is complex (Brymer et al., 2020). The purpose of this study is to analyze the relationship between extreme sports practitioners and their families.

<sup>1</sup> Artykuł w języku polskim: <https://www.stowarzyszeniefidesetratio.pl/fer/2022-2Zieli.pdf>

Defining the term *extreme sport* is not an easy task. Mynarski and Veltze (2008) tried to do so, defining extreme sports as disciplines whose common denominator is the risk of loss of health or life, the intense nature of physical exertion, and the adventurous nature of the activities undertaken (Mynarski & Veltze, 2008). On the other hand, Muszkieta and Gembiak (2004) describe participation in extreme sports as overcoming extreme external difficulties, psychological limitations, and related emotions. They point out the desire to overcome difficulties, to feel strong, new sensations, to push oneself to the limit, and to experience something unusual (ibidem). Furthermore, according to Sahaj (2005), it is the craving for extraordinary sensations, emotions and pleasure, as well as the development of skills, often leading to perfection, that induce extreme activity (ibidem).

International literature so far lacks a clear definition of extreme sports (Cohen et al., 2018; Zieliński et al., 2020). Cohen et al. state that the sports in question are those in which the participant is subjected to natural, physical or mental challenges. These include speed, altitude, depth, or natural forces. Mistakes made while participating in the disciplines discussed may result in injury or death of the participant more often than in the case of traditional sports. The authors suggest that accident rates may be factors that differentiate extreme sports from other sports (Cohen, 2016; Cohen et al., 2018). Laver et al. (2017) define extreme sports as those that typically take place in remote locations with little access to medical care, where the athlete competes against themselves or the forces of nature. While executing such disciplines, the participants are exposed to speed, altitude, and real or perceived danger. Athletes are subjected to high levels of physical exertion and often perform spectacular stunts (Laver et al., 2017). Laver et al. (2017) in line with Cohen et al. note that extreme sports are characterized by an increased risk of injury or death (ibidem).

By analyzing the above definitions, it can be concluded that in order to practice extreme sports, both high physical and mental fitness, and a great knowledge, essential to apply the acquired skills, are necessary (Olszewska, 2018). It should be emphasized

that practicing extreme sports is mainly an individualistic desire to overcome extreme difficulties, to experience unusual and powerful sensations, to gain records, and to push oneself to the limit (Musumeci, 2021; Divide, 2014).

Extreme sports can be classified according to the place of practice as well as by the discipline from which the sport originated. In agreement with the classification of place of practice, extreme sports can be divided into three categories: land-based (e.g., parkour, free running, freestyle motocross, mountain climbing), air-based (e.g., B.A.S.E Jumping, skydiving), and water-based (e.g., hydrospeed, canoeing, rafting). Due to the multitude of disciplines emerging in the United States, English-language names without Polish equivalents are used (Olszewska, 2018; Podzielnny, 2014).

The aforementioned sports, regardless of where they are practiced, have many characteristics in common. They all involve balancing on the edge of human endurance or even life or death. The reason for the increase in interest in these sports may be due to the reduction of manual labor and difficult tasks, execution of which humans have entrusted to the machines. Thus, in order to balance the level of daily physical exertion, people began to look for disciplines in which they could release their accumulated energy, need for competition and risk (Podzielnny, 2014).

## 1. Extreme athlete—characteristics

Woodman, Hardy, Barlow, and Le Scanniff (2010) noted that individuals who engage in extreme sports for long periods of time have difficulty naming and controlling emotions in everyday life, especially feelings of agency regarding intimate relationships. They regain this control only when performing high-risk activities, thus engaging in risky activities becomes their main focus. This tendency is particularly evident among mountain climbers who seek emotion regulation and a sense of agency in extreme activities (Woodman et al., 2010). Additionally, research by Martha, Laurendeau, and Griffet (2010) demonstrates that extreme athletes tend to make unsafe maneuvers as drivers and exhibit higher levels of

optimism about their own abilities and chances of avoiding the negative consequences of an accident (Martha et al., 2010).

The importance of human motives for taking up extreme sports is emphasized by Brymer and Oades (2009), who claim that people who are in real danger of death, communing with the forces of nature find increased amounts of humility and courage that have nothing to do with bravado (Brymer & Oades, 2009). Lester (2004), on the other hand, sees mountaineering as an attitude of romanticism towards the world (Lester, 2004). This shows that knowing the specifics of each discipline can help to create a model to explain the reasons for voluntary engagement in extreme sports (Krokosz & Lipowski, 2014).

External factors that promote extreme sports are not insignificant. These are primarily the mass media. Information and advertising, and above all the Internet, are developing at a very fast pace. The possibility of using them anywhere and at any time contributes to the popularization of extreme behavior (Olszewska, 2018). Suitable geographical and environmental conditions, as well as social and economic factors, are also necessary elements for extreme sports (Immonen et al., 2018; Olszewska, 2018; Vande Vliet & Inglés, 2021). Based on research, variables such as age, education, income, and seniority have been found to directly influence the preference for climbing, one of the sports classified as extreme (Koprowiak et al., 2014).

Demographic processes, i.e. the increase in the number of potential extreme athletes (Eidenmueller, 2018; Olszewska, 2018), and society's wealth, are also factors influencing the development of extreme sports. Along with it, the possibility of taking up a given sport increases. A good example here is the practice of Himalayanism, which, through popularization, is attracting attention and, consequently, the number of daredevils is growing.

It should also be noted that the scientific and technological development, which prompts the emergence of better and faster means of transport, as well as improvement of sports equipment (Łobożewicz & Bieńczyk, 2001), which in climbing makes it

possible to overcome greater and greater difficulties on higher and higher walls (Drózd, 2007; Zieliński, Zięba, Wilkowicz, et al., 2021), being significant for extreme sports.

With society becoming wealthier, a new style of behavior has formed and has begun to define the diverse nature of the demands of different population groups (Immonen et al., 2018; Łobożewicz & Bieńczyk, 2001). Having a higher income makes it possible to achieve goals that were previously unattainable due to financial circumstances. Increased wealth enables the investment in equipment or the use of modern technologies, among other things.

In addition to the above factors, which can be categorized as external factors, there are internal motivations for doing extreme sports (Olszewska, 2018). One example is climbing, which is a source of developing self-actualization needs (Asakawa & Sakamoto, 2019; Koprowiak et al, 2014; Saul et al, 2019; Seifert et al, 2018). Improving one's mental state is considered the main intrinsic motivation. Often, people with low self-esteem perform extreme sports in order to boost their ego, gain courage and confidence, and feel superior. To accomplish this, they begin to perform activities that seem unrealistic (de la Torre-Cruz et al, 2021; Olszewska, 2018; Ouyang et al, 2020; Šagát et al, 2021).

However, not every athlete wanting to participate in extreme sports necessarily suffers from low self-esteem. Desires and dreams are also common reasons, and extreme athletes, individuals with a lifelong passion, are well aware of the risks that accompany their hobby (Olszewska, 2018). For example, climbing is rather associated with emotional and pleasurable values, not with the opportunity to test oneself in extreme conditions connected with risk (Koprowiak et al., 2014).

In many situations, people feel anxious, which is a negative emotional state. An extreme athlete attempts to overcome this instinctual fear by mastering his emotions (Monasterio et al, 2016; Divide, 2014; Tofler et al, 2018; Zielinski et al, 2020). While engaging in his passion, he produces adrenaline that mobilizes him to fight against danger while exposing his body and mind to pleasant and exciting euphoria



(Jaskólski & Jaskólska, 2006). Participants of BASE jumping<sup>2</sup> specifically name the feeling of an adrenaline rush and a sense of control and mastery over fear as one of the motives for practicing the sport, as well as experiencing a positive transformation (Bouchat et al, 2022; Monasterio et al, 2016; Monasterio & Cloninger, 2019).

Health is of instrumental value for extreme athletes, and it is important for them to define the meaning of their lives by pushing existing limits (Krokosz & Lipowski, 2014). According to Koziński (1997), this is a need for transgression (Koziński, 1997), though the pursuit of happiness is not necessarily a hedonistic attitude, but may involve a eudaimonistic approach (Krokosz & Lipowski, 2014).

Another reason for engaging in extreme sports is the desire to escape from boredom and routine, as well as from the constant pursuit of material values (Olszewska, 2018). This is a type of relaxation-cathartic motivation. Also, Rédei (2009) argues that escaping from routine, monotony, and alienation is the reason for undertaking extreme sports (ibidem).

It is worth noting that adequate physical fitness is a key feature in extreme sports. It relates to the adaptation of the body to the natural environment. Proper mental fitness is also essential. Among the sports that require extraordinary physical fitness is high-altitude climbing (Olszewska, 2018).

Physical activity is a determinant of human health and is an essential element at every stage of life, regardless of a person's age or gender (Gęga et al., 2016). However, humans desire to experience much more than what everyday life has to offer. Hence, the popularity of extreme sports is likely to increase. Moreover, this type of sport provides a "shot of excitement", which can be addictive (Podzielnny, 2014).

The above reports may be explained by Zuckerman's (1994) sensation-seeking theory (Zuckerman, 1994), which concerns an individual's tendency to

engage in new, intense, complex, or risky behaviors that have stimulation value<sup>3</sup>. This requires balancing on the edge of accepted social, moral, and often legal norms (e.g., urban climbing)<sup>4</sup> (Krokosz & Lipowski, 2014).

## 2. Extreme sports and family relationships

The literature on the impact of extreme sports on family relationships is scarce. Despite the popularity of extreme sports, there is still a lack of reports that would focus on the relationship between athletes and their families. However, based on the literature, it is possible to consider the impact of extreme sports on family relationships when it comes to addiction or lack of it.

### 2.1. Extreme sport as a behavioral addiction

Behavioral addiction is defined as a behavioral disorder of an addictive nature that does not involve the ingestion of psychoactive substances. This form of behavior includes doing sports, which becomes compulsive, difficult to control, and leads to negative consequences for the individual and the environment. The aim of such behavior is no longer pleasure but alleviating negative emotions (Rowicka, 2015).

Many researchers have tried to define non-substance addictions, but the multitude of different models in this area shows that this phenomenon is quite challenging to explain. It is problematic to develop one, coherent theory because many predominant views are mutually exclusive. According to J. Orford's theory, finding one precise way to explain behavioral addictions is doomed to failure, and many authors, including Polish ones, agree with this standpoint (Lelonek-Kuleta, 2014). However, a category of non-substance use disorders that can

2 BASE jumping (from the English words building, antenna, span, and Earth) is a sport involving parachute jumps from skyscrapers, bridges, masts, mountain cliffs, and similar structures (Bouchat et al., 2022; Forrester et al., 2019).

3 Zuckerman (1994) distinguished four factors that are part of sensation seeking. The first is the search for adventure and terror, or the desire to engage in risky activities such as extreme sports. The second factor is the pursuit of new experiences, the main goal being to seek new stimuli, which can include spontaneous traveling, or making new friends. Another factor is "disinhibition", which includes all behaviors that are not accepted in a given culture, e.g. casual sex, alcoholism, or gambling. The last characteristic described by Zuckerman is susceptibility to boredom, which is an aversion to routine and tedious activities (Zuckerman, 1994).

4 Urban climbing is a type of climbing on urban structures, bridges, monuments, ruins, etc. (Zieliński et al., 2020).

be identified with behavioral addictions was created in the DSM-5 classification and published in 2013 (Rowicka, 2015).

Extreme sports addiction is a type of behavioral addiction because both dependence and compulsion are characteristic of it (Buckley, 2016; Heirene et al., 2016). Chemical substances do not play a role in it, which is why this addiction is sometimes difficult to spot and downplayed (Gęga et al., 2016).

In behavioral addiction, the sports emotions are extremely important and are associated with maintaining good health and well-being, developing sports skills, making new friends, having the opportunity to compete, and earning rewards for performance. All of those factors result in an improved self-perception and addiction to the activity that provides positive feelings (Terry et al., 2004).

Addiction is a process in which a person tries a substance or activity and begins to perceive themselves as better and more attractive than before (Guerreschi, 2006). Relating this to extreme sports, what is important are the different stages of the process during which a person starts to become accustomed to a threatening situation and starts to consider it familiar, and thus stops reacting to external stimuli that indicate danger. Over time, the body becomes accustomed to a given level of adrenaline. In consequence, the athlete needs a higher level of this substance, and thus needs stronger emotions, often resorting to even riskier activities. Providing more and more adrenaline becomes an end in itself, which results in the emergence of a mechanism typical of individuals addicted to psychoactive substances. (Podzielnny, 2014).

Sports addiction has been divided into positive, with beneficial effects on the psyche and physical form, and negative, understood as a compulsive need to practice physical activity regardless of external circumstances, and regardless of its impact on health (Lejoyeux et al., 2008). If one attempts to stop or reduce the amount of training, a withdrawal effect occurs, manifested by mood swings, guilt, remorse, anxiety, or aggression (Heirene et al., 2016; MacIntyre et al., 2019).

## **2.2. Impact of practicing extreme sports on family relationships**

Addiction will always have a negative impact on family relationships. It is quite common to talk about addictions to substances like alcohol or drugs. However, far too rarely is the topic of addiction to activities that cause similar effects discussed. In the aforementioned sources, there is evidence that athletes with sports addiction experience withdrawal symptoms when they try to reduce the amount of training. Not only does it affect the addict, but also their family members who may experience mood swings, anxiety, or even aggression. The effects of withdrawal can be many and varied, but most of them, at least initially, are characterized by negative emotions that affect the mental and often physical state of the entire family system.

No person in the world lives separated from society, but they are surrounded by other people to whom they are important. Therefore all the choices made by an individual have an impact both on the person and their family, which is more and more often treated as a system with a certain set of norms, rules, and measures supporting its integrity. The family system has certain goals, and ways of satisfying the needs of individual family members and fulfilling basic social tasks (Ryś, 2001). The family system is an integral structure, which requires looking at the functioning of the family as a whole, rather than its individual elements because every system is the result of interactions between its members. Every person functioning in the family system co-creates a network of mutual relations (Ryś, 2001) that play an important role in the life of each person. Thanks to them self-esteem is formed, needs are satisfied, personality develops, and the socialization process takes place (Ryś, 2011).

From early childhood, repeated situations, comments, especially of significant ones, or traumatic experiences play an important role in the further development of a child. Healthy relations, especially in the family system, provide a sense of security, build trust, form positive self-esteem, assurance of being loved, etc. (Ryś, 2011). The fundamental factor forming a person's emotional maturity is the

ability to establish lasting, deep, and positive relationships with others based on sincerity, openness, and straightforwardness, which include respect for one's dignity and that of the other person, as well as tolerance for their different attitudes, values, and views (Ryś, 2011).

An individual's relationships with others develop over the entire course of life. The environment and family can facilitate, hinder, or even prevent the development of mutual relationships. Individuals who form a family system exist as separate parties, simultaneously creating the structure of the whole system. Different feedbacks between individuals lead to a change in one element that influences the functioning of the family system as a whole. (Ryś, 2001).

The results of Olszewska's (2018) study showed that people who take up extreme sports are economically active, come from large cities, have higher education, are not married, and their age does not exceed 35 years. The main reasons why people decide to practice extreme sports are the pursuit of new experiences and adrenaline, the desire to overcome their weaknesses, as well as to get rid of everyday stress. Such a form of spending time was mainly suggested to them by their friends, or it was an individual decision of the respondents (Olszewska, 2018).

Relating these data to the family situation, it can be noted that extreme sports are practiced by young people who have not yet started a family and have the financial, temporal, and environmental opportunities to engage in risky activities. Consequently, they focus on themselves, without considering those closest to them. For example, in climbing, the preference for perceived values is significantly affected by the length of seniority in the sport (Koprowiak et al., 2014). Thus, problems and doubts arise when the decision to start a family is made. Then, the athlete practicing a particular sport is responsible not only for themselves, but also for their family members (Bilik, 2015).

A problem in relationships may arise when an athlete is self-centered. Their egocentricity is exposed in a particular way in relations with the environment and their loved ones (Bilik, 2015). The hierarchy of values

results in focusing on oneself, satisfying one's own needs and preferences, and disregarding the feelings and views of those closest to one (Podzielny, 2014).

Taking into account the fact that everyone has developed some relationships, it is worth asking the question: how and, if at all, is it possible to combine family life with extreme sports? Research shows that the life of partners of people who practice extreme sports is tough. Those who share their partner's passion do better, but this happens relatively rarely. In most cases, the life of family members of extreme athletes is characterized by constant fear for their life and health. The partners are aware of the needs of their loved one and know how important their passion is to them. They also see that it occupies a lot of their time, does not concern their life together, and is indispensable for their happiness. (Bilik, 2015). In such a situation, the problem of responsibility arises. It is the sports aficionado's role to reconcile the two values: passion and family (Bilik, 2015).

Public opinion focuses primarily on the athlete's achievement, on pointing out the people who contribute to the success, or on analyzing the reasons behind the failure, especially in the fatal cases. Public opinion often overlooks the fact that the consequences of an athlete's adventure are felt most by their family (Bilik, 2015).

However, practicing extreme sports does not only have negative consequences. The possible positive aspects of training risky sports are also worth noting. Research suggests that practicing extreme sports can develop valuable personal qualities such as courage and humility. Because of the stressful situations in extreme sports, athletes are better at handling similar situations in everyday life (MacIntyre et al., 2019). There are also reports in the literature that practicing bouldering may have an effect on reducing depressive symptoms (Kleinstäuber et al, 2017; Kratzer et al, 2021; Schwarzkopf et al, 2021; Stelzer et al, 2018; Zielinski, Zieba, & Byś, 2021). Moreover, stability in stressful situations and psychological well-being will positively influence family relationships. Knowledge about the family and relationships within it is important for the psychosocial functioning of the human being (Krok, 2010).



The length of time spent in the family environment and the amount of interaction between family members also undoubtedly influence relationships within a family. Relationships based on emotional closeness, strong personal bonds and feelings shape the psychological well-being of family members (Step, 2010; Marsh et al, 2020; Thomas et al, 2017). Extreme sports athletes often sacrifice family time for their hobby.

Family is a unique system that is distinguished by the intimacy of relationships and the permanence of emotional connections. The development of its integrity involves the formation of bonds, feelings and taking actions that shape and transform personal aspirations of family members, as well as satisfying basic needs (Ryś, 2011). A person who engages in extreme sports may prioritize their own needs over those of family members.

Meanwhile, the balance and stability of parents' relationship, based on the sense of responsibility and emotional bond between all family members, is the basis of proper relationships in the family. It gives a sense of family unity, at the same time respecting independence and self-determination of individuals, which helps to develop interests and maintain contact with people outside the family (Ryś, 2011).

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## Summary

In conclusion, practicing extreme sports has a significant impact on family relationships. The opportunities offered by the modern world make people want to achieve more and be someone who means something both in the local environment and in the wider society. However, the risks involved in extreme sports, where the line between life and death is extremely thin, prompt many questions, including those relating to the meaning and value of life. Deciding to become an extreme sportsman, a person takes responsibility not only for their own life but also for the lives of their family members.

Research shows that preferences for extreme sports are formed at an early stage of life. Parents' relationship influences children's sense of security, their perception of stressful situations, and ways to cope with them.

Extreme sports athletes should be aware of the reality of engaging in extreme sports and remember that it is them, not their spouse, who are responsible for the challenging task of reconciling passion and family.

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# Marital communication and relationship satisfaction – the differential role of gender schemas

Komunikacja w małżeństwie a zadowolenie ze związku  
– różnicująca rola schematów płci<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** The aim of the study was to examine whether gender schemas differentiate marital communication and relationship satisfaction. Most analyses are conducted with reference to biological sex. Psychological gender expands the construct of gender differences. The study involved 400 people (200 women and 200 men) who were married, economically active and had at least one child. The respondents completed the Marital Communication Questionnaire (KKM), the Masculinity and Femininity Scale (SMiK), and the Relationship Satisfaction Scale. The results obtained indicate a differential role of gender schemas in terms of preferred conversational styles. Psychological gender does not affect relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, the gender schemas evident in the four psychological gender types differentiate the relationship of spouses' communication with their ratings of relationship satisfaction. To conclude, taking the construct of psychological gender into account in analyses is important from the point of view of research as well as practice. Firstly, it deepens knowledge on relationship satisfaction and communication in marriage; secondly, the knowledge gained may find practical application, e.g. in marriage therapy.

**Keywords:** communication in marriage, relationship satisfaction, gender schemas, psychological gender

**Abstrakt:** Celem prowadzonych badań było sprawdzenie czy schematy płci różnicują komunikację w małżeństwie oraz zadowolenie ze związku. Najczęściej analizy prowadzone są w uwzględnieniu płci biologicznej. Płeć psychologiczna rozszerza konstrukt różnic płciowych. W badaniach uczestniczyło 400 osób (200 kobiet i 200 mężczyzn), będących z związku małżeńskim, aktywnych zawodowo, mających co najmniej jedno dziecko. Badani wypełniali Kwestionariusz Komunikacji w Małżeństwie (KKM), Skalę Męskości i Kobiecości (SMiK), Skalę Satysfakcji ze Związku. Otrzymane wyniki wskazują na różnicującą rolę schematów płci w zakresie preferowanych stylów konwersacji. Płeć psychologiczna nie wpływa na zadowolenie ze związku. Ponadto schematy płci widoczne w czterech typach płci psychologicznej różnicują relację komunikacji małżonków z oceną ich zadowolenia ze związku. Konkludując, włączenie konstruktu płci psychologicznej do analiz jest ważne z punktu widzenia badań, jak i praktyki. Po pierwsze, pogłębia wiedzę na relacji zadowolenia ze związku i komunikacji w małżeństwie, po drugie zdobyta wiedza może znaleźć praktyczne zastosowanie np. w terapii małżeństw.

