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**Growing up to co-being- in search of better ways of social integration
of the disabled**

*(...) The child to whom more care and attention is given, shall become
a stronger, more equable and brisk person in his adult life.*
Maria Montessori

Introduction

The creation and development of the very concept of called „the art of co-being” is a result of modern outlook to social processes as at the experience full of understatement, contrast and differences, on the one hand, and indicating to the need of mutual learning, uninterrupted pursue for that, what is more perfect, strengthening of that, what is durable and reliable and elimination of that, what is not much effective and not much useful in the life of an individual, on the other hand.

The pedagogics of co-being, as a variant of personalistic strand, close to the pedagogy of the heart represented by Janusz Korczak, Maria Łopatkowa or Maria Montessori, seems to be bound up with something, what we call today as external and internal integration, to which the taste of independence and coherence is given by higher feelings, and especially such evinced abilities as: love, devotion, empathy or altruism. The above mentioned pedagogy of the heart is a modern strand in education aimed at supporting a child in his development, apart from the fact whether the child is fit and healthy or scarred by the lot and must cut through life meanders and barriers put before him because of his ”otherness” – often preventing him from fulfilment of his parents’ expectations, making him unable to interact with other people, and because of it sometimes deprived not only of the feeling of life, friendliness, understanding and tolerance, but also of ordinary human attention and goodwill. .

What may the expression „growing up to co-being”, used in the title, mean? How should it be understood and interpreted? In what sense “growing up to co-being” is possible in the situation of disabled children, who appearing in the role of the “other” are often relegated to the outer edge of social life? The role of the “other”, which is practically deprived of a sender status in the act of communication, initiated by one of the parents or siblings or teachers,

educators or caretakers. In the opinion of B. Dymara¹, the term “co-being” originates from the verb “to be” ”to be together, in the wider meaning it may also stand for „to support”, „to co-participate in own social development”, considered in the context of personal and social needs of an individual.

A stigma of disability (particularly in children and youth with mental disability, and often with mobile and sensorial disability), still continues to function as self-realized „prophecy”. It means that the “scarred” persons are fettered to such extent with something like a tight panzer, fettering their natural development (i.e. „habitus” determined by defined type of disability), that they begin to behave in such a way which is expected from them. In consequence of captivating approaches on the environment part, they are not interested in undertaking any action which could bring their development, already in their childhood period. However, as adolescent and then adult persons they resign their right of being a free, independent and creative human being. They resign their privileges, aspirations and realization of their life plans. They loose their light, wishing not to irritate with their image, differing most probably from a standard one, those, who extort the standards of „other” on them. They prefer to bear all the consequences of being constrained, sometimes suffering severely for this reason, to be abased, undertaking all the same a passive approach of a minimalist, resigning himself to his fate, than to confront anybody or anything (W.Dykcik², J.Placha³, E.Więckowski FSK⁴).

We should note therefore that negative social approaches of healthy persons towards the disabled, their rights which are so frequently restricted and understated, may sometimes be the result of ordinary lack of understanding of the