**Słowa kluczowe:** komunikacja w małżeństwie, zadowolenie ze związku, schematy płci, płeć psychologiczna

## Introduction

Issues of marriage and social communication are willingly addressed in scholarly works (e.g., Dakowicz, 2021; Jankowska, 2016; Krok & Lewoska, 2016; Miluska, 2018; Wałęcka-Matyja & Szkudlarek, 2019; Wysota, 2015). Analyses are often conducted from the perspective of relationship tenure, age of the spouses, their biological sex, and the fact of having children. In the research presented herein, the author decided to introduce a new variable, namely gender

schemas - given their potential role in modifying the relationship of marital communication with relationship satisfaction.

Justifying the purpose of the study, it is important to note that a successful marriage is still one of the greatest values in a person's life and the search for factors that modify and determine relationship success remains a scientific priority (Abramiuk & Konopka, 2020). Moreover, psychological gender expands the

<sup>1</sup> Artykuł w języku polskim: <https://www.stowarzyszeniefidesetratio.pl/fer/2022-2Grobel.pdf>

construct of gender differences. While the concepts of ‘woman’ and ‘man’ remain comprehensible to everyone due to the fact that they refer to specific biological differences, the concept of genus - the male and female gender schema - is a more complicated term. Research exploring gender differences primarily focuses on biological sex (e.g., Dakowicz, 2021; Wałęcka-Matyja & Szkudlarek, 2019). Accordingly, the purpose of the analyses conducted was to examine whether the gender schemas evident in the four psychological gender types differentiate the relationship between spouses’ communication and their ratings of relationship satisfaction. Therefore, a conceptualization of the key variables will be presented below.

## **1. Marital communication and relationship satisfaction**

Historical retrospection reveals that the basis of modern marriage originated in the culture of ancient Rome, and its further development was influenced by the medieval doctrine of the Church, the Reformation era, and the social impact of the Industrial Revolution (Rostowski, 2009). When writing about marriage rather than family, it is important to emphasize that marriage is a subsystem that operates within the family system. The participants in this subsystem are the spouses between whom the processes of interaction and communication take place. Marriage, as well as satisfaction with it, is constantly changing through the mutual exchange of information. Modern marital relationships are not only different from traditional ones (the husband is the head of the family, and the woman takes care of the household), but they are also undergoing a gradual transformation. The change involves the position of men and women in marriage, and in society in general. Some mention about the matriarchy of the industrial era because men’s responsibilities are mainly reduced to the material sphere, while women are forced to take on many roles, including those once performed by a husband and father. This makes the woman the central figure in the family, which can affect gender role schemas (Lipińska-Grobelny, 2014).

When dealing with marital problems, the matter of marriage durability and quality is of significant importance. This issue is described using many different terms. Sęk referred to marital success, Rostowski indicated marital selection, Braun-Galkowska wrote about marital success, while Janicka and Niebrzydowski about marital satisfaction, contentment, and happiness. Despite the divergence in terminology, all of the researchers mentioned agree that a well-matched and satisfied couple experiences happiness, both from being together and from having a partner.

Satisfaction with marriage prompts the topic of its conditioning and modifying variables. An attempt to organize them was made, among others, by M. Braun-Galkowska, who distinguished internal factors of success in marriage, such as, for example, the personality of the partners, communication processes between the spouses, and external factors represented, e.g., by the material or family situation of the spouses (Lipińska-Grobelny, 2014). Relationship communication is the subject of interest in this study. Mutual trust as well as perceived intimacy and affection promote ‘unveiling’ in the marital subsystem (Dakowicz, 2021; Jankowska, 2016; Ryś, 1999; Wałęcka-Matyja & Szkudlarek, 2019; Wysota, 2015). Happy couples are more likely to experience nonverbal positive messages and a high degree of commitment to the relationship. Couples who are dissatisfied with their marriage tend to perceive their partner’s messages as more negative than the sender intended. In addition, there is a tendency to control and devalue the spouse (Dakowicz, 2021; Kaźmierczak & Płopa, 2005).

Therefore, the well-known and frequently applied concept of marital communication by Kaźmierczak and Płopa (2005) was used to describe relationship communication. The authors introduced the concept of conversational style and defined it as a unique way of conveying, encoding, and interpreting messages. They emphasized that there are no completely right or wrong conversational styles, and that the primary task of spouses is to choose a mode of communication that promotes mutual understanding and intimacy. The following were distinguished in marriage: 1) *supportive communication* which boils down to showing respect and interest in the



partner, care demonstrated in everyday situations, and active participation in the process of problem solving; 2) *engaged communication* based on mutual understanding and closeness, emphasized by a high rating of the partner's attractiveness; 3) *deprecating communication*, aggressive towards the partner, based on the desire to dominate and control their actions. Kąmierzak and Płopa (2005) confirmed the relationship between perceived support and commitment and relationship satisfaction as well as between depreciation of the partner and lack of satisfaction with the marriage in both men and women. In addition, men were more satisfied with their relationship than their life partners, whereas women experienced less intimacy, behavioral similarity, self-actualization, and greater disappointment (Płopa & Rostowski, 2005). With this in mind, it seems interesting to ask the following question: "What might this look like for the gender schemas that underlie psychological gender?" Therefore, Sandra Lipsitz Bem's gender schema theory will be presented synthetically in the following section of the article.

## 2. Bem's gender schema theory

Until 1973, the prevailing view was that masculinity and femininity were part of a single dimension, being its opposite poles. Masculinity was at one end of this continuum, and femininity was at the other end. The more feminine a person was, the less masculine they were, and conversely, the more masculine they were, the less feminine they were. In 1974, Bem described a new approach to this issue, claiming that some people exhibit both traits considered masculine and those perceived as typically feminine. Bem referred to the combination in one person of traits and behaviors specific to one sex and the other as psychological androgyny (Bem, 1974; Lipińska-Grobelny, 2016).

By treating masculinity and femininity as two independent orthogonal dimensions, four configurations of biological and psychological traits can be created, which correspond to the psychological gender types listed below:

1. sexually defined individuals who have a gender schema, with psychological characteristics that correspond to their biological sex (feminine women and masculine men);
2. sexually cross-defined individuals (gender-aschematic individuals) with psychological characteristics corresponding to the opposite sex (feminine men and masculine women);
3. androgynous individuals (gender-aschematic individuals) with both masculine and feminine characteristics, regardless of their biological sex; and
4. sexually indeterminate, gender-aschematic individuals who have little to no feminine or masculine characteristics (regardless of their biological sex).

So what is the gender schema that manifests itself in psychological gender types? It is a cognitive structure that organizes and directs the processing of self-related information. The resulting structure acts as a filter, i.e., on the one hand, it directs the individual to seek specific information, and on the other hand, it facilitates the assimilation of data consistent with the dimensions that exist in the schema. An individual who has a developed gender schema should: 1) process information about oneself in the area of a given category with ease; 2) extract from memory with greater freedom those behaviors that are related to the particular area; 3) predict one's own future behavior in the given area; and 4) resist schema-incompatible information about oneself. According to Bem, only sexually defined individuals possess a schema of masculinity or femininity. The former relates to task functioning, dexterity, and assertiveness, while the latter relates to social and emotional functioning. The other types - androgynous, cross-defined, and sexually indeterminate - are treated by Bem as gender-aschematic (Lipińska-Grobelny, 2016).

## 3. Issues of own research

The purpose of this study was to examine whether gender schemas differentiate marital communication and relationship satisfaction. Analyses so far have been

conducted mainly with reference to biological sex. Jackson, Miller, Oka, and Henry (2014) conducted a meta-analysis of 226 independent studies with a total of 101,110 respondents and confirmed that there is little difference between men and women in their assessment of marriage quality. Women were slightly less satisfied with their marriage than men. However, the authors of that study noted that such differences did not occur in non-clinical samples. In contrast, Krok and Lewoska (2016) carried out a national study and found statistically significant differences, but only on the Disappointment scale from Plopa and Rostowski's Well-Matched Marriage Questionnaire. Women experienced slightly more relationship disillusionment than men, which the researchers explained by the fact that women participated in carrying out household and caregiving responsibilities to a greater extent.

Psychological gender not only expands the construct of gender differences but is also an important determinant of human behavior in interpersonal relationships (Starr & Zurbriggen, 2017). Mandal (2004, 2020) undertook to verify the relationship between psychological gender and biological sex and marital happiness. In women, the androgynous type was the happiest. In men, a high sense of happiness was associated with high scores on the femininity scale. On the other hand, Krok and Lewoska (2016), who studied 105 couples ( $N = 210$  individuals), indicated psychological gender differences in marital satisfaction with respect to intimacy and disappointment. The mean level for intimacy was highest among androgynous individuals. In terms of disappointment, female subjects scored highest, differing significantly from androgynous and male subjects.

Next to sexual intercourse, marital communication is considered to be the most important bonding factor between spouses (Carlson, Miller & Rudd, 2020; Dakowicz & Dakowicz, 2021; Hou, Jiang & Wang, 2019; Ryś, 1999). In the absence of effective communication, love alone cannot guarantee the continuation of a relationship for long. In contrast, the likelihood of being in a marriage is much higher in case of proper communication, even when love fades (Dakowicz & Dakowicz, 2021).

In this article, the interrelations between marital communication and relationship satisfaction were analyzed from the perspective of psychological gender, which was considered (in previous research) in relation to the individual variables mentioned rather than the relationship between them (e.g., Krok & Lewoska, 2016). Therefore, the following research questions were formulated:

1. Does psychological gender differentiate marital communication ratings in terms of: 1.1. self-rated supportive communication, 1.2. self-rated engaged communication, 1.3. self-rated deprecating communication?
2. Does psychological gender differentiate partner's assessment of marital communication in terms of: 2.1. supportive communication, 2.2. engaged communication, 2.3. deprecating communication?
3. Does psychological gender differentiate marital satisfaction?
4. Which marital communication styles are critical to the level of satisfaction with relationship in the following type: 4.1. sexually determined, 4.2. androgynous, 4.3. sexually indeterminate, 4.4. sexually cross-defined?

## 4. Method

### 4.1. Research group

The research was conducted on a group of 400 people (200 women and 200 men) aged 21-59 ( $M = 40.8$ ,  $SD = 8.6$ ). All the subjects were married for a minimum of one year, were economically active, and had at least one child. This selection of subjects was due to the need to control the demographic variables listed above, as they are not indifferent to relationship satisfaction scores. Women's age ranged between 22 and 56 years ( $M = 39.6$ ,  $SD = 7.5$ ), while men's ages oscillated between 21 and 59 years ( $M = 41.9$ ,  $SD = 9.5$ ). The respondents primarily had a college degree (69%) or completed secondary school education (25%). Only 6% of the subjects had basic vocational education. The entire procedure, conducted online, was prepared in accordance with the principles of

the Declaration of Helsinki, which means that the subjects were informed about voluntary participation in the study. They were given information about the purpose and procedure of the study and were assured of anonymity as well as of the fact that the results would be used for scientific purposes only. The subjects were provided with a link that initially allowed them to read information about the entire study; after consenting, they proceeded to complete particulars and three questionnaires, beginning with the Marital Communication Questionnaire, then moving on to the Masculinity and Femininity Scale, and ending with a scale to assess relationship satisfaction.

#### 4.2. Research tools

In seeking answers to the research questions formulated earlier, three research tools with satisfactory reliability indices were used.

The Masculinity and Femininity Scale (SMiK) worked out by Lipińska-Grobelny & Gorczycka was used to measure masculinity and femininity, including psychological gender. The scale is composed of 20 adjectives, of which 10 describe feminine characteristics and 10 describe masculine traits. The respondents were asked to indicate on a five-point scale the extent to which each characteristic characterized them, where 1 meant 'I am definitely not like that' and 5 meant 'I am definitely like that'. Reliability analysis was performed by assessing the Cronbach's *alpha* internal consistency coefficient. Based on the results, the tool had satisfactory reliability (Cronbach's *alpha* for Femininity = 0.85 and for Masculinity = 0.76).

Marital communication quality was measured using Plopa and Kaźmierczak's Marital Communication Questionnaire (KKM). The KKM has two versions: the first is a self-assessment of conversational style and the second involves an assessment of partner's communication style. Each version consists of 30 items. Subjects respond to each item using a five-point scale, where 1 means they never behave as described by the given statement and 5 means they always do. Two versions of the KKM were used in this study. The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated using Cronbach's *alpha* (for the first version, the

coefficient for support was 0.88, for engagement - 0.77, and for depreciation - 0.86; for the second version, partner's behavior assessment, the coefficient for support was 0.91, for engagement - 0.80, and for depreciation - 0.89). According to the tool's authors, the higher the support and engagement in communication, the higher the overall quality of the relationship. In contrast, an increase in depreciation is associated with a drop in the mentioned relationship quality.

As in Chybicka and Karasiewicz's (2009) study, marital satisfaction ratings were measured using an index created by summing responses to the following three questions: "How satisfied are you with the relationship you are currently in?"; "How satisfied are you with your partner?"; "How satisfied are you with the relationship between you?". The respondents provided answers on a scale from 1 - very dissatisfied to 7 - very satisfied. Cronbach's *alpha* for this measurement was 0.89.

## 5. Results

All calculations were performed in IBM SPSS Statistics version 27. The number of subjects and central limit theorems allowed for the application of parametric tests. The presentation will begin with descriptive statistics (see: Table 1). The mean score on the supportive communication self-assessment was 40.59 with standard deviation of 6.71 (*Min* = 10, *Max* = 50). The mean score on the engaged communication self-assessment oscillated around 31.01 with standard deviation of 6.23 (*Min* = 9, *Max* = 45). Finally, the mean score on the self-reported deprecating communication reached a value of 23.18 with standard deviation of 6.37 (*Min* = 11, *Max* = 55). Scores for assessing partner's conversational style were lower, but were in line with the general trend, namely, the respondents positively rated their level of support and engagement in marital communication. They evaluated their partner's support and commitment in a similarly favorable manner. Scores below average referred to deprecating communication. For masculinity, femininity, and relationship satisfaction, the respondents scored above average (see: Table 1).



Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the studied variables

Variables	Min	Max	M	SD
Relationship satisfaction	3	21	15.79	4.31
Supportive communication (self)	10	50	40.59	6.71
Engaged communication (self)	9	45	31.01	6.23
Deprecating communication (self)	11	55	23.18	6.37
Supportive communication (partner)	10	50	38.38	8.08
Engaged communication (partner)	9	45	29.26	6.57
Deprecating communication (partner)	11	55	22.87	7.59
Masculinity	10	50	36.15	6.79
Femininity	10	50	34.57	5.97

### 5.1. Marital communication and psychological gender types

The first research problem in questions 1 and 2 related to the differential impact of psychological gender on marital communication (self-assessment and evaluation of partner’s conversational style). A one-way analysis of variance with Bonferroni post hoc test confirmed that gender schemas differentiate supportive communication (self) to a moderate degree ( $\eta^2 = 0.07$ ) and engaged communication (self) to a degree close to strong ( $\eta^2 = 0.1$ ). Androgynous individuals were characterized by the highest rating of these modes of communication, while sexually inde-

terminate individuals were characterized by the lowest scores. Those with a gender schema placed themselves in the middle of this set, although the mean score obtained ( $M = 40.82, SD = 6.6$ ) still indicated a high self-assessment of supportive communication. There was a similar distribution of results for engaged communication. In contrast, psychological gender types were indifferent to deprecating communication ( $F(3,396) = 0.86, Sig = 0.45$ ), (see: Table 2).

The results given in Table 3 relate, in turn, to the differential effect of gender schemas on partner communication ratings at the level of statistical trend. This is indicated by the weak effect sizes. Partner’s supportive communication and engaged

Table 2. Marital communication (self) and psychological gender types

Psychological gender types		M	SD	F(3,396)	Sig	Post hoc Bonferroni
Supportive communication (self)	Determined (N = 142)	40.82	6.6	9.35	<.001 $\eta^2 = 0.07$	1-2 1-3 2-3
	Androgynous (N = 88)	43.18	6.29			
	Indeterminate (N = 118)	38.35	6.71			
	Sexually cross-defined (N = 52)	40.62	6.19			
Engaged communication (self)	Determined (N = 142)	31.09	6.63	14.70	<.001 $\eta^2 = 0.1$	1-2 1-3 2-3 2-4 3-4
	Androgynous (N = 88)	34.08	4.85			
	Indeterminate (N = 118)	28.53	5.72			
	Sexually cross-defined (N = 52)	31.25	6.07			
Deprecating communication (self)	Determined (N = 142)	23.61	6.31	0.86	n.s.	---
	Androgynous (N = 88)	22.56	6.22			
	Indeterminate (N = 118)	22.8	6.22			
	Sexually cross-defined (N = 52)	23.92	7.11			

Table 3. Marital communication (partner) and psychological gender types

Psychological gender types		M	SD	F(3,396)	Sig	Post hoc Bonferroni
Supportive communication (partner)	Determined (N = 142)	38.79	8.59	2.14	.095 $\eta^2 = 0.02$	---
	Androgynous (N = 88)	39.80	7.39			
	Indeterminate (N = 118)	37.08	7.4			
	Sexually cross-defined (N = 52)	37.79	8.96			
Engaged communication (partner)	Determined (N = 142)	29.15	6.79	2.36	.071 $\eta^2 = 0.02$	2-3
	Androgynous (N = 88)	30.7	6.66			
	Indeterminate (N = 118)	28.26	6.02			
	Sexually cross-defined (N = 52)	29.35	6.74			
Deprecating communication (partner)	Determined (N = 142)	23.63	7.62	1.43	n.s.	---
	Androgynous (N = 88)	22.05	7.35			
	Indeterminate (N = 118)	22.16	7.16			
	Sexually cross-defined (N = 52)	23.83	8.70			

Table 4. Marriage satisfaction and psychological gender types

Psychological gender types		M	SD	F (3,396)	Sig	Post hoc Bonferroni
Satisfaction with marriage	Determined (N = 142)	15.78	4.14	0.74	n.s.	---
	Androgynous (N = 88)	16.13	4.69			
	Indeterminate (N = 118)	15.36	4.38			
	Sexually cross-defined (N = 52)	16.21	3.95			

communication styles obtained a small effect size ( $\eta^2 = 0.02$ ). Therefore, it is possible to speak not of statistically significant differences between psychological gender types, but of an emerging trend. Androgynous individuals rated partner’s supportive and engaged communication highest, while sexually indeterminate people rated it lowest (see: Table 3).

### 5.2. Marriage satisfaction and psychological gender types

The second research problem concerned psychological gender and levels of satisfaction with marriage. The results of a one-way analysis of variance did not confirm statistically significant differences ( $F(3,396) = 0.74, Sig = 0.53$ ). The different psychological gender types (gender-schematic and gender-aschematic individuals) present similar levels of relationship satisfaction (see: Table 4).

### 5.3. Marital communication and relationship satisfaction - the differential role of psychological gender

The final research question was: “Which marital communication styles are critical to the level of satisfaction with relationship in the following type: 4.1. sexually determined, 4.2. androgynous, 4.3. sexually indeterminate, 4.4. sexually cross-defined?” For this purpose, a stepwise regression analysis was performed (see: Tables 5-8).

For gender-specific individuals (feminine women and masculine men), both models were fit to the data (model 1 -  $F(1,140) = 127.87, Sig < 0.001$ , model 2 -  $F(2,139) = 70.01, Sig < 0.001$ ). In the first model, only one variable, i.e., *supportive communication (partner)*, was introduced; one more, i.e., *deprecating communication (self)*, was added in the second model. The model with two variables explained 50% of the

variation in the dependent variable of *relationship satisfaction*. The standardized coefficient values were  $\beta = 0.64$ ,  $Sig < 0.001$  for partner's supportive communication and  $\beta = -0.16$ ,  $Sig = 0.01$  for deprecating communication (self), respectively. On that basis, the stronger the spouse's supportive communication and the weaker the respondent's deprecating communication, the stronger is the relationship satisfaction of sexually defined individuals (see: Table 5).

Moving on to the summary of the second model, it was fit to the data for the androgynous individuals ( $F(2,85) = 31.72$ ,  $Sig < 0.001$ ) and explained 42% of the variability in marital satisfaction. The mentioned

variability was most predictive of the level of supportive communication from the partner ( $\beta = 0.45$ ,  $Sig < 0.001$ ) and of aggressive deprecating communication from the partner ( $\beta = -0.27$ ,  $Sig = 0.05$ ). For the androgynous respondents, it was important whether their spouse showed support and interest and actively participated in the problem-solving process. This raised the overall marriage quality rating. In contrast, a deprecating partner displaying an aggressive style in marital communication significantly reduced their relationship satisfaction (see: Table 6).

For the last two groups - gender-aschematic individuals - the regression models were also fit to the data, explaining 52% of the marriage satisfaction of those with low scores on Masculinity and Femininity and 56% of the variability in relationship quality of masculine women and feminine men (see: Tables 7-8). The standardized coefficient values in the sexually indeterminate group were  $\beta = 0.43$ ,  $Sig < 0.001$  for supportive communication (partner) and  $\beta = 0.34$ ,  $Sig < 0.001$  for supportive communication (self), respectively. On that basis, the stronger the spouse's supportive communication and the higher self-assessment of one's own supportive communication style, the stronger the relationship satisfaction of sexually indeterminate individuals (see: Table 7).

Table 5. Stepwise regression, dependent variable - relationship satisfaction of sexually defined individuals (gender-schematic), (N = 142)

Independent variables	$\beta$	$t$	Adjusted $R^2$	$F(df1,df2)$
Model 1				
Supportive communication (partner)	.69	11.31***	.47	$F(1,140) = 127.87***$
Model 2				
Supportive communication (partner)	.64	10.22***		
Deprecating communication (self)	-.16	-2.61**	.50	$F(2,139) = 70.01***$

Explanations: \*\* $Sig < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $Sig < 0.001$

Table 6. Stepwise regression, dependent variable - relationship satisfaction of androgynous individuals (gender-aschematic), (N = 88)

Independent variables	$\beta$	$t$	Adjusted $R^2$	$F(df1,df2)$
Model 1				
Supportive communication (partner)	.62	7.35***	.38	$F(1,86) = 54.12***$
Model 2				
Supportive communication (partner)	.45	4.16***	.42	$F(2,85) = 31.72***$
Deprecating communication (partner)	-.27	-2.47*		

Explanations: \*  $Sig < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $Sig < 0.001$

Table 7. Stepwise regression, dependent variable - relationship satisfaction of sexually indeterminate individuals (gender-aschematic), (N = 118)

Independent variables	$\beta$	$t$	Adjusted $R^2$	$F(df1,df2)$
Model 1				
Supportive communication (partner)	.69	10.17***	.47	$F(1,116) = 103.51***$
Model 2				
Supportive communication (partner)	.43	4.47***	.52	$F(2,115) = 63.27***$
Supportive communication (self)	.34	3.56***		

Explanations: \*  $Sig < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $Sig < 0.001$

The standardized coefficient values in the sexually cross-defined group were in turn  $\beta = 0.42$ ,  $Sig < 0.01$  for supportive communication (partner) and  $\beta = 0.39$ ,  $Sig < 0.01$  for supportive communi-

cation (self). As was the case for sexually indeterminate individuals, the stronger the spouse's supportive communication and the higher the self-assessment of one's own supportive communication style, the stronger the relationship satisfaction of masculine women and feminine men (see: Table 8).

Table 8. Stepwise regression, dependent variable - relationship satisfaction of sexually cross-defined individuals (gender-aschematic), (N = 52)

Independent variables	$\beta$	$t$	Adjusted $R^2$	$F(df1,df2)$
Model 1				
Supportive communication (partner)	.72	7.34***	.51	$F(1,50) = 53.81***$
Model 2				
Supportive communication (partner)	.42	2.93**	.56	$F(2,49) = 33.88***$
Supportive communication (self)	.39	2.69**		

Explanations: \*\*Sig < 0.01, \*\*\*Sig < 0.001

## Conclusion and discussion of results

The purpose of the analyses conducted was to examine whether the gender schemas evident in the four psychological gender types differentiate the relationship between spouses' communication and their ratings of relationship satisfaction. This is a scientifically and practically important issue. It is worth noting that on the one hand, a successful marriage is still the most frequently indicated value in the lives of Polish women and men (Abramiuk & Konopka, 2020); on the other hand, marital satisfaction is very strongly related to marital communication (Jankowska, 2016; Walęcka-Matyja & Szkudlarek, 2019).

The first research problem related to differences between psychological gender types in marital communication, both self-assessment of one's own conversational style and assessment of partner's style. The results obtained showed that psychological gender significantly differentiated supportive (self) and engaged (self) communication. Ratings

of partner's supportive and engaged communication were differentiated by gender schemas at the trend level. The androgynous (gender-aschematic) type scored highest and the sexually indeterminate type scored lowest. Referring to the results obtained, one can mention the position of Bem, who believed that psychological androgyny is the optimal type of psychological gender for good functioning. It is characterized by a wider repertoire of behaviors both communal and instrumental, which gives space in marital communication, for example, to show support and commitment. Krok and Lewoska (2016) further confirmed that androgynous individuals were characterized by the strongest sense of intimacy in the relationship. On the other hand, the sexually indeterminate type - due to a limited number of masculine and feminine characteristics - may manifest difficulties in adapting to the demands of social life. The consequence of this aschematic nature may be less interest in the partner's successes and problems, daily life, or conflict resolution, thus revealing weaker support and commitment in marriage.

The second research problem concerned the satisfaction with the formal relationship experienced by gender-schematic and gender-aschematic individuals. The results for biological sex are divergent; however, in case of psychological gender there are no statistically significant differences in the assessment of relationship quality. The androgynous type, the sexually defined type, the sexually indeterminate type, and the sexually cross-defined type presented similar ratings of relationship satisfaction. This is likely due to the reshaping of the gender role system and the increasing compatibility of partners in terms of relationship expectations, regardless of their biological sex.

The third research problem addressed the issue of the modifying effect of gender schemas on the relationship of marital communication to relationship satisfaction. All regression models were significant and explained between 42% of the variability in satisfaction with marriage of androgynous individuals and 56% for the sexually cross-defined type. Of the six conversation styles, one played a key role in assessing relationship quality. It was the partner's supportive style, manifested in showing respect, taking an in-

terest in the problems and needs of the spouse, and showing concern in everyday situations. Its high intensity significantly improved relationship satisfaction of both gender-schematic and gender-aschematic subjects. In addition, avoiding an aggressive style in communication was the second important determinant of relationship quality of feminine women and masculine men as well as androgynous individuals. Sexually defined individuals had to take into account their own need to dominate but also to control their partner's actions (self-deprecating style). Androgynous individuals exhibiting high levels of reactivity and assertiveness (Lipińska-Grobelny, 2006) expected their partners to avoid deprecating communication (Partner deprecating style). In contrast, feminine men and masculine women as well as sexually indeterminate individuals indicated - in addition to their partner's supportive style - the importance of their own supportive style in shaping

marital satisfaction to be manifested by situationally appropriate levels of expressive traits in men and instrumental traits in women.

In conclusion, taking the psychological gender construct into account in analyses is important for research as well as practice. Firstly, it deepens the knowledge of relationship satisfaction and communication in marriage; secondly, the knowledge gained can find practical application, e.g., in marriage therapy. Regarding the limitations of the research conducted, the correlational nature of the research and the smaller group of respondents in the androgynous and sexually cross-defined types can be noted. On the other hand, the differences and correlations observed are interesting enough to make it worthwhile to continue the analyses with the inclusion of the socio-demographic variables that were intentionally controlled herein, i.e., marital tenure, having/not having children, and being economically active or not.

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## Belonging to religious communities—a source of stress or satisfaction? Analysis of gender differences

### Przynależność do wspólnot religijnych – źródło stresu czy satysfakcji? Analiza różnic międzypłciowych<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** *Introduction:* Dialogue is an inseparable element of the functioning of social groups, including religious communities. The article shows how being in dialogue with God and people by belonging to religious communities among young Catholics corresponds with the perceived stress in its various areas (e.g. related to health, interpersonal relations, socioeconomic conditions or religiosity) and with life satisfaction, both in the group of boys and men, as well as in the group of girls and women. *Method:* The gender differences in the identified 18 areas of experienced stress and life satisfaction were analyzed. The study was conducted using the author's questionnaire and the SWLS scale in the paper-and-pencil version on a group of 407 young Catholics belonging and not belonging to religious communities. *Results:* The results indicate that belonging to a religious community differentiates the level of experienced stress only in the area of religiosity (no differences were noted in terms of stress as a whole) and differentiated the level of life satisfaction. It turns out that gender differentiates the level of experienced stress both in the group of people belonging and not belonging to the religious community and in the entire studied sample. Women in all groups are characterized by a higher level of experienced stress. Selected areas of experienced stress, which are differentiated by gender and which concern interpersonal relations and the political situation, have been described. Gender also differentiates the level of life satisfaction. In the entire group of respondents, men indicate a higher level of life satisfaction than women. Life satisfaction, on the other hand, negatively correlates with the assessment of experienced stress, which is confirmed by the already existing reports on this subject. *Conclusions:* Persons belonging to religious communities, treating religiosity as an important value in their lives, feel a higher level of stress in this area. In addition, they experience stress on a very similar level to that of their non-religious peers, but at the same time they are characterized by a higher level of life satisfaction. The results of the study indicate the potential of religious communities and suggest a special sensitivity towards girls and women whose psychological situation is more difficult in the area of experienced stress and life satisfaction than the assessment of these aspects by boys and men.

**Keywords:** religious community, stress, life satisfaction, gender differences

**Abstrakt:** *Wstęp:* Dialog jest nieodłącznym elementem funkcjonowania grup społecznych, w tym wspólnot religijnych. Artykuł przedstawia, jak bycie w dialogu z Bogiem i ludźmi poprzez przynależność do wspólnot religijnych wśród młodych katolików koresponduje z odczuwanym stresem w różnych jego obszarach (m.in. dotyczącym zdrowia, relacji interpersonalnych, warunków socjoekonomicznych, czy religijności) oraz z satysfakcją z życia, zarówno w grupie chłopców i mężczyzn, jak i w grupie dziewcząt oraz kobiet. *Metoda:* Poddano analizie różnice międzypłciowe w wyodrębnionych 18 obszarach doświadczanego stresu i w obrębie satysfakcji z życia. Badanie przeprowadzono autorską ankietą oraz skalą SWLS w wersji papier-olówek na grupie 407 młodych katolików przynależących i nieprzynależących do wspólnot religijnych. *Wyniki:* Wyniki wskazują, że przynależność do wspólnoty religijnej różnicuje poziom doświadczanego stresu jedynie w obszarze religijności (nie odnotowano różnic w obrębie stresu ujętego całościowo) oraz różnicuje poziom satysfakcji z życia. Okazuje się, że płeć różnicuje poziom doświadczanego stresu zarówno w grupie osób przynależących, jak i nieprzynależących do wspólnoty religijnej oraz w całej badanej próbie. Kobiety we wszystkich grupach charakteryzują się wyższym poziomem doświadczanego stresu. Opisano wybrane obszary doświadczanego stresu, które są różnicowane przez płeć, a które dotyczą relacji interpersonalnych oraz sytuacji politycznej. Płeć różnicuje ponadto poziom satysfakcji z życia. W całej grupie osób badanych mężczyźni wskazują na wyższy poziom satysfakcji z życia, aniżeli kobiety. Satysfakcja z życia natomiast negatywnie koreluje z oceną doświadczanego stresu, co potwierdzają istniejące już doniesienia na ten temat. *Wnioski:* Osoby przynależące do wspólnot religijnych, traktując religijność jako istotną wartość w swoim życiu, odczuwają wyższy poziom stresu w tym obszarze. Poza tym przeżywają stres na bardzo podobnym poziomie, co ich rówieśnicy niezaangażowani religijnie, charakteryzując się jednak przy tym wyższym poziomem satysfakcji z życia. Wyniki badania wskazują na ogromny potencjał wspólnot religijnych i sugerują szczególną wrażliwość wobec dziewcząt i kobiet, których sytuacja psychologiczna jest trudniejsza w obszarze doświadczanego stresu i satysfakcji z życia niż ocena tych aspektów przez chłopców i mężczyzn.

**Słowa kluczowe:** różnice międzypłciowe, satysfakcja z życia, stres, wspólnota religijna

<sup>1</sup> Artykuł w języku polskim: <https://www.stowarzyszeniefidesetratio.pl/fer/2022-2Pilarska.pdf>

## Introduction

During adolescence and early adulthood, an individual often experiences stress, which is associated, among others, with biological changes, difficulties in preparing for adult life, adult roles and new tasks (Oleszkowicz, Senejko, 2015; Ziółkowska, 2015). Subjective well-being is defined, among others, on the basis of the relative absence of emotions perceived as unpleasant (Diener, Scollon, Lucas, 2004), so experiencing stress is important for the level of satisfaction with life. Catholics try to look for support in their environment, including by belonging to religious communities. Research indicates that religious commitment is related to life satisfaction (Haidt, 2007; Steger, Frazier, 2005; Zimbardo, Johnson, McCann, 2017), and belonging to a religious group indirectly reduces symptoms of depression (Petts, Jolliff, 2008), which, as a consequence, may reduce the intensity of experienced stress. It was decided to check the above relationships in religious groups of Polish Catholics, taking into account gender differences, which in the context of research on religiosity are of significant importance. (comp. Marcysiak, 2009; Spencer, Fegley, Harpalani, 2003; Talik, 2013).

### 1. Religious communities in the lives of young people

Being in relationships with others meets many basic human needs (Aronson, Wilson, Akert, 2012; Wojciszke, 2021), hence a natural human activity is dialogue and the need to be a member of social groups. A social group is formed by individuals who interact with each other, who are interdependent in meeting their needs and achieving goals. Participants of the social group have the task of acting for the common good. The groups are very diverse and they function differently, if only because of their size. The social group is characterized by its own norms, hierarchy and assigned roles (Czyżowska, 2005). In the era of postmodernity, religious communities are gaining more and more popularity, often fulfilling the function of defense against fear and enabling the satisfaction of the need for contact with the Absolute

and the related values. According to the definition, “a religious community is a group of people who are in a relationship with God and with each other and the way of being in a group is determined by the norms adopted by the group, which relate to religious practices (the way of worship); mutual interactions and jointly performed tasks” (Kusz, 2007, p. 3). Recently, the functioning of such communities on the Internet has also been observed, including on social networking sites (Cabak, 2020). This is even more important now, in the era of a pandemic, when young people are looking for, among other things, a virtual parish community (Mariański, 2021). Despite this, however, the use of support in religious communities has been significantly limited due to COVID-19 (Parker, Haskins, Lee, Hailemeskel, Adepoju, 2021). Commitment to community activities is often an expression of a change in the former life of a young person. At this point, it is worth returning to the sources and the timeless words by Pope John Paul II in 1979 at Victory Square in Warsaw: “Let your Spirit descend! Let Your Spirit descend and renew the face of the earth! The face of this land!”. They were understood, among other things, as an incentive to strengthen a sense of community and brotherhood (Ostrowska, 2015). Pope John Paul II emphasized the importance of helping the sick, the weak, the suffering, the excluded and the lost. In Gdańsk in 1987, he said to young people: “Each of you, young friends, also finds some Westerplatte in your life. A dimension of tasks that must be undertaken and fulfilled. Some righteous cause that you cannot help but fight for. Some duty, duty that cannot be avoided. You cannot desert”, wanting to encourage young people when confronted with the needs of others. The Pope also showed concern for the Catholic Church as a community of believers (“Look for this truth where it really is! If necessary, be determined to go against the current of popular views and propagated slogans! Do not be afraid of the Love that challenges people”) and argued that dialogue and meeting facilitate solving the problems of the contemporary world and everyday difficulties, and the period of adolescence is the time that espe-



cially needs it (“Youth is the time when a person feels the greatest need for acceptance and support, when he or she most wants to be heard and loved”). These numerous quotes by Karol Wojtyła and his activities indicate the need to be part of the community, to find support in it, and to bring it to the other members. Such commitment, however, always comes with benefits and losses, so the question arises: what is the importance of belonging and the associated dialogue in communities for young people? Does belonging to religious communities reduce the perceived stress, or is it its source? Is being in constant dialogue with other members of the community and with God important for the satisfaction with the life of young Catholics? And how do young girls and young men find themselves in the face of these challenges? Can we talk about gender differences?

## **2. Young Catholics’ Challenges: coping with stress and striving for well-being**

Adolescence is a time of numerous and dynamic changes, both quantitative and qualitative, that result in the achievement of relative psychosocial and sexual maturity. They largely determine the functioning of people in further development periods (Przetacznik-Gierowska, 1973; Obuchowska, 1983, 1996). In a dynamically changing reality, it is difficult to deal effectively with the stressful demands placed on people in various situations, so they are often exposed to crisis-like experiences (Bauman, 2000). Sometimes the crisis is motivating, but not everyone is able to use it in a creative way (Dąbrowski, 1986), which is associated with experiencing stress. W. Oniszczenko (1988) describes stress as a reaction to the demands placed on the body (in the biological and psychological dimension), as a system of conditions that burden a human being (mainly related to deprivation, overload, difficulty, threat and motivational conflict) and as a specific type of human-environment relationship. Numerous needs, changes and developmental tasks in adolescence and early adulthood may cause confusion of roles, dissonance and disturbance of homeostasis.

They make up the image of the youth crisis, which is associated with numerous contradictions in the mental development of an individual (Oleszkowicz, 1995). Therefore, dealing with stress becomes everyday life, and experiencing it is an inevitable element of life. According to adolescents, one of the ways of coping with stress in the adolescent crisis is involvement in religion or ideology. Young people face numerous developmental difficulties, they want to relatively deal with them and experience joy and satisfaction with life, which can be understood as the general quality of life related to the criteria selected by the individual (Diener, Scollon, Lucas, 2004; Shin, Johnson, 1978).

## **3. Research procedure**

The subject of the study was the intensification of stress in its various areas and the issue of satisfaction with the life of young Catholics, including members of religious communities, meeting in three types of communities: prayer communities, liturgical services and musical groups. The study was conducted using the paper-pencil method on a group of 407 people. An original questionnaire was used (the general level of stress and its 18 areas were examined: health, parents, siblings, extended family, peers / colleagues, spouse / partner, neighbours, teacher / employer, school / work, religiosity / spirituality, appearance, knowledge and skills, personality, financial situation, housing conditions, political situation, lack of free time, household duties; variables rated on a scale from 1 to 5) and the SWLS scale, created by E. Diener, R.A. Emmons, R. J. Larson, and S. Griffin (1985). The reliability of the original scale calculated on the basis of the internal consistency index is  $\alpha = 0.87$ , while the reliability of the repeatability of the test is  $r = 0.82$  (Diener et al., 1985, Pilarska, 2012). In the Polish adaptation of the test, the reliability index is  $\alpha = 0.81$ , and the test repeatability reliability is  $r = 0.86$  (Juczyński, 2001). The selection of the respondents for the sample was purposeful in terms of age (13-28 years old). The mean age of the respondents in the group belonging to a religious community was  $M = 17$  years and 11 months ( $SD = 2.75$ ), and in the group

of people not belonging to a religious community—M = 17 years and 5 months (SD = 2.09). The majority of the respondents were women—248 people (60.9%). Women constituted the majority both in the group belonging to and not belonging to the religious community: respectively in the belonging group 53.7%, and in the non-belonging group 66.5%. The average time spent on religious practice by the respondents per week was over three hours (3 hours and 10 minutes). On average, more time per week was devoted to religious practice by the respondents belonging to the religious community—it was less than 5 hours (4 hours and 50 minutes) compared to the group of non-belonging who spent on average about 2 hours (1 hour and 54 minutes). The average time of being a member of the community was over 5 years (5 years and 5 months). A longer period of membership was noted in the group of men (over 6 years) than in the group of women (less than 5 years). The R-Spearman correlation coefficient was used to determine the correlation between the two variables. The non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test was also used to assess the differences of one trait between two populations (groups) and descriptive statistics.

#### 4. Results

The largest number of young people indicated that the experienced stress is on the average level—170 people (41.8%), next at a moderately low level—78 people (19.2%). The least stated that the stress was very high—38 people (9.3%). In the group belonging to the community, the highest stress was average—42.4% and moderately low—20.3%, the least—very high stress—6.8%. In the group not belonging to the community, most people indicated average stress—41.3% and moderately low stress—18.3%, the least—very high stress—11.3% (Table 1).

The mean assessment of the level of experienced stress was 2.89 points, which is an average level. The scores in both analyzed groups were similar. A slightly higher average was recorded in the group of people not belonging to the community—2.90 points, in the group of people belonging to a reli-

Table 1. Assessment of the level of experienced stress

Belonging to religious community	Yes		No		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
very low	21	11,9	33	14,3	54	13,3
moderately low	36	20,3	42	18,3	78	19,2
average	75	42,4	95	41,3	170	41,8
moderately high	33	18,6	34	14,8	67	16,5
very high	12	6,8	26	11,3	38	9,3
total	177	100,0	230	100,0	407	100,0

Table 2. Differences in the assessment of the strength of experienced stress in selected areas between the compared groups, in terms of belonging to a community (U Mann-Whitney Test)

Stress aspect	Z	p level
Health	-0,532	0,595
Parents	-0,137	0,891
Siblings	1,276	0,202
Distant family	0,347	0,728
Peers/ Colleagues	0,156	0,876
Spouse/ Partner	-1,733	0,083
Neighbours	0,771	0,441
Teacher/ Employer	1,281	0,200
School/ Work	0,236	0,814
Religion/ Spirituality	2,099	0,036
Appearance	-0,143	0,886
Knowledge and skills	0,201	0,841
Personality	0,062	0,951
Financial situation	-0,066	0,947
Accommodation conditions	-0,483	0,629
Political situation	0,261	0,794
Lack of free time	0,348	0,728
Household chores	0,873	0,383

Table 3. Differences in the level of experienced stress between groups of women and men (U Mann-Whitney Test)

Belonging to community	Z	p level
Total	4,126	0,000
Yes	3,061	0,002
No	2,836	0,005

Table 4. Differences in the assessment of the strength of experienced stress in selected areas between groups of women and men in the group as a whole, among people belonging to and not belonging to religious communities. (U Mann-Whitney Test)

Stress aspect	Entire sample		People belonging to communities		People not belonging to communities	
	Z	p level	Z	p level	Z	p level
Health	1,270	0,204	0,502	0,616	1,144	0,252
Parents	1,862	0,063	1,203	0,229	1,401	0,161
Siblings	0,447	0,655	0,432	0,665	0,613	0,540
Distant family	-0,382	0,702	-1,802	0,072	1,250	0,211
Peers/Colleagues	0,749	0,454	-0,888	0,374	1,971	0,049
Spouse/ Partner	0,284	0,776	-1,647	0,099	1,448	0,148
Neighbours	-2,087	0,037	-2,895	0,004	0,078	0,938
Teacher/ Employer	-1,641	0,101	-2,284	0,022	0,198	0,843
School/ Work	1,430	0,153	0,269	0,788	1,809	0,070
Religion/ Spirituality	-1,662	0,096	-1,768	0,077	-0,147	0,883
Appearance	1,646	0,100	0,731	0,465	1,535	0,125
Knowledge and skills	1,715	0,086	0,772	0,440	1,701	0,089
Personality	0,097	0,923	-0,552	0,581	0,667	0,505
Financial situation	0,206	0,836	-0,860	0,390	1,152	0,249
Accommodation conditions	-0,548	0,584	-1,687	0,092	0,730	0,466
Political situation	-2,805	0,005	-3,558	0,000	-0,505	0,614
Lack of free time	0,083	0,934	0,524	0,601	-0,309	0,758
Household chores	0,342	0,732	-0,163	0,870	0,910	0,363

religious community the average level of experienced stress was recorded at the level of 2.88 points. There were no differences in the level of perceived stress between groups of people belonging to and not belonging to religious communities ( $Z = -0.086$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). One statistically significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) between the compared groups in terms of belonging to a religious community concerned one area of experienced stress, which is the area of religion, spirituality (Table 2).

There were statistically significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) between men and women in the level of experienced stress, both in the group as a whole and in subgroups of people belonging or not belonging to the community (Table 3).

Greater stress, both in the group of respondents as well as among people belonging to and not belonging to the religious community, was recorded in the group of women. In the group of women it was an average level (3.09), in the group of men it was also average (2.59), but on the verge of a moderately low

level. In the group of women and men who did not belong to religious communities, these indicators were lower than in the group of women and men belonging to religious communities. In the entire sample, statistically significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) between women and men were found in the assessment of the sources of experienced stress in the area of relations with neighbours and in relation to the political situation. A higher index of stress related to both difficulties in relations with neighbours and the political situation was recorded in the group of men (1.03 and 1.62, respectively). Moreover, there were statistically significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) between men and women belonging to a religious community regarding the assessment of the sources of experienced stress due to relations with neighbours, teachers / employers and due to the political situation. A higher stress index in all three analyzed aspects was obtained in the group of men belonging to a religious community (1.17; 2.04; 1.82, respectively). The only statistically significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) between

Table 5. Correlations between the results of life satisfaction (SWLS) and the level of experienced stress (R-Spearman correlation)

Belonging to community	N	R	t(N-2)	p level
Total	407	-0,319	-6,768	0,000
Yes	177	-0,230	-3,132	0,002
No	230	-0,380	-6,208	0,000

Table 6. Differences in the results of life satisfaction by gender / the whole group / (U Mann-Whitney Test)

	Z	p level
SWLS	-2,777	0,005

women and men who did not belong to a religious community was noted in the assessment of the sources of experienced stress due to relationships with peers / colleagues. A higher stress index in relationships with peers or colleagues was noted in the group of women who did not belong to a religious community, and its result was 1.61 (Table 4).

The results of life satisfaction remained in a statistically significant negative and moderate correlation ( $p < 0.05$ ) with the results of the level of experienced stress both in the group as a whole and in the group not belonging to the religious community, and to a lesser extent in the group belonging to the religious community (Table 5).

There were statistically significant differences between men and women in terms of life satisfaction (Table 6). A higher level of satisfaction in all SWLS items was recorded in the group of men. This was noted in the group of men belonging to and not belonging to religious communities.

A comparison of groups belonging to and not belonging to religious communities in terms of life satisfaction shows statistically significant differences ( $Z = 3.173, p < 0.05$ ). A higher level of satisfaction with life was recorded for people belonging to religious communities.

## Discussion of the results

The level of stress in the group of people belonging to and not belonging to religious communities reaches a similar value, these groups do not differ in terms of the level of experienced stress, and there are also no differences between different types of community groups. This shows that both religiously engaged and disengaged people are exposed to crisis experiences. Struggling with stress, the level of which we can estimate as moderate and which occurs in various areas, is therefore the everyday life of all young people. The area of experienced stress, which is more intense in the group of people belonging to religious communities, is the area of “religion / spirituality”. Why in this area stress is higher in the group of people belonging to communities than in the group of people not involved in dialogue in religious communities? Religious commitment through participation in communities intensifies the use of religious stress coping strategies (Pilarska, Liberska, 2017), which means that religiosity becomes an essential element of life, and thus an area around which conflicts and fears also focus. Research among Jewish adolescents (Dubow, Pargament, Boxer, and Tarakeshwar, 1999) showed that over half of the respondents experienced stress related to religion (related to Shabbat-related restrictions or anti-Semitic attitudes). The time devoted to religious practice in the compared groups is different (people belonging to communities spend more than twice as much on it), which generates space for experiences that are not free from stress. Additionally, it should be remembered that belonging to religious communities is associated with fulfilling specific roles in them, often requiring leaving the so-called “comfort zone”, which is a form of challenge, but also stress. The study did not distinguish eustress and distress (cf. Ogińska-Bulik, 2009) as different variants of stress, and such a specification in this area seems to be important and could describe the stress of community members, which is associated, for example, with public speaking. There are gender differences in the strength and sources of experienced stress. Women and girls report a higher level of experienced stress in all studied groups. Previous studies indicated a greater incidence of depression in women

(cf. Marczak, 2011; Pilarska, 2011; Wojciszke, 2012), which may be its consequence. It is worth referring to the problem of female masochism (Horney, 2012). K. Horney claims that the problem of masochism in our cultural circle is encountered more often in women than in men, and its causes should be seen in the anatomical differences between the sexes and in how they are interpreted from the perspective of psychoanalytic theories, which is discussed by the author of the theory. Gender differences can also be explained in other ways, including social learning theories or gender schema theories (Brannon, 2002). It is noted that to some extent the socialization of girls and boys is culturally diverse, although gender differences are better described by evolutionist explanations (Wojciszke, 2012). At this point, it is necessary to reflect on the role of prehistoric women and prehistoric men. Women have always been involved in giving birth to children, bringing them up and caring for the welfare of their loved ones. Therefore, it is not surprising that among people who do not belong to religious communities, women and girls considerably more often perceive relationships with their peers and colleagues as a source of experienced stress. How girls and women experience relationships with their peers is important. Women tend to confide in other women, especially their relatives, they focus on emotions and social relations (Wojciszke, 2012). They are seen as more sensitive, critical, but also observational, they attach great importance to their appearance and body (Richters, Grulich, de Visser, Smith, Rissel, 2003). However, what is interesting is the fact that the declaration of a higher level of stress in the area of interpersonal relations occurs only among girls and women who do not belong to religious communities. This can be explained by the fact that belonging to religious communities, in a way, places women and girls more in their roles and facilitates functioning in peer relations through constant dialogue with other members of the community. In the entire sample and in the group of people belonging to a religious community, men and boys statistically more often perceive the political situation and relations with their neighbours as sources of experienced stress. Compared to men, women are less interested in politics, follow current events less frequently and

are more pessimistic about their ability to influence politics (Wolak, 2020). Therefore, less interest in women may result in a lower level of stress in this area. The higher level of stress manifested among men in relation to their neighbours may correspond to the stereotypical attribution of competitive tendencies to men (Brannon, 2002), but also to a higher level of aggression in men (Wojciszke, 2012). On the other hand, how is the higher level of stress in boys to be explained, within the relationship with teachers and employers, in the group of boys and men belonging to religious communities? It should be remembered that the surveyed boys and men belonging to religious communities have on average over 6 years of involvement in community dialogue in their lives, and this is a statistically significant difference in relation to girls and women in those groups whose average duration of membership in communities is less than 5 years. Better role placement may cause a more conflicting relationship with widely understood authorities, which is natural and even necessary in preparation for adult life, adult roles and new tasks (Oleszkowicz, Senejko, 2015; Ziółkowska, 2015). On the other hand, the study of life satisfaction shows that it reaches a higher level in the group of boys and men and that it negatively correlates with the level of experienced stress. This sheds new light on the results for men and women, in which there are no significant differences in the context of experienced happiness (Wojciszke, 2012). A higher level of satisfaction with life (despite a similar level of experienced stress) is also indicated by members of religious communities compared to people who are not religiously involved, which indicates a constructive coping with stress (Pilarska, Liberska, 2017). Despite the fact that the analyzes prove that the dimensions of religiosity are subjectively related to subjective well-being and that they buffer the influence of professional demands on depression symptoms, it cannot be stated that the dimensions of religiosity have a buffering effect on satisfaction with life and work (Lechner, Tomasik, Silbereisen, Wasilewski, 2013). This area requires further analysis.

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# Communication in logotherapy as an example of phenomenological approach in cognition of another human being

Komunikacja w logoterapii jako przykład fenomenologicznego podejścia w poznaniu drugiego człowieka<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to outline the issue of communication in logotherapy based on existential communication, the foundation of which is phenomenological cognition of another human being. The basic assumptions of logotherapy have been presented in the context of the issue of the location of psychotherapy in relation to the question of its essence, and at the same time the basic catalyst for therapeutic change – the techniques developed on the basis of empirical evidence, or a therapeutic relationship. The next part of the article outlines the form of existential communication according to Karl Jaspers in the context of phenomenological cognition of another human being. On the background of logotherapy, the meeting of Me and You, full of authentic acceptance and devoid of ready-made interpretative patterns, allows us to discover the freedom “to”, which provides a space for authentic selection and implementation of values, taking responsibility for one’s own existence, and consequently – experiencing the meaning of life.

**Keywords:** logotherapy, meaning of life, values, existential communication, phenomenology

**Abstrakt:** Celem niniejszego artykułu jest zarysowanie problematyki komunikacji w logoterapii na gruncie komunikacji egzystencjalnej, której fundamentem jest fenomenologiczne nastawienie w poznawaniu drugiego człowieka. Podstawowe założenia logoterapii przedstawione zostały w kontekście problematyki umiejscowienia psychoterapii wobec pytania o jej istotę, a zarazem zasadniczy katalizator zmiany terapeutycznej – techniki wypracowane w oparciu o dowody empiryczne czy też relacja terapeutyczna. W kolejnej części artykułu zarysowany został kształt komunikacji egzystencjalnej wg Karla Jaspersa w kontekście fenomenologicznego poznania drugiego człowieka. Na gruncie logoterapii pełne autentycznej akceptacji i pozbawione gotowych wzorców interpretacyjnych spotkanie Ja i Ty pozwala odkryć wolność “ku”, będącą przestrzenią autentycznego wybierania i urzeczywistniania wartości, przyjmowania odpowiedzialności za własną egzystencję, a co za tym idzie – doświadczania sensu.

**Słowa kluczowe:** logoterapia, sens życia, wartości, komunikacja egzystencjalna, fenomenologia

## Introduction

One of the most fundamental questions of modern psychotherapy is the question of understanding it as an art or as a technique. With the emergence of the concept of EBP (evidence-based psychotherapy) in the 1990s (Chrzastowski, 2019), certain standards

were set, directing the knowledge that this field operates away from pseudoscientific concepts supported by individual intuition and experience of the therapist to empirically verified theorems and the construction of procedures and techniques with measurable

<sup>1</sup> Artykuł w języku polskim: <https://www.stowarzyszeniefidesetratio.pl/fer/2022-2Sipowicz.pdf>

effectiveness (Cook, Schwartz, Kaslow, 2017). Thus, attention was directed to the question of what really treats the patient in the course of therapy. According to many contemporary authors, the person of the therapist and the therapeutic relationship are the basic healing factor regardless of the therapy trend (Norcross, 2010; Wachtel 2012). However, excessive perception of psychotherapy as a kind of art may result in the slipping towards the area of quackery, where empirical knowledge is eliminated.

According to Viktor E. Frankl (2019), the creator of the basic assumptions of logotherapy, psychotherapy is both an art and a technique, and each extreme is a pure artifact, as a phenomenon that is inherently mutually exclusive in practice. The continuum of therapeutic situations opening between the extremes offers an abundance of diverse possibilities, among which both the existential encounter between two humans, which is the therapeutic relationship and each technique and method in a specific situational context have their value. As stated by Frankl (2017), psychotherapy understood as art is closest to an authentic existential encounter, and therefore “existential communication” as understood by Karl Jaspers (1998, 2009).

Frankl’s logotherapy, also referred to as meaning-centered psychotherapy, uses a rich repertoire of techniques which are specific to it – including, among others, paradoxical intention, dereflection, modification of attitudes, logodrama, mountain-range exercise, guided autobiography, etc. (Marshall, Marshall, 2012; Dhezelic, Ghanoum, 2015)–for which communication is the primary medium (Lukas, 1998; Lukas, 1999). However, communication in logotherapy is not limited to language communication. It is an interpersonal phenomenon whose power lies in extracting man from the existential emptiness through the search for meanings and values. The techniques used in logotherapy do not set a rigid framework of management, nor do they assume precise implementation of the “recipe” for therapy – they are used in a fluid way to give a course to the process of communication, the essence of which is the phenomenological cognition of another person.

The aim of this paper is to outline the logotherapy process in the context of a phenomenologically oriented encounter, which is the broadly understood communication between the patient and the therapist.

## 1. Therapeutic relationship in the aspect of the basic assumptions of logotherapy

The process of communication is always embedded in the specificity of the relationship that connects people communicating with each other (Wachtel, 2012). Basically, all psychotherapy currents unanimously see the therapeutic relationship as a necessary (although insufficient) condition for the emergence of the psychotherapy process (Aleksandrowicz, 2000) and one of the most important healing factors (Czabała, 2006). The difference lies in defining the form of this therapeutic compound and its role in the process of change. Referring to the previously described discrepancy between psychotherapy understood as an art or a technique, it should be emphasized that in some approaches these relations are in themselves a fundamental carrier of psychotherapeutic assistance, while therapeutic techniques are considered only as a pretext for establishing and maintaining communication between the patient and the psychotherapist. At the other extreme, the opinion that a technique developed on the basis of scientific evidence is effective regardless of the person of the therapist and the bond between the therapist and the patient can be found (Trzebińska, 2005).

Against the background of the presented considerations, logotherapy appears as a somewhat eclectic concept. It is based, on the one hand, on phenomenologically oriented being with another person, and on the other hand, on moving within not so much the specific techniques as the practical implications of Frankl’s philosophy and anthropology. The relationship itself would thus prove insufficient to achieve a change, but the philosophical and anthropological material (logotherapy) and the techniques used by logotherapy also cannot do without an existential meeting between the therapist and the patient, emphasizing the subjectivity and dignity of man. In logotherapy, science and wisdom are nothing without a bit of humanity (Frankl, 2018). As emphasized by Frankl (2017), logotherapy is both an art and a technique – a dynamic point on a continuum whose current location is the result of many individual factors. Frankl’s psychotherapy is



much more than “therapeutic engineering” aimed at a specific change – it is based on the rapprochement of two human beings, each of whom represents own sense of existence (Leontiev, 2016).

Certainly, the personality of the therapist and the therapeutic relationship established with its help is the foundation in the process of logotherapy. Thus, the question can be raised what is the form and specificity of logotherapeutic communication.

Looking at the Polish and world logotherapeutic literature, it can be noticed that it abounds primarily in philosophical and anthropological inquiries. There are few publications on techniques specific to this trend, and the procedures for their application are general assumptions and inspirations guiding communication rather than specific guidelines. This ratio is a perfect illustration of the essence of the logotherapeutic process, which can be understood as “healing through meaning” (Fabry, 1968). The issue of the relationship between the logotherapist and the patient, and proper communication is usually not emphasized. However, it emerges indirectly through the analysis of the basic assumptions of logotherapy – precisely in the philosophical and anthropological aspects. It is difficult to imagine psychotherapy not rooted in the proper theory of man (Frankl, 2018), however, for logotherapy, this foundation is in a special way the essence of the process itself. As indicated by M.S. Dezelic and G. Ghanoum (2015), logotherapy is not only psychotherapy, but also philosophy of life and anthropology of man. The therapeutic process is therefore a kind of immersion in the image of man and the world proposed by the logotherapy.

Logotherapy (Latin *logos* – meaning), also referred to as meaning-focused psychotherapy, is characterized by a specific vision of the perception of man and his place in the world, and in particular is interested in the issue of metamotivation of human existence – it oscillates around the question of the meaning of life and the possibility of experiencing happiness in the face of the turns of fate (Lukas, 1998). Logotherapy is based on three fundamental concepts: free will, the will of meaning, and the meaning of life (Frankl, 2019).

In Frankl’s view, freedom is an antidote to the determinism of the psychophysical dimension of existence. This freedom is not omnipotence in the sense

of independence from any conditions (biological, psychological or social), but the freedom to choose responsibility for one’s own attitude towards these conditions (Leontiev, 2016). The man reaches true humanity by rising into the dimension of freedom, which is possible through self-transcendence. (Frankl, 2017). This phenomenon reflects the man’s ability to transcend himself in the psychophysical dimension and to achieve the noetic (spiritual) dimension, thus adopting an attitude towards himself – his mental and somatic possibilities and difficulties, including symptoms of diseases and disorders and his own suffering. The noetic dimension of existence is a space for developing our own character and taking responsibility for who we become. The man reaches the noetic realm, “whenever he reflects on himself or, if necessary, when he rejects himself, makes an object of himself or questions himself, he shows that he has an awareness of himself, or that he has a conscience” (Frankl, 2018, p. 30). It is in the noetic dimension of existence that man feels the desire for meaning and has the freedom to find and fulfill it.

The will of meaning is a response to the statement of G.F. Allport (1960), according to which at every moment the human mind is constantly guided by some intention. According to Frankl (2017), the overriding motivation of human existence is the desire for meaning – both in the universal dimension (the meaning of life, supersense) and in the partial dimension (the meaning of individual situations). Meaning is always an implied meaning, and although it is hidden in the situations and circumstances of life in an immanent and objective way, the discovery of it by the man takes place through subjective interpretation and search burdened with many errors. The logotherapist is therefore not a depository of any absolute truth, and he seeks meanings, making mistakes and correcting relative truths on an equal footing with the patient (Frankl, 1984). The man fulfills his meanings through the implementation of values, which can be realized as follows:

1. By acting and shaping the world,
2. By living and experiencing the world,
3. By enduring fate, and in particular suffering (Frankl, 2019).

The essence of logotherapy is therefore discovering meanings, implementation of values, and as a result, experiencing the meaningfulness of individual life circumstances and one's own existence in general, while the role of a logotherapist involves accompanying the patient in this process in a special way and co-creating him. But what does this accompaniment and co-creation mean? As mentioned earlier, publications in the field of logotherapy do not directly provide an answer to this question. The solutions to this problem should be sought implicitly.

## 2. Logotherapy as a phenomenological cognition of the noetic dimension of existence

Phenomenology, understood as an optics of perception devoid of supposition, turns out to be the key issue for the question posed earlier. In the logotherapeutic context, it will be learning about existence beyond the interpretative patterns and explanations offered by, for example, psychodynamic or socioeconomic hypotheses. The man is perceived as a dignified subject with freedom achieved through transcendence in the noetic dimension and readiness to assume responsibility for his existence. Phenomenological optics frees the man from being a helpless object – a victim of biological, psychological and social conditions, or clashing drives. (Frankl, 2018).

The phenomenological view of man in logotherapy refers directly to existential communication and is, in a way, its crowning achievement. It should be acknowledged that communication can be understood at different levels, and from the perspective of psychotherapy it includes both the exchange of information and the relational aspect. K. Jaspers (1998) gives communication a special meaning, understanding it as an obverse of loneliness, and, above all, the

highest form of being oneself and experiencing fully one's own identity by being together. As stated by M. Żelazny (2011), the man in the existential dimension can reveal himself both to himself and to the world only in dialogue with another human being.

According to Jaspers (2009), the dimensions of communication include the Dasein<sup>2</sup> area (being here), and therefore empirical existence and the existential area. The man decides about himself within the possibilities (potentiality) inscribed in Dasein (i.e. the specificity of his existence). Existence cannot be directly explored, but it can be illuminated and thus bring out of darkness what man is. One of the possible ways of such clarification is communication, which is discovering the humanity of the partner and one's own by being in a relationship. Jaspers (1998, 2009) emphasizes that a human being can only be in a community, and "I" always exist in relation to "You". It is the act of rapprochement with another human being that constitutes existential existence and at the same time allows to experience it. The man can become himself authentically only thanks to another person, because being with others precedes being himself. It is not that one can exist initially as an isolated person and then enter into interpersonal relationships. Only the act of drawing closer to someone else makes it possible for the man to say "I am" about himself.

The man is made up of many interpenetrating dimensions, so there are many levels of communication. Empirical being here (Dasein) seeks to meet immediate needs – therefore, communication at this level is an exchange of information necessary for survival. According to Jaspers (1991), the man's only goals in the Dasein dimension are his own happiness, survival and multiplication. Interaction at the empirical level turns out to be insufficient as one becomes aware that everything known from the perspective of psychology, biology, chemistry, physics, etc. has already resounded.

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2 M. Żelazny (2011) proposes to translate Dasein in K. Jaspers' view as "being here". This expression includes knowability (cognitive accessibility) and temporal character. Thus, Dasein expresses the man existing here and now, in a specific situational context, knowable using the methodology of biological, psychological and social sciences.

Communication at the Dasein level can be similarly compared on the basis of Frankl's dimensional ontology<sup>3</sup> (2018) to a relationship with another human being only on the physical and mental level, neglecting the noetic dimension. The essence of humanity, in fact, goes "beyond all that man can know about himself" (Jaspers, 1998, p. 43). The authentic meeting of Me and You is possible thanks to man's ability to self-transcend, and thus to transcend his psychophysicality (analogous to Dasein) in order to see at the noetic level the other person and the universe of meanings existing for that person.

Existential communication understood in this way is an expression of phenomenological cognition of another human being. Being the foundation of a logotherapeutic meeting, it does not place the patient in the role of an object, shaped according to a pattern defining mental health. It is based on full acceptance and openness to the existence of the patient, a perception that questions one's own beliefs and suggestions. Logotherapy is much more than psychological engineering, because it is based on the rapprochement of two human beings, either of them representing their own sense of existence. (Frankl, 2018).

The essence of logotherapy is "healing through meaning" (Fabry, 1968), and therefore the search for particular meanings, senses, and supersensibility through the recognition and implementation of values. The role of the logotherapist is to accompany the patient in this process by affirmation of his dignity and subjectivity. A seemingly trivial and almost obvious statement reveals actually the foundations of logotherapeutic interactions. As stated by J. Fabry (1981, p. 11), "As long as we treat human beings as animals that can be trained, and machines that can be manipulated, we make them into animals and machines". On the other hand, if we make them aware of the fullness of their humanity manifested in the noetic dimension of existence, we support them in achieving this humanity.

The logotherapist discovers together with the patient the often unconscious freedom "to". Freedom inherent in the noetic dimension of existence allows us to go beyond the conditions and limitations of psychophysical existence, which "push" man to automatic answers to the questions posed by life. This freedom is a space for authentic choice and implementation of values, taking responsibility for one's own existence, and thus experiencing meaning.

Logotherapy, however, is far from a moralistic approach (Popielski, 2018). The therapist approaches the patient with ontological humility and acceptance, recognizing his right to shape his life according to his own conscience. This conscience is a key concept and is understood on the basis of logotherapy as an intuitive ability to find the meaning of specific situations. A living and tender conscience is an axiological compass that protects against experiencing existential emptiness. A logotherapist cannot impose on the patient his system of values and the meanings he perceives. His role is to give the patient the opportunity to listen to the voice of his own conscience.

The question of the axiological diversity and relativism that emerge in this way arises. If existential communication and phenomenological cognition presume listening to the man at the noetic level with full acceptance, is that associated with a kind of axiological permissiveness and chaos, and thus sterility?

It should be understood that the man does not create his own meaning, but only discovers the meaning hidden in what happens to him. In every situation there is only one true meaning, the existence of which is permanent and objective. However, this discovery has the flavor of intuitive explorations and interpretations, and is therefore burdened with error (Frankl, 2018). It follows that both the patient and the logotherapist can never be sure of the truth of the meanings to which they are devoted.

The logotherapist does not instruct the patient, but only sensitizes his conscience, also pointing to the freedom and responsibility hidden in the dignity of

3 In order to bring closer the understanding of man in the biological (lowest), psychic and noetic (highest) dimensions, Frankl (1984, 2017, 2018) introduces a dimensional ontology, which is a kind of geometric metaphor illustrating the complexity of human existence as a biological, psychic and noetic being at the same time. The first law of dimensional ontology indicates that the projection of one object on other, lower dimensions results in discrepancies. The second law, in turn, states that the projections of various objects into one lower dimension result in an isomorphism.

being human. He accompanies the discovery, clarification and implementation of values – what can be lived and experienced, created and given of oneself. He points out that existential choice is always possible, even in the form of adopting an attitude towards the inevitable, supporting the patient in consciously taking responsibility for who he is. The logotherapist rejects all interpretative patterns and looks at the patient in a way full of acceptance, seeing him as a unique human being with inherent dignity. He represents phenomenological curiosity in the face of an existential encounter with another human being and with the noetic dimension of his personality. For from communication at the existential level “(...) the brightest moments flow out, and their richness makes up the importance of life” (Jaspers, 2009, p. 221).

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## Conclusion

Phenomenological cognition of another human being is the basic foundation of logotherapy, because it is a pure perception that directly aims at the true humanity of the human being. The rapprochement of the therapist and the patient through existential communication exposes the noetic dimension of existence and allows to perceive the patient's freedom, responsibility and conscience beyond biopsychosocial conditions.



# Inter-professional and patient communication as part of the personalized treatment process. A patient – doctor – pharmacist – pharmaceutical plant relationship model

Komunikacja międzyzawodowa i z pacjentem jako element procesu leczenia spersonalizowanego. Model relacji pacjent – lekarz – farmaceuta – zakład farmaceutyczny<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** This article presents the issue of communication with the patient, as well as the professional relationship between a doctor, pharmacist and the employees of a pharmaceutical plant who are involved in the process of personalized treatment. The current literature on the subject recognizes the potential of personalized medicine, but focuses on its medical characteristics, analyzing, to a small extent, the importance of proper communication between entities involved in the treatment process. The transition from the traditional model of treatment to individualized therapy requires the expansion of the classic model of doctor-patient communication into a broader communication model which takes into account the relationship between the patient, doctor, clinic staff, pharmacist and pharmaceutical plant. The article presents the current state of development of personalized medicine and the potential of inter-professional communication in patient treatment. As a consequence, a model of the patient – doctor – pharmacist – pharmaceutical plant relationship has been proposed, taking into consideration potential opportunities and areas for development.

**Keywords:** personalized medicine, doctor–patient communication, doctor – patient – pharmacist – pharmaceutical plant communication.

**Abstrakt:** Niniejszy artykuł przedstawia zagadnienie komunikacji z pacjentem oraz współpracy interdyscyplinarnej pomiędzy lekarzem, farmaceutą i pracownikami zakładu farmaceutycznego w procesie leczenia spersonalizowanego. Aktualna literatura przedmiotu dostrzega potencjał medycyny spersonalizowanej, jednakże koncentruje się na jej medycznych charakterystykach, w niewielkim stopniu analizując znaczenie właściwej komunikacji pomiędzy podmiotami zaangażowanymi w proces leczenia. Przejście z tradycyjnego modelu leczenia w zindywidualizowaną terapię wymaga rozbudowania klasycznego modelu komunikacji lekarz-pacjent na szerszy model komunikacji uwzględniający relację pomiędzy pacjentem, lekarzem, personelem przychodni, farmaceutą, a zakładem farmaceutycznym. W artykule przedstawiono aktualny stan rozwoju medycyny spersonalizowanej oraz potencjał współpracy zespołu interdyscyplinarnego w leczeniu pacjenta. W konsekwencji zaproponowano model relacji pacjent – lekarz – farmaceuta – zakład farmaceutyczny, rozważając potencjalne możliwości i obszary do rozwoju.

**Słowa kluczowe:** medycyna spersonalizowana, komunikacja lekarz – pacjent, komunikacja lekarz – pacjent – farmaceuta – zakład farmaceutyczny.

## 1. Personalized medicine

In the treatment of the patient, not only is the effectiveness of the therapy important, but also awareness of the potential risk of complications. Modern clinical observations have led to the conclusion that the average drug works in 40-60% of patients, and another 15% experience side effects. Therefore, an important stage

of medical therapy should be take into account the individual properties of the patient's organism, including their genetic predisposition (Gaciong, 2016; Jain, 2002). The process of optimizing and individualizing therapy, as well as adapting a drug to the needs of a specific patient is defined as personalized medicine (Gaciong, 2009;

<sup>1</sup> Artykuł w języku polskim: <https://www.stowarzyszeniefidesetratio.pl/fer/2022-2Barlog.pdf>

2016, Kaleta, 2016; Wysocki, Handschuh, Mackiewicz, 2009). The idea of individualized therapy presented finds supporters in oncological treatment (Łaczmajska et al., 2021; Wysocki, Handschuh, Mackiewicz, 2009), but there are more and more considerations regarding the adaptation of the method in other areas of medicine, e.g. in the treatment of infertility (Goetz, Schork, 2018). Currently, researchers focus on the promotion of personalized medicine, the presentation of advantages and identification of potential difficulties. The literature considers ways to optimize the personalized treatment process, and the main topics of discussion are the issues of diagnosis, methods of genetic testing, protection of sensitive data (Chan, Ginsburg, 2011; Hamburg, Collins, 2010, Gaciong, 2016; Schork, 2015), the use of new technology (Abul-Husn, Kenny, 2019), or data analysis—so-called big data (Cirillo, Valencia, 2019; Suwinski, Ong, Ling, Poh, Khan, Ong, 2019; Senn, 2018). As personalized therapy is a fairly new idea in medicine, researchers face many scientific, economic and organizational challenges (Mathur, Sutton, 2017). Despite the difficulties, the great potential of the method is noted, which in the future may allow for better prophylaxis (hence, the prevalence of genetic tests will enable a broad analysis of the risk of developing the disease), increasing the effectiveness of treatment (through the correct selection of drugs and reducing side effects) and reduction of costs related to, among others, the shortening of the time of treatment or inhibiting the development of the disease (Gaciong, 2016; Mathur, Sutton, 2017).

In the treatment process, non-medical aspects are also important, such as the quality of the relationship between the patient and medics (Karkowski, Karkowska, Skoczylas, 2016; Nowina Konopka, 2016). As noted by Mathur and Sutton (2017), personalized treatment makes it possible to monitor the patient's compliance with medical recommendations, and individualized communication between the patient and specialists can build trust in the health care service. Although interpersonal relationships have proved to be essential in personalized therapy, the pioneers of this method do not pay much attention to them.

## **2. Interpersonal communication in personalized medicine**

In personalized medicine, not only is the ability to interpret genetic data or medical analysis of the disease history important, but additionally the ability to build relationships with the patient, understanding their expectations and emotional needs (Małecki, 2018; Małecki, Nowina Konopka, 2018; Nowakowska et al., 2009). Karkowski, Karkowska and Skoczylas (2016) indicate the need to link personalized medicine with narrative medicine. Narrative medicine places emphasis on the free narrative of the patient, whose life history and the way of describing the disease are crucial for the effectiveness of the therapeutic process. The key here is the doctor's interpersonal skills and the quality of the relationship with the patient and appropriate environmental conditions, e.g. regarding the time of the visit (Karkowski, Karkowska, Skoczylas, 2016). Just as not every disease requires personalized treatment, the quality of the doctor-patient relationship may be related with the type of disease. There are four main communication types in the doctor-patient relationship: authoritarian, paternalistic, cooperative and partner-like (Nowina Konopka, 2016).

In the treatment of severe injuries (requiring surgery under anesthesia), the physician most often shows an authoritarian attitude, while, in chronic treatment (including personalized treatment), a relationship of mutual participation is desirable (Nowina Konopka, 2016; Szasz, Hollender, 1956). In the case of physician-dominated communication, the patient may adopt a passive attitude (characteristic of the authoritarian type of communication) or completely subordinate one (paternalistic type of communication). On the other hand, the type of cooperative communication is characterized by the fact that the doctor cooperates with the patient and, if necessary, with his family, maintaining an appropriate emotional distance. However, in the process of long-term treatment, the specialist, apart from focusing on physical health, should also take into account the emotional needs of the patient, as well as that of his family, adopting a partnership type of communication (Nowina Konopka, 2016). The ability to build this type of relationship may be

particularly important in increasing the effectiveness of individualized therapy. It seems, however, that not only the doctor-patient relationship is important in the treatment process, but also a wider support network which includes communication with the clinic's medical staff (Nowina Konopka, 2016) and a pharmacist (Burak, Andersz, Karpińska, Gašior, and Fedorowicz, 2015; Chmielewska, Kostrzewa-Itrych, Kostrzewa, Hermanowski, 2017) as well as between a pharmacist and pharmaceutical plant that produces drug ingredients.

The pharmacist is an important subject of communication in the patient's treatment process. Some patients omit a visit to the doctor (undertaking self-diagnosis) and consult drug purchase with just the pharmacist (Waszyk-Nowaczyk, Simon, 2009). In turn, more than half of the patients after talking with the doctor, they does not remember the instructions, and only every fifth patient admits that the doctor asks about the level of understanding of the information presented (Zygadło, 2005; after: Chmielewska, Kostrzewa-Itrych, Kostrzewa, Hermanowski, 2017). The health system should not limit the pharmacist only to the obligation to issue drugs, but it could develop potential in the area of preventive activities, e.g., disseminating knowledge about a healthy lifestyle among pharmacy customers (Burak et al., 2015). In the United States, the role of the pharmacist in the personalized treatment process has been increasingly recognized for several years. Americans systematically develop a pharmacotherapy management program, i.e., they adjust pharmacological therapy to the individual predispositions of the patient. In this process, important competencies of a pharmacist (a side from specialist knowledge in the field of personalized medicines) are communication skills, i.e., the ability to consult the patient, including motivating and educating conversations, and the ability to build relationships with doctors (Piecuch, Makarewicz-Wujec, Kozłowska-Wojciechowska, 2014). Equally important for a clinical pharmacist is acquiring competencies in the area of making therapeutic decisions (clinical judgment), engaging in clinical interviews and optimizing care in selected clinical groups (Piecuch, Kozłowska-Wojciechowska, Jaszewska, Makarewicz-Wujec, 2014).

The literature on the subject regarding the issues of cooperation between doctors and pharmacists (interprofessional communication) points to a need to increase interaction between stakeholders. To this end, the pharmacist should develop the social competencies described above, and the doctor should acquire knowledge regarding the importance of cooperation with the pharmacist, recognize his role in the treatment process and understand that the pharmacist is not only a drug seller, but also an important partner in the process of helping the patient (Piecuch, Makarewicz-Wujec, Kozłowska-Wojciechowska, 2014). Bradley, Ashcroft and Noyce (2012) on the basis of qualitative research conducted among doctors and pharmacists, they highlighted several factors important for the quality of cooperation, they are: location, service provision, trust, knowledge, communication, professional role and professional respect (Piecuch et al., 2014). It is worth emphasizing that only the first two factors do not concern interpersonal competencies, and the remaining ones are related to communication, noticing the importance of a partner's professional role, showing respect or trust. Although in other European countries, specialists are beginning to notice the need to strengthen cooperation between doctors and pharmacists, in the case of Poland, there is no such interaction that would be extremely beneficial for the patient (Piecuch et al., 2014).

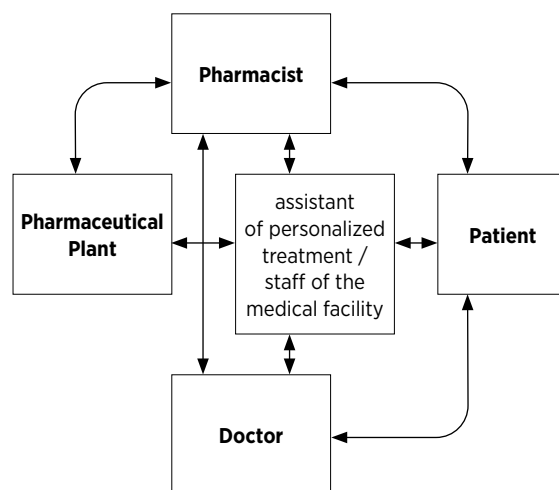
In the perspective of personalized medicine, communication is also very important with a pharmaceutical company. Pharmaceutical companies, having a detailed knowledge of the patient and his or her genetic predispositions, will be able to produce ingredients of preparations, which will consequently increase the effectiveness of treatment, compared to the effectiveness of traditional methods (Nowakowska et al., 2009). Pharmaceutical companies have begun to notice the need to develop in the area of personalized medicine (Hermanowski, Drozdowska, 2013), however, improving the quality of communication between medical entities and pharmaceutical companies requires the development of innovation and the introduction of new technological tools (Kołomecka-Kochańska, 2012).

The patient's attitude towards the diagnosis and the proposed therapy is equally important in the personalized treatment process, and might even include the patient's personality. Chapman, Roberts, and Duberstein (2011) suggest the use of personality tests as a diagnostic hint for doctors, facilitating the process of communication with the patient. Personality is important, inter alia, for the effectiveness of coping with stress (Ogińska-Bulik, Juczyński, 2010). The patient's life story, which is important in narrative medicine (Karkowski, Karkowska, Skoczylas, 2016), shapes his patterns of information processing (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2006). Consequently, it matters what information the patient remembers. Perseverance, i.e. a temperamental tendency to experience events for a long time (Strelau, 1998), may be related to the effect of self-fulfilling prophecy (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2006), which in this case will manifest itself in skipping medical appointments and not undertaking treatment, the source of which there is a lack of faith in recovery. On the one hand, the patient's predispositions and his involvement in the treatment process and faith in the effectiveness of the methods used are important, and on the other hand, the doctor's communication skills are equally important to that of the pharmacist's, as well as the knowledge of how to react to patients with different individual predispositions.

### 3. Relationship model: patient – doctor – pharmacist – pharmaceutical plant

In implementing personalized medicine, it will be crucial to build a communication network between the patient, doctor, medical staff of a health care facility, pharmacist and pharmaceutical plant, because all these entities are important for the effectiveness of therapy. Figure 1 shows the theoretical model of the communicative relationship in the individualized treatment process.

In the process of the implementation of the present model, it is worth discussing the need to introduce a new medical profession (assistant of personalized treatment), as is the case in other support areas, e.g. family assistant (Act of June 9, 2011 on supporting



Picture 1. The theoretical model presenting the communication relationship in the process of personalized treatment

the family and foster care system), personal assistant of person with disabilities (programs implemented under the Act of October 23, 2018 on the Solidarity Fund), or a recovery assistant (Announcement of the Minister of Health of November 3, 2020). In the communication model described, an assistant of personalized treatment could be employed as a member of the medical staff of a healthcare facility. The assistant would support the patient in the treatment process, being the first point of contact, helping to obtain additional information. The assistant could also be able to contact with other specialists, coordinating communication between them, e.g. by organizing meetings of the team developing the treatment plan, as well as by motivating the patient to implement the established assumptions. The doctor provides a diagnosis and selects an appropriate treatment strategy in consultation with other specialists. The medical staff supports the doctor's work, but also performs diagnostic tests, e.g. laboratory. The pharmacist is in touch with the patient, dispenses medications, explains issues that are incomprehensible to the patient when in contact with the doctor and the pharmacist can additionally allay any doubts that patients who need the assurances of other specialists might have, e.g. by ensuring that the diagnosis is correct. The pharmacist, together with the doctor and clinic staff, should create a communication network, remaining in regular contact. Another element of the model is the pharmaceutical



plant, which produces medicinal substances, ensuring the availability of raw materials for the pharmacist, but is also important for the final costs of treatment.

The presented theoretical model requires a research implication. An important question remains where the coordinator of the personalized treatment process is concerned, namely, if establishing a new profession is too expensive, who will organize the communication of the presented interdisciplinary team and moderate the information exchange process between specialists? Then it is worth considering how daily Communications between specialists can be improved. For example, in the context of communication between a doctor–medical staff–pharmacist, it is worth considering the modification of electronic prescriptions, for example, to allow for the addition of comments, which act as a guide for other specialists who participate in the treatment process. A useful solution could be to design an application which would coordinate the patient’s treatment history together with a place

for the interaction between specialists to take place (i.e., via “chat”). However, the presented ideas would require research verification.

In addition to organizational issues, legal issues are equally important, e.g., regarding the transfer and processing of personal data and the sharing of sensitive data, in accordance with the principles of the GDPR (Regulation of the European Parliament and the EU Council 2016/679) between medical entities involved in the treatment process.

## Summary

Classic theories of communication in the treatment process focus on selected subjects of the relationship (e.g. doctor-patient, doctor-pharmacist). Modern personalized medicine, which concentrates on highly individualized treatment, also requires adapting the patient-specialist communication process to the challenges of modern medicine. The article presents a theoretical model of communication that holistically captures the network of interpersonal relationships in the process of personalized treatment. The main assumptions and practical challenges of the presented model are:

1. **The individual predispositions of the patient**—in the process of personalized treatment, apart from the physical condition, the psychosocial competencies of the individual are equally important and individual predispositions (e.g. temperament, personality, life history). They are important for the approach adopted to treatment and for the assessment of relationships with individual specialists.
2. **Interprofessional communication**—the doctor coordinates the patient’s treatment process, however, other medical specialists, clinic staff (who are the patient’s first contact source, who conducts the ordered tests, for example blood tests), pharmacist and the pharmaceutical plant which supplies medicinal substances are of equal importance. These entities constitute a related network of experts.
3. **The communication skills of specialists**—individualized treatment requires high interpersonal skills of medical service employees, the ability to inform about the state of health, translate incomprehensible content, or to delegate tasks to the patient. Communication between specialists is also essential from the involved parties sacrificing time, understanding the meaning of cooperation and psychoeducation.
4. **The organization of the communication process** developing theoretical assumptions and taking into account the perspective of all entities of communication, it is necessary to introduce legal regulations, for example regarding the transmission of information in compliance with the GDPR, or the appointment of a coordinator of an interdisciplinary team created by a patient, doctor, pharmacist and a representative of a pharmaceutical company.

To sum up, the presented theoretical model organizes the issues of communication with the patient and inter-professional communication, important for the process of personalized treatment. However, it requires empirical verification, which should be the next step in increasing the effectiveness of treatment in the future.

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## The contexts of mask. On another note to the considerations of Rev. Edward Wojtusiak on the social uniform

Konteksty maski. Na marginesie rozważań ks. Edwarda Wojtusiaka na temat munduru społecznego<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** Forty years ago the *Kultura i Społeczeństwo* magazine published a sociological essay by Reverend Edward Wojtusiak (1905-1983) on the subject of “social uniform”. It contains reflections on the shaping of human social personality, inspired by the views of Józef Chalasiński. The concept of social uniform refers to those concepts perceiving social life as if it were a drama staged in a theater. The leading topic of the essay is a multifaceted presentation of the issues of “mask” in formal and material terms, as a concept used by psychologists, philosophers, sociologists and practitioners to explain various aspects of human expression in social contacts. The views of classics such as Richard Müller-Freienfels, Karl Jaspers, Otto Tumlirz, Ludwig Klages, Paul Guillaume, Ernst Harms and Carl Gustav Jung were used. Referring to the aforementioned theatrical metaphor, we can assume that in the most general approach to the subject, a mask is understood as a sign or a system of signs communicating various aspects of human personality “on the stage of life”. Due to the current pandemic situation, the concept of mask, previously functioning mainly as a term of theoretical considerations, has been supplemented with a number of new meanings related to its universality and the necessity to use it in various situations of our everyday life. This includes, among other things, its impact on interpersonal communication and the relationship with the expression of extreme attitudes towards epidemiological threats, manifested by putting on or refusing to wear a mask in public places. The article presents the results of selected psychological studies from 2020-2021 on the impact of wearing masks on reading emotions from facial expressions, and confronts the applicability of classic mask theories in explaining and searching for new research aspects for this content-relevant construct in the field of social sciences. Rich in content the essay by Rev. Edward Wojtusiak seems to be a good starting point for the exploration of the issue, and the upcoming anniversary of its publication prompts us to refer to this text.

**Keywords:** mask, social uniform, social personality, interpersonal communication, Rev. Edward Wojtusiak

**Abstrakt:** Przed czterdziestoma laty ukazał się w czasopiśmie „Kultura i Społeczeństwo” esej socjologiczny autorstwa księdza Edwarda Wojtusiaka (1905-1983) na temat „munduru społecznego”. Zawiera on refleksje nad kształtowaniem się osobowości społecznej człowieka, zainspirowane poglądami Józefa Chalasińskiego. Pojęcie munduru społecznego nawiązuje do tych koncepcji, które postrzegają życie społeczne na podobieństwo dramatu wystawianego w teatrze. Wiodącym tematem eseju jest wielostronne przedstawienie problemu „maski” w ujęciu formalnym i materialnym, jako pojęcia wykorzystywanego przez psychologów, filozofów, socjologów i lekarzy na wyjaśnienie różnych aspektów wyrażania siebie przez człowieka w kontaktach społecznych. Wykorzystane zostały poglądy klasyków takich jak Richard Müller-Freienfels, Karl Jaspers, Otto Tumlirz, Ludwig Klages, Paul Guillaume, Ernst Harms i Carl Gustav Jung. Odwołując się do wspomnianej metafory teatralnej można przyjąć, że w najogólniejszym ujęciu tematu maska rozumiana jest jako znak albo system znaków komunikujących różne aspekty ludzkiej osobowości „na scenie życia”. Obecna sytuacja pandemiczna spowodowała, że pojęcie maski funkcjonujące dotychczas głównie jako termin rozważań teoretycznych został uzupełniony szeregiem nowych znaczeń związanych z jej powszechnością oraz koniecznością przedmiotowego używania w różnych sytuacjach życia codziennego. Należy tu między innymi jej wpływ na komunikację interpersonalną oraz związek z wyrażaniem skrajnych postaw wobec zagrożenia epidemiologicznego, manifestowany poprzez zakładanie lub niezakładanie maski w miejscach publicznych. W artykule przedstawiono wyniki wybranych badań psychologicznych z lat 2020-2021 nad wpływem noszenia masek na odczytywanie emocji z wyrazów twarzy oraz skonfrontowano użyteczność klasycznych teorii dotyczących maski w wyjaśnianiu i poszukiwaniu nowych aspektów badań dla tego ważnego treściowo konstruktów z obszaru nauk społecznych. Bogaty treściowo esej księdza Edwarda Wojtusiaka wydaje się być dobrym punktem wyjścia do eksploracji zagadnienia, a zbliżająca się okrągła rocznica jego publikacji skłania do nawiązania do tego tekstu.

**Słowa kluczowe:** maska, mundur społeczny, osobowość społeczna, komunikacja interpersonalna, ks. Edward Wojtusiak

1 Artykuł w języku polskim: <https://www.stowarzyszeniefidesetratio.pl/fer/2022-2Doman.pdf>

## Introduction

It was forty years ago that the *Kultura i Społeczeństwo* magazine published a sociological essay by Reverend Edward Wojtusiak, devoted to the issue of “social uniform”. The author, who was a doctoral student of the outstanding Polish sociologist Józef Chałasiński, based his considerations on the views of his master. The work by Rev. Wojtusiak, kindly received by the sociological community at the time of its publication, became “suspended in vacuum” in the long run. For over three decades, it has not received any quotations or polemics, not to mention an attempt to further develop its theses and include them in the discussion on social personality. It can be said that it contributed to the area of “discontinued science”, where ideas and research are that have not found anyone to undertake them and develop them creatively (Domański 2014).

Perhaps the theory of “uniform” or social “uniform” is not very attractive to contemporary sociologists, but it does contain elements of interest to psychologists, for example, considerations about the mask (which is one of its basic elements). Unexpectedly, the current pandemic situation, the economic, social and psychological effects of which are experienced all over the world, has opened up a new area of research. The mask, this time not as a theoretical construct but as a real object, plays one of the main roles in this drama of the “time of the plague”. An abstract term that was used to describe certain behaviours and attitudes adopted in social life, became a designate of the commonly used utensil of personal protection. This transition from a meaningful scientific metaphor to an everyday object will be discussed in further detail below. What is particularly worth considering, is whether and how the theoretical approaches to the function of the mask in the life of an individual and community proved successful in the context of the new role it has recently started to play in social life. Reverend Edward Wojtusiak’s lecture on the “social uniform” is useful here because it has structured the knowledge about its various types and the meanings resulting from it.

## A brief note about Rev. Wojtusiak

The biography of Rev. Wojtusiak’s was published several times in biographical dictionaries, including those by Nowak (2004), Adamek (2007) and Szymański (2011). IN 2009 “Rocznik Sądecki” published an article about him, by Rev. W. Taraska. These works can be supplemented with the use of previously unpublished record sources from the National Archives in Kraków, which provide new, hitherto unknown data. Edward Jakub Wojtusiak was born on 26 July 1905 in the centre of Cracow in a house located at ul. Basztowa 9. He was the firstborn son of Stanisław, a railway and post office clerk, and Salomea Gołąb. On 6<sup>th</sup> of August that year, he was baptized in the Cracow parish of St. Szczepan in Cracow by priest Andrzej Kościółek (former vicar of the parish in Andrychów). He had a sister and two brothers. One of them, Julian (1910-1985) later became an engineer and professional officer in anti-aircraft artillery. Before the Second World War, he was stationed in Toruń, and after its outbreak, he participated in the Battle of Bzura. He was a prisoner of war at the Murnau Oflag<sup>2</sup>.

Edward Wojtusiak attended schools in Krosno and Mielec, and then the 1<sup>st</sup> State High School (Pol.: “Gimnazjum”) in Tarnów. After being awarded his secondary school-leaving examination certificate in 1924, he entered the Higher Theological Seminary there. In June 1928 he was ordained a priest in the Tarnów cathedral by Bishop Leon Wałęga. As a new presbyter, he became a vicar in the parish church in Nowy Sącz. From 1932 he was the parish priest in the Ochotnica Górna parish. Four years later he was transferred to the parish in Barcice. His interest in the sociology of religion resulted in the work entitled “Socjologiczne podstawy Akcji Katolickiej: próba syntezy” [“Sociological foundations of Catholic Action: an attempt at synthesis”], published in 1934 by the St. Wojciech Bookstore in Poznań. In 1937, he started his course in sociology at the University of Warsaw. Due to the costs and difficulties in reconciling his studies with priestly

2 National Archives in Cracow: Civil registry files of the Roman Catholic parish of St. Stephen in Cracow from 1904, 1905 and 1910.

service, he soon resigned from the rectory in Barcice. In the same year, he published, in Tarnów, a study entitled “Modlitwy mszalne – szkołą apostołstwa” [“Mass prayers - a school of the apostolate”], which was then recommended by diocesan authorities as reading for lectures conducted by members of the Catholic Action<sup>3</sup>. In 1939, reporting to the supreme authority that he was taking the last of the exams prescribed for his studies, Rev. Wojtusiak applied to take over a vacant parish priesthood in the diocese. In June 1939, he was assigned to the parish in Dobra near Limanowa. From the first weeks of his ministry, he proved to be an effective property manager and a fine animator of parish life. Patriotic sermons, which he did not stop after the outbreak of the war, despite the threat from the occupant, were the reason for his 1941 arrest by the Gestapo. First he was imprisoned in Nowy Sącz and Tarnów. In April of that year, he was sent to the Auschwitz camp, and from there, after a month, he was transferred to the camp in Dachau, where he stayed until his liberation, in April 1945. He spent the next year in France, where he was a chaplain at the Paris V repatriation camp and studied sociology at the Sorbonne. In July 1946 he returned to his parish in Dobra. He was entrusted with the office of the dean of the Tymbark Deanery. He obtained permission to continue his studies at the University of Lodz, where in 1947 he received a master’s degree in philosophy in the field of sociology, and in 1950 a doctoral degree on the basis of his dissertation “Genealogia społeczna duchowieństwa diecezji tarnowskiej” [“Social genealogy of the clergy of the Tarnów diocese”]. In the post-war period, Rev. Edward Wojtusiak belonged to the Union of Former Nazi Prisoners and Concentration Camps (Pol.: Polski Związek Byłych Więźniów Politycznych Hitlerowskich Więzień i Obozów Koncentracyjnych). He was a member of the Polish Sociological Association and the Scientific Society of the Catholic University of Lublin. He has published numerous works in the field of the sociology of religion and culture as well as the field of methodology of sociology and auxiliary sciences of history. In 1978, he received the

Brother Albert award “for creating an exemplary parish museum in Dobra near Limanowa.” He founded this memorial room in 1956 and was its custodian for many years. In 1980, at his own request, he was dismissed from the function of the parish priest in Dobra. He planned to continue his scientific writing and to compile a chronicle of his parish. However, he was unable to implement these plans. He died on 6 December 1983 in the Limanowa hospital, a few hours after a car accident in the Biernaty estate in Dobra.

Magdalena Adamek, whose article I used to source most of the above biographical information, wrote: In the activity of Rev. E. Wojtusiak, there was a clear correlation between pastoral, scientific and social work. Despite the fact that faith remained the supreme value for him, it was through the prism of science that he attempted to see better opportunities for fulfilling priestly duties and social tasks. [...] He looked at all manifestations of social and religious life from the position of a sociologist, therefore he saw and pointed out anachronisms of attitudes and actions, even in the bosom of the Church” (Adamek, 2007, p. 365).

## 1. The social uniform

The pivotal concept of the essay by Rev. Wojtusiak was “uniform”, which in sociological works appears in two different conceptualizations. The first of them, literal one, concerns the social function of the uniform as a kind of outfit (dress) used to identify a specific group of people. This approach is analyzed, for example, by Nathan Joseph and Nicholas Alex in their repeatedly cited article *The Uniform: A Sociological Perspective* (1972). It gives the “uniform” the features of a tool that helps to distinguish certain communities by defining their boundaries, also rendering it easier to understand the hierarchy of their members. In the second approach, which is the subject of our present considerations, the term “uniform” has a metaphorical meaning, and the adjective describing it (“social”) denotes its function in the broadly understood community.

<sup>3</sup> This work is now forgotten and omitted in the bibliographies of Rev. Edward Wojtusiak, although it was an important contribution to explaining the essence of the rites of the Holy Mass.

Reflections on the “social uniform” appear in the work of the above-mentioned Józef Chałasiński, who wrote that “Everyone behaves as required by a uniform, clothing, which is the basis of the portrait of a person. A uniform is not only clothing, it is the entirety of customs and the ideas that make up the human being as a social being. The better the uniform fits, the less noticeable is its presence” (1969, p. 95). Social uniform is shaped by the epoch, so it changes throughout history. Individuals must “put on” the current form of uniform, because if they fail to do so, they will face issues with adjusting to society. However, social uniforms vary in a given period under the influence of antagonistic ideologies. Members of various groups are required to wear their assigned social uniforms. Man gets used to the fact that his social uniform is woven from different roles and attitudes. Understanding this structure allows us to get to know the essence of the social uniform, and indirectly “to understand the social personality of man and his participation in the drama of life” (Wojtusiak, 1982, p. 108).

Without further elaborating on this thread, it is worth noting that the “clothing” analogy of the social identity of a man also appears in the considerations of other authors. Roman Zawadzki (2010) characterizes this aspect of identity, which is also sometimes referred to as assigned identity: “The social identity can [...] be considered as a kind of covering, a cover surrounding the real interior of the human psyche. So it can be a social decoration, mask, camouflage, armor, challenge, provocation, make-up; there are countless varieties of its forms” (Zawadzki, 2010, p. 105). The concept of the mask is thus closely related to the theory of the social uniform, which significantly explains its dominant position in views on the formation and expression of social personality.

## 2. Universality of the mask

In his inspiring and still current book *Poznanie chorego* Antoni Kępiński wrote: “Social life, especially in its superficial contacts, which constitute the overwhelming majority of interactions in human life, forces the use of a *mask*. It can be understood as

superficial layers of the psyche - ways of behaving and reacting related to a specific social situation or role” (Kępiński, 1989, p. 46). Also Rev. Wojtusiak treated the problem of masks as one of the issues of the sociological workshop (Tarasek, 2007). In addition to an extensive essay on the subject, which he left in the manuscript, he devoted most of his essay to the problem of social masks. It is worth referring to this knowledge, which he gathered based on the works of the classics, and consider how helpful it is, or maybe even valid today, when the mask is no longer just a figurative word, a theatrical or ball prop, or a souvenir from a visit to exotic countries, since it has become one of the symbols of two conflicting attitudes during the pandemic. If previously the problem of the mask was mainly about hiding one’s true nature (or face) from the environment, now it has acquired completely new meanings, as evidenced by the research of psychologists presented later in the present text.

As already mentioned, in the traditional approach, the issue of the mask can be considered both from the formal and from the material point of view. Reverend Edward Wojtusiak described these possibilities in some detail, referring mainly to the works of psychologists, philosophers and psychiatrists, such as Richard Müller-Freienfels, Karl Jaspers, Otto Tumlirz, Ludwig Klages, Paul Guillaume, Ernst Harms and, naturally, Carl Gustav Jung. The mask analyzed from the formal point of view concerns the human self, or rather the image of reality reflected in it, which may be unmasked, masked or falsified. On the other hand, masks considered in the material aspect, i.e. taking into account the matter in which they are expressed, are divided into physiognomic (appearance), linguaphonic (speech), dress (outfit), residential (apartment), positional (social position), external-ideological (when the presented ideology is contrary to personal beliefs) and external-ethical (when the presented moral attitude is inconsistent with actual moral behaviour) (Wojtusiak, 1982). It is impossible not to notice that in this approach, which the author sourced mainly from the works of Karl Jaspers, the concept of a mask becomes a synonym of numerous features, objects and activities accompanying the human beings, by means

of which they create in others (or perhaps in front of themselves too) an image of their personality. Moreover, the presence of masks in social life is related to two types of activities, “masking” and “unmasking”, and their universality leads to the conclusion that they are nothing more than a kind of game in which everyone participates and that takes place everywhere.

It is interesting that although it is difficult to find any simple analogies between the concept of the mask as an element of the social uniform and the present situation in which the objectified mask has become the basis of new issue, there is an analogy in at least one aspect. It is contained in group reactions in the form of intergroup and intragroup conflicts arising from the ‘wearing’ of masks. Thus, although in the theory presented by Rev. Wojtusiak, the conflicts around the mask have a different source and social significance (they concern the type of mask understood as sharing a specific worldview) than the disputes about the sense of wearing a mask (an object of personal protection) during the pandemic, they become, after all, an expression of an ideological struggle.

### **3. The new face of the mask**

The typology of masks, presented by Rev. Wojtusiak, although very broad and capacious in elements, does not cover all the contexts in which the mask functioned in culture and social life, and does not allow to classify all the issues that emerged in interpersonal interactions due to its common (and mandatory) use. There was no resistance, as long as it could be worn voluntarily, and not due to an official order imposed by the authorities. The pandemic created a social reality in which the existing theoretical and speculative considerations about the types and functions of the mask were expanded with new content. In 2020-2021, there was a number of articles were published signalling the emergence of hitherto unknown psychological problems resulting from new rules of contact between people. Several of these works, which describe only one topic, are worth mentioning here.

Claus-Christian Carbon and his team studied the effect of wearing face masks on reading the emotions of a person so protected. The subjects assessed the emotional expression of randomly presented faces expressing various experiences (anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, neutral state) when it was fully visible, and once covered with a half-mask. What was clearly noticeable in the latter case were the lower accuracy of reading emotions and lower confidence in self-assessment. Moreover, researchers found certain patterns of confusion consisting in misinterpreting the faces of disgusted people as expressing anger, and judging emotional expressions such as joy, sadness and anger as neutral (so in practice it means a problem with recognizing the current experiences of the interlocutor) (Carbon, 2020).

What seemed important in the context of the requirement to wear masks, also in school and other pedagogical institutions, were the results of research on their impact on the socialization of children. The obtained results are not at all unequivocal. Already at the beginning of the pandemic A. L. Ruba and S. D. Pollak (2020) drew attention to the social implications of children wearing masks on their faces, by constructing an experiment in which school students (aged 7 to 13) were shown faces partially covered by sunglasses, half masks and fully uncovered. The researchers found that “the children were still able to draw accurate conclusions about emotions even when only parts of the face were hidden. These data suggest that “[...] it is unlikely that masks will dramatically disrupt the social interactions of children in their daily lives” (Ruba, Pollak, 2020, p. 1).

The team of M. Gori, L. Schiatti and M. B. Amadeo (2021), conducting research on the ability of children, aged 3 to 5, to recognize the emotions expressed by the facial features of people around them, found no confirmation of the above findings. The authors concluded that the situation forced by the use of specific personal protective equipment may have serious impact on the development of social and emotional reasoning of young children, and therefore the development of their social abilities should be carefully monitored. Even if such conclusions seems to be too far reaching, it is worth recalling the experiments on the reaction of infants



to the facial expressions of their caregivers, which confirm how important this is the area of shaping social relations. This issue seems to be significant in that studies other than aforementioned of slightly older children confirm the disturbance of effective non-verbal communication, including reading such important emotions as disgust, fear and sadness caused by wearing masks on the face (Carbon, Serano, 2021).

Equally interesting are the results presented by J. L. Scheid et al. (2020), who studied the physiological and psychological consequences of wearing masks in relation to the requirements of the pandemic period. Even though their research concerned the situation in the United States, these conclusions can be generalized to other populations. According to the authors, there is a clear impact of the requirement to wear a mask in public space on the fulfillment of basic needs such as the need for autonomy, participation and competence. The need to participate requires one to align with others. This raises, for example, the dilemma of having to belong to one of two clearly mutually exclusive groups (masked and non-masked). In the US, this translated into identification with a specific political party, as their leaders had extremely different attitudes to the mask wearing requirement. These researchers also suggested a correlation of the attitude of acceptance or rejection of masks with gender identification leading to mental discomfort. They found that the existence of social pressures “to make men tough” (Scheid, 2020, p. 7) resulted in a negative attitude towards wearing masks, with far-reaching psychological consequences, such as the feeling of shame during this activity. The aforementioned sense of competence, which is put to the test in the face of contradictory messages concerning the protective effectiveness of masks against viruses, which most citizens encounter on a daily basis, is also not without significance. The need for competences is realized through the belief in one’s own effectiveness and in controlling the situation in which a person finds itself. Meanwhile, ambiguous opinions on the personal protection measures do not provide the desired (positive) feedback on one’s own behaviour and therefore increase the feeling of discomfort.

We may end the present, brief due to limitations of space, review of research conducted by psychologist on the topic of our interest, with the conclusions of the article published in “Scientific Reports”. It highlights the problem of re-identifying the person previously seen in the mask and, of course, the disturbance of the ability to recognize the emotional expressions of people wearing masks, and in particular to form an opinion about their credibility on this basis (Marini et al., 2021). As we all know, people carefully observe the faces of others to make sure that the messages conveyed to them through other channels of mutual communication are consistent.

While the results of the psychologists’ research cited here seem to provide some arguments to opponents of universal mask protection, they should not be decisive in determining the attitude towards physical measures taken during the pandemic; the protective value of the mask is proven and emphasized in many medical reports (see e.g. Howard et al., 2021). Therefore, the authors of research in the field of social and developmental psychology are looking for different solutions that could eliminate the limitations in interpersonal communication resulting from wearing a mask. One of the aforementioned works suggested the use of compensatory actions in social interactions in areas such as body language, gestures and verbal communication (Carbon, 2020).

## Conclusion

Can the conclusions from psychological research on how social contacts are altered due to the common necessity to use masks as a real objects supplement the philosophical considerations of the main character of the present article about the place and role of the abstract concept of mask in social life? Seemingly, these are two different worlds of research reflection that are linked solely by the use of the same concept that is broad in meaning. On closer reflection, however, we can see that life has created a paradox that requires a new insight into the issue of the mask. According to Rev. Wojtusiak (1982, p. 115), the traditional concept of mask in social sciences meant more or less “a natural or conventional system of signs



used by man to express, in a socially comprehensible way, real or alleged states of consciousness and their corresponding functions". In such an approach, the mask contains some information directed to the recipient and it is not important whether it is real or its role is to deceive others or construct an illusion. Its task is simply to "emphasize certain attitudes to the world and strengthen certain opinions about a human individual, regardless of how contrasting with the speaker's private personality they might be" (Wojtusiak, 1982, p. 126). The mask as an object of everyday use cuts off information and prevents the recipient from understanding the experiences of another human being (those expressed by facial expressions). Its symbolism is therefore closer to the metaphor of a wall that prevents us from knowing what is hidden on the other side.

One should also not forget about other problems resulting from the attitude to the mask as an object of personal protection. After all, it became the object of reflection on the sense and nonsense of human actions, by negating its effectiveness in protecting us from infections. Above all, it served as a pretext for a discussion on civil liberties and freedom of choice. Worse still, there are already media reports of aggressive behaviour demonstrated towards people wearing, or not wearing, a mask in public places. Some of these incidents ended in the death of one of the participants in the conflict.

In view of the entanglement of the mask in discussions about social generalities, attempts to personalize it, familiarize it or use it as a manifestation of the attitudes of people who put it on, for example, by selecting colours matching the rest of outfit, placing symbols or slogans on it, and even a schematic drawing of teeth, making the face of the person wearing such a half-mask resemble a skull, seem all insignificant. But even such use of the mask cannot be underestimated, as it is related to the lifestyle and conveys socially significant messages.

Rev. Edward Wojtusiak gave the subtitle "a sociological essay" to his considerations. An essay is a literary form that presents the point of view of its author, so it is a voice on a matter rather than a presentation of a scientific theory. Perhaps in this way he wanted to reach a larger group of recipients

than just researchers interested in this topic. It is certainly intriguing that the article by Rev. Wojtusiak was published at the time the screens of TV sets in Poland featured speakers in military uniforms, and the very word "uniform" was commonly associated with militia and military patrols, which became a common sight during the martial law period. Was it an accidental coincidence, or was it rather his comment on the situation in which the abstract construct began to take on a real dimension? The answer can be easily found in the quoted article. Today, we are facing another challenge in this area: the term "mask", which until recently played a figurative role or that of a prop, has acquired completely new meanings, opening up a rich field of research for psychologists.

Rev. Władysław Tarasek, the author of the only larger sketch on Rev. Wojtusiak, quoted a fragment of his letter, which was a request to the superior authorities to release him from the function of dean: "What I suffered in prisons and Nazi camps, and also the sad times of the postwar anti-Hitler terror and the opportunistic attitudes of some members of our Episcopate, who are afraid to stigmatize the intolerance of official factors in People's Poland in relation to religion and its followers, even when the communists themselves did it - all that had a negative impact on my health (...)" (Tarasek, 2007, p. 271-272). Perhaps these confessions explain the author's interest in the issue of social masks, which, as these few sentences demonstrate, he himself did not "put on". Today, however, when the problem of the mask returns in completely new contexts, it is worth paying more attention to it, and the concept of the social uniform by Rev. Wojtusiak, describing a number of interesting aspects of this topic, may be a good starting point for such research and reflections.

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## Lectures on beauty as a way to preserve the spiritual strength and dignity of women in the German concentration camp FKL Ravensbrück in the light of the documentation of prof. Karolina Lanckorońska

Wykłady o pięknie sposobem na ocalenie duchowej siły i godności kobiet w niemieckim obozie koncentracyjnym FKL Ravensbrück w świetle dokumentacji prof. Karoliny Lanckorońskiej<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** *Introduction:* The article aims at analysing the influence of beauty on the spirituality of women (in a philosophical sense) and the value of art history education during the secret teaching that women received in the all-female German Nazi concentration camp – FKL Ravensbrück. The clandestine lessons were initiated by the Polish teachers to save fellow prisoners, young Polish women, who were subjected to some criminal medical experiments conducted by the Germans. The researcher examines the role of telling stories about beauty and works of art in the extreme conditions, when the excruciating suffering was cumulating and depriving the prisoners of hope for survival. The author indicates the importance of influencing the listeners' with the value of beauty contained in the lecturer's words concerning the works of art and the emanation of her personal spiritual beauty. The research also underlines the role of the ancient method of learning through ekphrasis and emphasizes the therapeutic value of beauty. *Method:* Analysis of the source documents: the *mémoires* of the former Ravensbrück inmates and the results of Urszula Wińska's survey. *Conclusions:* Attending the secret classes by the Polish women-prisoners (so called "Rabbits", as they were subjected to the medical experiments) at FKL Ravensbrück and their education in the field of art history and aesthetics provided by prof. Karolina Lanckorońska had a double meaning. On one hand, it allowed the women to survive the camp (ad hoc effect of teaching), and on the other hand, it strengthened their need for a stronger attachment to their Polish roots and returning to the family home. It also boosted their love for the model of social life, in which one is to start one's own family and protect the lives of its members.

**Keywords:** FKL Ravensbrück, Karolina Lanckorońska, ekphrasis, beauty, secret teaching

**Abstrakt:** *Wstęp:* Przedmiotem artykułu jest analiza wpływu piękna na duchowość (w znaczeniu filozoficznym) kobiet i wartość kształcenia o historii sztuki podczas tajnego nauczania jakie kobiety otrzymały w niemieckim nazistowskim obozie koncentracyjnym dla kobiet – FKL Ravensbrück. Nauczanie zainicjowały polskie nauczycielki dla ratowania współwięźniarek, młodych Polek, poddanych przez Niemców zbrodnicy eksperymentem medycznym. Autorka bada rolę opowiadania o pięknie i dziełach sztuki w warunkach ekstremalnych, w których doznanie cierpienia było skumulowane i odbierało więźniarkom nadzieję na przeżycie. Wskazuje na znaczenie oddziaływania na słuchaczki wykładów wartością piękną zawartego w słowach wykładowcy o dziełach i emanacji jego osobistego duchowego piękna. Wypukła rolę antycznej metody nauki poprzez ekfrazę i podkreśla wartość terapii pięknem. *Metoda:* Analiza dokumentów źródłowych: wspomnień Ravensbrückanek i wyników ankiety Urszuli Wińskiej. *Wnioski:* Tajne komplety, w których uczestniczyły polskie kobiety-więźniarki w FKL Ravensbrück (nazywane „królikami” ze względu na to, że były przedmiotem eksperymentów medycznych) i kształcenie ich przez prof. Karolinę Lanckorońską w dziedzinie historii sztuki i estetyki posiadało podwójną wartość. Pozwoliło kobietom przeżyć obóz (skutek doraźny nauczania) i wzmocniło u nich potrzebę silniejszego przywiązania do polskich korzeni, powrotu do domu rodzinnego, umiłowania wzoru życia społecznego jakim jest założenie własnej rodziny i ochrona życia jej członków.

**Słowa kluczowe:** FKL Ravensbrück, Karolina Lanckorońska, ekfrazę, piękno, tajne nauczanie

1 Artykuł w języku polskim: <https://www.stowarzyszeniefidesetratio.pl/fer/2022-2Filip.pdf>

## Introduction

As taught by Wanda Póltawska, even though young people, both man and women, are able to understand what a beautiful love is, they realise it is a perfection, and that it is difficult to obtain. To make young people eager to live their lives in such a way, that would enable them to achieve it, they must be shown the sanctity of life. They need to get the first-hand experience to commune with the beauty and be able to depart spiritually and physically from mediocrity, hatred, crime, that are shown, among others, in the media (Póltawska, 2014, p. 13). During World War II prof. Póltawska, née Wojtasikówna (born in 1921), was a „Rabbit” prisoner of Frauen-Konzentrationslager Ravensbrück — an all-female Nazi German concentration camp in Ravensbrück (hereinafter referred to as FKL Ravensbrück). The term „Rabbit” refers here to several dozen female prisoners of the mainly Polish origin, brought by the Germans to FKL Ravensbrück in a special transport from the prison in Lublin (70 women) and from the ‘Pawiak’ prison (4 women). In the period from the beginning of August 1942 to the end of August 1943, the German medical personnel conducted medical experiments on the said Polish women and 12 female of other nationalities. Reduced to the level of slaves, prisoners were forced to undergo the said experiments. Memoirs of a factual nature concerning the „Rabbits” — female prisoners, were published in 1945 by Jadwiga Wilczańska. Her account of these medical experiments is entitled „The Rabbits” (Kiedrzyńska, 2019, p. 25-26; Woźniak, 1985, p. 105; Filipowicz, 2021, p. 537-540).

W. Póltawska, as well as seventy-three other Polish „Rabbits”, and nearly forty other young female prisoners of the Polish origin, own saving their lives to the Polish teachers — their fellow inmates. One of the teachers providing the secret lectures at FKL Ravensbrück was prof. Karolina Lanckorońska (1898-2002), who taught them about the art history (Wińska, 1985; Kiedrzyńska, 2019, p. 247-258; Drywa, Oratowska, 2015; Filipowicz, 2021, p. 541, 554).

The issue that is being analysed hereinafter concerns the influence of teaching about beauty on saving women’s spirituality: regenerating their spiritual

strength by stimulating the imagination, and liberating ones’ spirit thanks to directing their hearts and minds towards beauty. The article tackles the role of remembering the beauty and its history as well as the value of the word of mouth concerning the reality and the transcendence of beauty in art. The role of teaching about beauty in the conditions of terror – in FKL Ravensbrück – will also be emphasized. The source base of this analysis consists of the war memories of prof. Karolina Lanckorońska, who was a prisoner at FKL Ravensbrück for 24 months (from January 9, 1943 to April 5, 1945). The aforementioned documentation (Lanckorońska, 2001) shall be used to present the topics of prof. Lanckorońska’s lectures on art given by her during the occupation, both before and after her arrest by the Germans, in particular the ones conducted as part of the clandestine lessons in the camp. The importance of ekphrasis shall be shown as an essential part of the lecture on the sense of beauty. The research paper also underlines the importance of the bond between the man and supernatural beauty, which became the so-called “lifebuoy” thrown to women-“Rabbits” in FKL Ravensbrück. To illustrate this, issue some arguments of Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas shall be mentioned and some reflections of prof. Władysław Tatarkiewicz shall be quoted.

### **1. The lectures on art history conducted by prof. Karolina Lanckorońska during the war – in Lviv and at FKL Ravensbrück concentration camp**

Karolina Lanckorońska from Brzezine, of the Zadora coat of arms, was a daughter of the count Karol Lanckoroński and Małgorzata, née Lichnowska. She received a careful upbringing and education. The primary place and environment where she received the education were her home and family, then she was taught by the professors of the Viennese gymnasium, and later she studied at the University of Vienna. In 1926 she obtained her Doctor degree

in Vienna under the supervision of Max Dworzak. In 1935, she received a Habilitated Doctor degree at the Jan Kazimierz University in Lviv. She was the first woman in Poland to gain scientific and didactic independence in the field of art history. A year later, she was granted the right to give lectures at this Polish university. She specialized in the works of Michelangelo (Kalinowski, Orman, 2001, p. 8-9).

After the Soviets entered Lviv in September 1939, prof. Lanckorońska, who was an associate professor at a time, continued giving her academic lectures on the Italian art from the period of 14th-century Siense painting. Prof. Lanckorońska was also referring then to her lectures on 15th-century Florentine painting that she had conducted before the war. In February 1940, she was commissioned by the occupation authorities to conduct a general course on Renaissance and Baroque art. In April of the said year, before she was made redundant by the university, she had given a lecture on the early sculptures of Donatello. There is a memory of prof. Lanckorońska dated to May 1942, the period after her arrest by the Germans (Hans Krüger, 1909-1998), concerning the creative use of her time in the dark pit of the prison in Stanisławów. At that time, she was reminiscing especially vividly the European art galleries, the collections of works of art from her family home in Vienna, the Prado in Madrid, Louvre in Paris, Uffizi in Florence, and Venice. The darkness surrounding her in the detention was increasing the intensity of that spiritual journey and the thought-provoked images and colours of the paintings known to her. Analysing her situation, prof. Lanckorońska then recalled an anecdote about El Greco, who, when had been asked why he was staying in a dark room, he supposedly replied to his guest: "The daylight prevents me from seeing the inner light" (Lanckorońska, 2001, p. 20, 24, 26, 51, 161; Bartelà, 1991; Donatello, 1926; Galicka, Sygietyńska, 2014, p. 22-29).

As a prisoner at FKL Ravensbrück, prof. Lanckorońska was giving lectures as a part of the secret teaching. The first of them concerned the catacomb painting. Then, in isolation — in the bunker, she was preparing the "talks" on history and cultural history that she was later on sending with the help of the washerwomen (Lanckorońska, 2001, p. 272).

At the end of October 1944, she became a block leader [translator's note: a kind of a functionary prisoner] in block 32, where, among others, the Polish women—"Rabbits" used to "live". On Sunday of early January 1945, she recalled conducting a lesson on Greek culture of the 6th century. Having a booklet with several reproductions of Rembrandt's works at her disposal, she introduced young prisoners to the subject of religious painting of the 17th century.

This way, together with her students, she said goodbye to Halina Wohlfarth: "It was the only mourning ceremony through which we could have commemorated Halina" (Lanckorońska, 2001, p. 313). Halina was one of the students of the clandestine lessons — the most talented one, keenly interested in the ancient history of the classical period. She had a great impact on the other women. As prof. Lanckorońska remembered, the level of Halina's group was advanced thanks to her — it was the best of all groups attending the secret classes in the camp. Halina regularly took notes on prof. Lanckorońska's lectures, and the said notes were later on found by an overseer while he was searching the block. That was the reason why Halina was sentenced to a camp prison located in the bunker, near which, in 1943, the Germans built a crematorium and a gas chamber (Lorens, Małachowska, 2020, p. 57). She was killed together with the room supervisor — Zosia Lipińska. At a secret Rembrandt lecture everybody missed her acutely. During the Holy Week of 1945, prof. Lanckorońska, on request of Marysia Grocholska (Czterwertyńska), taught the "Rabbits" about scenes from the Passion, "*Last Supper*" by Leonardo da Vinci and Tintoretto. Madam professor recalled the mystery of Christ's death and His Resurrection, teaching about the works of Michelangelo, which he painted in the last period of his life. She quoted the artist's reflections on art and beauty. The lecture on Emmaus in Rembrandt's paintings scheduled for Easter Monday was not carried out. It got postponed because Karolina Lanckorońska was called to join the group of French women. They were to leave the camp. The madam professor gave that lecture on the following day, on Easter Tuesday (Lanckorońska, 2001, p. 243, 304-305, 312-313, 325-326;

Michelangelo Buonarroti, 1922, p. 142, 144, 146; King, 2017, p. 72-77, 80-98; Lanckorońska, 1932; Bastek, 2010, p. 242-268).

The lecture on the catacomb art was, in the professor's opinion, particularly important, because of the similarity of the first Christians' fate and FKL Ravensbrück female prisoners. Living in epochs that were distant from each other, yet however, very close due to the persecution, martyrdom and martyr's death. They were united by a spiritual community: they had faith in supernatural life and were adhering to the teachings of Jesus Christ. They both placed hope in the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Despite the tragedy they kept on cultivating values, and finding salvation in prayers that were confirming the transcendence of the human existence due to its divine origin, dignity, and an inner freedom preservation. After descending under the surface of earth one may see the catacomb wall decorations depicting Daniel among the lions, the Good Shepherd, the Mother of God, the allegories of Moses, Jonah, Abraham and Lazarus, baptism, and the healed paralytic — all the above conveyed what was most essential message to those facing death: the truth about the resurrection (Rycerz Niepokalanej [Knight of the Immaculate], 1922; Sadurska, 1974; Iwaszkiewicz-Wronikowska, 2000; Jastrzębowska, Antczak, 2015, p. 254-292, 293-334).

## 2. The meaning of ekphrasis in teaching about art in the extreme conditions

Ekphrasis was used extensively by prof. Karolina Lanckorońska while she was giving the secret lectures on art history. Years later, Wanda Póltawska would recall that the lectures of Madame professor were indeed beautiful. When she had a chance to contemplate art in the museums, she would instantly recognize the paintings that prof. Lanckorońska was telling them about during the clandestine lessons

(Póltawska, 2004). Madame Professor was showing the said paintings to the girls with... words. She was explaining their content in a complete and utmost detailed manner, using the appropriate language functions, as per the Greek term *ekphrazein*, which stands for a skill of visual communication. The said skill comprises of paying attention to an object and analysing it carefully, in order to give a careful description of it to another person later on. The ekphrasis is a very well-constructed utterance in terms of the language skills (see Słodczyk, 2020, p. 77-141; Krzywy, 2012).

Telling stories about the beauty of works of art was preceded by the admiration for the perfection of the artistic workshop, and supported by the extensive knowledge of prof. Lanckorońska about the centuries-old human effort of reaching the ability to express the idea of the Great Mystery. The said description could contain descriptions of the vivid colours of the paintings presented in the style of the Procopius of Caesarea ekphrasis. The ekphrasis in question was about the form and lines of the architecture of the Hagia Sofia basilica, the colours of its plaster paintings and mosaics (Janocha 2005, p. 142-143; Procopius of Caesarea, 2006, p. 88-89).

As a detailed description of the images seen personally by the storyteller, the ekphrasis can be compared to an account of a journey through the world of beauty. In this story, the richness of the words used reflects the richness of the painting theme. It allows not only to observe the scene depicted in the painting, but also to find oneself there in the space created on the canvas — both with the artists, and the protagonists of their works. Ekphrasis allows the listeners to travel in time. It allows people to see the light that makes the colours on the canvas vivid. In extreme conditions, ekphrasis, as a conscious didactic procedure, was based on the verbal transfer of knowledge and working while using one's memory only. Ekphrasis fulfilled its role also thanks to the lecturer's empathy: it reached the roots of *caritas*, allowing the teacher to lend her personal good to the listeners, which constituted of the remembered aesthetic experience, knowledge of a beautiful work of art and sharing the admiration for its beauty. Ekph-

rasis introduced women-prisoners to the professor's personal reflection, to her spiritual life, to the wisdom (Grochowska, 2022, p. 6-7).

One of the most famous Polish art historians, Jan Białostocki (1921-1988), wrote in the early 1960s: "*Ars auro gemmisque prior* — Art is more valuable than gold and stones." (Białostocki, 2004, p. 9). He referred to the Romanesque reliquaries and the words of Sugeriusz — a Benedictine abbot living at the turn of the 11th and 12th century — the spiritual creator of the Gothic basilica in Saint-Denis, whose words are placed on the bronze door of this temple. The faithful who crossed it were admonished: <<*Whoever you are, if you want to appreciate the glory of this door, admire not the gold and the price, but the mastery of the work.*>>

Coming from the royal necropolis of France, this inscription was quoted by prof. Lanckorońska: <<... *Portarum quisquis attollere quaeris honorem / Aurum nec sumptius, operis mirare laborem, / Nobile claret opus, sed opus quod nobile claret, / Clarificet mentes, ut eant per lumina vera / Ad verum lumen, ubi Christus lanua vera. / Quale sit intus in his determinat aurea porta. / Mens habes ad verum per materialia surgit / Et demersa prius hac visa luce resurgit.*>> (Lanckorońska, 1934/1935, p. 157; after Julius von Schlosser: Schlosser, 1896, p. 271). Madam professor thus drew attention to the idea of the law of beauty: despite the differences in styles and goals developing over the centuries, the essence of art is independent of historical epochs. As the pieces are called the works of art — the creations of people who, through their craftsmanship and, in some way, previously discovered and understood perfection, were able to introduce immanent light into their work. Owing to the said light the artists were able to — using the matter animated in such a way, and submitted to them — lead the recipient of their individual works to the spiritual world. This is also how prof. Białystok used to teach about art. The costly material used by the creator does not constitute the value of the work. Its value, on the other hand, lies within the artistic maturity of a gifted man, trained in work and study, who in a human way makes perfection a reality with his own hands. A perfect work, according to the

philosophy of abbot Sugeriusz, is more valuable than gold. A man who is sensitive to beauty and has learned to recognize it, is able to perceive it and to be mentally satisfied with its light and truth, which a beautiful piece of art shows.

Based on the memories of women who had contact with prof. Lanckorońska at FKL Ravensbrück concentration camp, it should be assumed that the ekphrasis performed by her during lectures strengthened and liberated the female prisoners — the "Rabbits" — spiritually. The aesthetic experiences provided to women allowed them to stay in the world of beauty, i.e. in the world outside the camp. They enhanced their belief in the superiority of spiritual powers. Thanks to rationality, which is a spiritual — metaphysical — human endowment, ekphrasis that is the necessary element of the secret didactics, could play the role of the logotherapy invented for the students — "Rabbits". Influencing the young women with the beauty she referred to in her ekphrasis, prof. Lanckorońska contributed to saving their lives. Leopold Staff wrote about the healing value of a creative word in relation to Michelangelo's poetic reflections (first published in 1623). Madam professor taught about it as well: [the word is] "a manifestation of life in the most personal way [...] the image of a spiritual development [...] the most volatile, bending material that there possibly can be," the most difficult to master, expressing a metaphysical longing for infinity (Staff, 1922, p. XIII, XV-XVI).

Years later, Wanda Póltawska wrote about prof. Lanckorońska that her lectures were "ravishing", "artistic, stimulating the imagination", revealing the works of art conjured up by the professor, "they were on the verge of lessons and entertainment programs" (Wińska, 1985, p. 142, 355). Monika Dankowska was "impressed" by the professor and thanks to her lectures she left the camp "morally stronger", "physically resistant to body ailments" (Wińska, 1985, p. 352). Halina Zofia Bella, imprisoned for two weeks in the bunker, and immediately after that placed in the dark pit, thanks to the professor was "given the spirit of survival" (Wińska, 1985, p. 326). Genowefa Kluczek-Kącka testified that K. Lanckorońska was a "great friend of kings", who was speaking "constantly about the dignity and honour of the Polish women"

(Wińska, 1985, p. 304). Maria Kuśmierczuk did not remember the content of the lectures conducted by prof. Lanckorońska, on the so-called “*trzeciak*” (the third floor of the barrack bunk beds). She, however, recalled “that mood, the time without fear of death and hunger”. She remembered staring at the teacher, confining in her, and entrusting with the personal details of the “Rabbits”, that were scrupulously written on the edge of a handkerchief, which later on Karolina Lanckorońska handed over to the headquarters of the International Red Cross in Geneva (Wińska, 1985, p. 149). Mirosława Grupińska wrote that Karolina Lanckorońska gave her fellow prisoners “words of hope and encouragement” (Wińska, 1985, p. 135). She described that the lectures were “listened to with bated breath”, and that they were shaping the personality when women strongly felt the “thirst for knowledge”. The lectures were broadening the minds, teaching what “in the understanding of these wise, experienced women [i.e. teachers of secret classes] was the most valuable” (Wińska, 1985, p. 144; Księżyk, 2017, p. 86-102). They were a spiritual exercise.

### 3. The value of beauty in the process of enhancing the purposefulness of surviving the camp by women

Dr. Urszula Wińska (1902-2003), professor of Polish language and literature, one of the initiators of the secret teaching at FKL Ravensbrück concentration camp, conducted a survey among her fellow prisoners on the subject: “How did we change in the camp?” The study was expected to answer two questions. The first concerned the attitude of the fellow female inmates towards human beings before their stay in the camp. The second was connected with the attitude to work before and during the camp life. 64 women aged 15-50 answered the questionnaire. They had different social and educational backgrounds. The main goal of the survey and processing its results was a therapy: to get women, especially young ones, to express themselves and introduce them to the structured research work. It took almost two months to collect the responses and analyse them. The results were

read and discussed on Sundays. The survey participants were aware that they had written a story about themselves, while the trace of them — as the German authorities intended — should not have survived. There was a crematorium both in the nearby town of Fürstenberg and in Ravensbrück. Near the camp, the Germans — Sturmbannführer Sauer, Dr. Trommer and Moll — were killing prisoners in gas chambers hidden in the forest, and since November 1944 the gas chamber operated also in the camp (Kiedrzyńska, 2019, p. 115-118; Wińska, 1985, p. 12).

One of the main reflections found in the camp research material of Dr. Wińska (which unfortunately was lost) was that: “the value of a man lies in his inner qualities” (Kiedrzyńska, 2019, p. 257-258). The collection of responses from the post-war survey conducted by Dr. Wińska was entitled “The values prevailed. Memories from Ravensbrück” (Wińska, 1985; Filipowicz, 2021, p. 543 and 550).

In the light of the classical philosophy of being (Greek *το ον* or *ουσια*, Latin *ens*), the attribute of being is its beauty (Greek *kalon*, Latin *pulchritudo*). In the ontic category, beauty concerns the transcendentals, speaks in favour of the rationality of the work, is its property, expresses its proportions. Thanks to its perfection, the work shows the intention of the creator, who with the work of his hands, expresses the highest beauty and the source of the created beauty — the God himself (Kluza, 2011; Michałowicz, 2011).

Beauty stimulates the imagination by influencing the human senses. It is recognized by the man. However, since in the camp conditions at FKL Ravensbrück, the eyes of the listeners of art history lectures could not see the pieces they were learning about, the women- “Rabbits” experienced cognition on a level higher than the one of a sensory cognition. This higher cognition allowed women to transcend spiritually the matter of the camp, which was an atrocity (see, among others, Salska, 1985; Wińska, 1985, p. 17; Rutkowska, 1985).

From the memoirs of prof. Lanckorońska it can be inferred that the lectures on art, although difficult to conduct due to the lack of illustrations, were for herself a spiritual opportunity to return to the beauty that she knew, valued and longed for. By teaching about it during the clandestine lessons on art, she



spiritually saved both herself and each of her “sisters” — fellow prisoners. She wanted to experience this value, to return to a life of freedom in the midst of the beauty of nature, motherland, and home. The ugliness terrified her since the moment she had entered the gates of the German camp. She detested corrupt vulgarity, especially when she could not get away from it herself (Lanckorońska, 2001, p. 229, p. 284-285, p. 87-288).

In secret classes, the lecturer intensified in her students the cognitive act related to the power of will, its desire for beauty and goodness. People, unlike animals, feel the higher world and move towards it. Having an intellect and intellectual feelings, they have the ability in their rationality to arouse curiosity, thirst for knowledge, and admiration, as well as they expect to find the truth. When this hope is fulfilled, their sense of joy and well-being grows. The aesthetic feelings that people are able to evoke allow them to experience the beauty of things — both material and spiritual. This feeling and the awareness of its experience, evoke joy and pleasure. They lead to the nobleness. This does not exclude the feeling of contempt for evil overwhelming spirituality and the body. Evil, which can exist wherever there lacks the good (Kwiatkowski, 1947, p. 187-189).

Focusing on the beauty shared with the women during the secret lectures, drew their attention towards its transcendence, and introduced them to the spiritual well-being — to the extent that was possible at that time. Thus, the lectures helped to eliminate evil, violence and the feeling of suffering, even if only while they were going on and waiting for the next ones. The secret lectures were needed and much-awaited. They were giving a relief. They generated the good that women shared during sets. They led to the source of transcendence — the God himself. Women put their hope in them. The transcendence of values accompanied their lives in the camp. Dr. Wińska wrote about the trust in God's Providence in her reflection on Easter 1945 and the all-night prayer conducted in the Polish block by Józefa Kantor. The women were reciting the service of the Holy Saturday from memory. When in the morning they left the block as if they were going out of a church, on Lagrowa Street of FKL Ravensbrück they heard the news that the gas chamber in the camp had just been

closed. On the Easter Vigil, the oldest women from the block expected the inevitable selection... for the gas chamber. To avoid this, they coloured their grey hair and made their hollow cheeks pink. They were supposed to seem younger. They knelt around the barrack table and were whispering their prayers. Every fellow prisoner accompanied them in that prayerful hope. A similar situation had happened during their first Easter in the concentration camp in 1942, when a prayer and a long lecture on love for the homeland allowed Polish women to overcome all physical ailments. One of them was waiting for the evening “coffee”, the only meal they were supposed to receive that day. The lecture seemed to make the waiting time to be shortened (Wińska, 1985, p. 113-114, 127).

#### **4. Teaching about beauty as a contemplation of values**

Teaching art history as a part of the secret lessons in the concentration camp was deliberate. It was supposed to protect each “Rabbit” women's consciousness from the destruction caused by the aggregated suffering. During the occupation of Poland Władysław Tatarkiewicz (1886-1980), a historian of philosophy, ethics, art and aesthetics, continued giving the clandestine lessons at the University of Warsaw. He personally suffered and witnessed the suffering of the students he taught. He knew the value of compassion. The lives of the participants of the conspiratorial education were endangered to the same degree. But both teachers and their students were very brave and courageous. The other characteristics that they had shared were the internal resistance in order to maintain dignity, and their will to survive the war and repressions applied by the Germans throughout the territory of the occupied country (Tatarkiewiczowie, 2011, p. 221-226).

During the war professor Tatarkiewicz wrote a book “O szczęściu” [“On happiness”]. In the chapter entitled “Cierpienia” [“The Sufferings”] apart from reflecting on the suffering and atrocities of war, he formed a metaphor on a human psyche, explaining that it functions similarly to a spring. — it has an ability to absorb the received blows and to create

a limit of endurance to the strength of the experienced mental and physical blows. The said limit is the human spirituality. Although people have an influence on their education, the target potential of their own spirituality is not known to them, and those who experience suffering learn their fragility on their own. The constant influx of the causes of suffering and living in pain violates the barriers of human physical and mental resistance. In such circumstances, a relief from suffering, according to prof. Tatarkiewicz, can be brought to a person by another human being, influencing him with a transcendent good. The said good, as a source of hope, is sought by the mind and the heart of a person threatened with death, physically exhausted, on the verge of the internal resistance. After crossing it, with the pressure of forces causing suffering, human defence mechanisms can be significantly compromised. The salvation from this misfortune is then to receive from the other person some compassion and an impulse to live. In some way it is indispensable survive the difficulties accumulated over time (Tatarkiewicz, 2015, p. 154-155, 159, 557; Filipowicz, 2021, p. 546).

In the light of aesthetics, which is a branch of philosophy devoted to beauty, it is commonly accepted that what is perceived by our mind as harmonious in its colours, sounds and language, is beautiful. Saint Thomas Aquinas teaches in *Summa theologiae* about the truthfulness of beauty. Transcendental beauty is the intrinsic property of being. Along with unity and goodness, it remains in a specific relationship to the human senses, reason and will. External beauty, that is, the beauty of another being, is recognised by people through reason, and therefore extrasensorily. Hence, we distinguish the existence of spiritual, mental and moral beauty. After coming into contact with the being, a person recognizes what he or she likes about it as beautiful. Beauty is related to good. Good is perfection, it is praised as beauty: *bonum laudatur, ut pulchrum* (Sth 1 a, q 5, art. 4 = *Summa theologiae*, 1925).

People refer to something as beautiful when it makes an exceptional impression on them. It is hard to resist the beauty of things. This is due to their recognized perfection, their inner harmony, proportion, and coherence. Aquinas lists, after Aristotle, three objective conditions necessary for a thing to be

considered beautiful. They refer to the sensual beauty. Firstly, it is the perfection of the whole thing (*integritas*); secondly, the preservation of the proportions constituting harmony between its component parts (*consonantia*); and thirdly, its *brightness* and shine (*claritas*), perceived by the senses immediately, i.e. from the first encounter of a man with the said piece of work. Within the beauty, in the harmonious ordering of the entire being, a non-accidental greatness and an intellectually recognized reason of the origins of being are contained. (Aristoteles [Aristotle], 2010, s. 138-139; Sth 2a – 2ae, q. 180, art. 3 = *Summa theologiae*, 1926, p. 30-35; Tatarkiewicz, 2012, p. 376-377).

When it comes to the spiritual beauty the above-mentioned complexity is not the case. God is not complex in his very essence. He is absolutely beautiful in the unity of its spiritual and moral qualities. Only reason can judge beauty. The intellectual cognition of beauty causes a taste for beauty, which is an act of will. The recognition of beauty introduces peace into the spiritual powers of a man and his physicality, it gives one the feeling of the highest pleasure. Dealing with beauty, by recognizing it, integrates the inner powers of a human being. Recognizing beauty, as Aquinas teaches, is a virtue and as such it is active (Sth 1a, q. 5, art. 4, res. = *Summa theologiae*, 1925, s. 154-155). It directs the person from within oneself towards the community. Thus, teaching about beauty during secret classes brought women out of their loneliness, made it possible to get away from the feeling of being left unattended, without rescue.

Following Aquinas's teachings, it can be said that since beauty coincides with the good, teaching about beauty during art lectures spread both beauty and goodness (Sth 1a, q. 5, art. 4, res. = *Summa theologiae*, 1925, s. 154-155) among women-„Rabbits” and their teachers. Ultimately, it rebuilt their identity, anchoring them even more strongly to the supernatural source of their lives.

Communing with what is beautiful, is called contemplation. The existence of the state of contemplation confirms the metaphysical dimension of the human life and his spiritual abilities. It initiates in one's intellect the miracle of wisdom. (Sth 2a–2ae, q. 180, art. 8 = *Summa theologiae*, 1926, p. 64-68). In the case of women from FKL Ravensbrück the

contemplation was accompanied by the sense of the God's Truth presence, hope of surviving the camp, and the belief that they had enough physical strength and moral resistance to do so. All this thanks to stimulating the intellectual strength during courses on art history and beauty. The spiritual bond between the lecturer and the students enhanced their lives, just like in case of Mary and Martha from the Gospel according to St. Luke (Luke 10: 38-42). This example was given by Aquinas when he wrote that the sisters contemplated Christ, the incarnate Word of God, by listening to what he was saying when he came to visit the house of the said women and their brother (Sth 2a-2ae, q. 180, art. 3. 4). = *Summa theologiae*, 1926, p.31). In painting, contemplation is symbolized by lapis-lazuli, called the spiritual colour.

The effect of beauty can save from death (in the perspective of human abilities) as long as beauty is shared by one person with another. An example of the literary image of such an understanding of the role of harmony of beauty that unites the spiritual powers of a man are, among others, Silesian fairy tales by Gustaw Morcinek (1891-1963) — a writer, and a prisoner of the German concentration camps in Opava, Sachsenhausen and Dachau. Among the fairy tales of G. Morcinek, there is a story about the Plague Maiden and the way of controlling her actions. As long as the beauty of the music lasted, when Kalasanty Saturninus was playing the organs of the Cieszyn church choir, the spreading of fear and taking a heavy toll by the Plague Maiden, who entered the houses of Cieszyn's inhabitants without invitation, was suspended (Morcinek, 1984, p. 219-220; Filipowicz 2007, p. 171-175). The literary image of the impact of beauty setting a boundary to the sudden death through the good, devoted heart of Kalasanty, the shoemaker, and his music, is related to the story from 1713, when there was an outbreak of the Plague (Black Death) in Cieszyn.

## Summary

Person's education based on one's spiritual ability to learn the good, truth and beauty, leans towards the rationality, freedom and dignity of the human being.

The fruits of human education, which people can use by themselves or share with others, allow them to express their human identity and to affirm the reason for their existence. Both educating another person and learning from someone are possible, thanks to the human creative forces. However, the education in the concentration camps established by the Germans was strictly forbidden. It was the case because of their Prussian concept, and practice of treating people imprisoned there as slaves (see, inter alia, Karczewski, 2021, p. 200-203).

The Polish political prisoners imprisoned in FKL Ravensbrück (Infographics 2020) broke the prohibition of the camp authorities, according to which the spiritual life of female inmates had no right to exist. However, the Polish teachers obeyed the laws dictated by their own reason. Thanks to the secret lessons, they activated an internal defence mechanism — both within themselves and in the fellow prisoners educated by them, most of whom were a group of the so-called "Rabbits". This allowed many of them to survive the camp, maintain their female dignity and, despite the traumatic spiritual and physical burdens, return to their families, undertake education interrupted by the war, start their own families, give birth and raise children (see biographies in: Kiedrzyńska, 2019, p. 286-316 and reports of the Ravensbrück Family, 2022).

This classic knowledge about the role of rationality in a human life and saving it was emphasized by the Catholic priest, Fr. Wojciech Gajdus (1907-1957). He was a prisoner of the Stutthoff and Sachsenhausen-Oranienburg camps: "In the fight for survival, the most important weapon that the prisoners had at their disposal — and which the camp authorities were unable to control — was the reason" (Gajdus, 2013; Drywa, Oratowska, 2015, p. 78). In the light of priest Gajdus' memories, we understand that the intimacy of a human being — apart from a defenceless body exposed to blows and destruction — which is constituted by one's own thoughts and spiritual life, can become a metaphorical bunker. Rationality on the other hand, and the search for values that revive life thanks to the assimilation of knowledge about the existence of principia of eternal beauty and teaching about it, as well as having a persistent hope and believ-

ing in the supernatural good — despite everything, constituted what can be called the ancient shield and combat order of Greek hoplites. In 1943, at the end of the Lent, Polish prisoners-priests following the hoplites' example, protected their bodies against the beating by standing arranged in a square. They offered their suffering and pain received from Gust (ex. Kowalski), to God, just like Jesus Christ did. They were following the order of Fr. B. Pieckowski — the capo of the barracks, who had suffered the worst beating during that roll call: "Finally, one by one, they slowly and calmly make the sign of the cross. And this sign relaxes them: it drives the torment away [...]" (Gajdus, 2013, pp. 177-180).

When it comes to the secret lessons, the comparison to the Greeks concerns the virtue of prudence in the work of both teachers and students. This virtue was based on the rationality of women and their faith in the chance to survive the camp, to be liberated from it thanks to the active efforts to preserve physical and spiritual resistance, waiting for the end of the war and the possibility to leave the German soil, and return to their normal lives. The camp authorities did not manage to "seize" the spirituality of women. Learning was their way out, both to survive the camp, and find a way to rest. The time spent in the camp, that was devoted to studying was longed for and awaited by female prisoners — the Rabbits". The knowledge acquired in a direct contact with the teachers had become a *raison d'être* for Polish women by blending into their living values. The said values, which they acquired in their family homes, in Poland, lasted because the women remembered about history, the history of art, and about its indispensable element — the beauty. Moreover, these values constituted a barrier against barbarism (Filipowicz, 2022, p. 154-156 in an interview with the works of art conservator-restorer, Maria Magdalena Rymaszevska).

Thanks to participating in lectures on art, female prisoners — the "Rabbits" communed with beauty through words. They contemplated it, as beauty is not material, although people, as creators, need to use the real materials to make their beautiful pieces of art. Even though the beauty of the works that prof. Karolina Lanckorońska was teaching them about did not remain physically within the imprisoned

women reach (they could not see the works with their eyes, could not touch them) — it was real, and understood and felt as such. It existed for both prof. Lanckorońska, as well as for her camp sisters — the young listeners. Lectures given on the creations of the human spirit and human hands, the talks on the beauty of works that are transcendent, lessons on the history of art, that lasts... All that made both sides realise the transcendence of life. Women were strengthening their spirituality. Despite the violation of their freedom, the wounds inflicted on them by the German camp service, the killing of their fellow prisoners, students of prof. Lanckorońska did not lose their dignity (see the documentation of the women of Ravensbrück in: *Zapisy Terroru*, 2022).

When it comes to the women of Ravensbrück the value of teaching about beauty should be emphasized. It enhanced the life forces of women, even when they were utterly exhausted as prisoners. It can be concluded that not only the beauty itself, but also educating about it, the time devoted to learning about it, and the risks associated with it, were the expressions of love, and as one may say, they were pure love themselves. Irena Sendler, née Krzyżanowska (1910-2008) described what the spiritual beauty was when she recalled her father who was spoiling her as a child. When her aunts visiting the family home expressed their indignation, anticipating the disastrous educational effects of the excessive, in their opinion, warmth with which Dr. Krzyżanowski surrounded the only child, they heard: "You never know how our daughter's life will go. It may be that our caresses will be the most pleasant memories for her" (Mieszkowska, 2009, p. 65). Acting during the occupation under the pseudonym Jolanta, I. Sendlerowa was responsible for the Children's Section of "Żegota". There is a possibility that as a prisoner of Pawiak, I. Sendlerowa could have been sent to the FKL Ravensbrück concentration camp. Before the eventual transport to the camp or before being shot to death in Warsaw, she was bought out and saved from the hands of the German guards with money from the Polish Underground State.

(Translation: Agnieszka Wiesenthal)

## Abbreviations

Sth – Summa theologiae

Luke – Gospel according to St. Luke

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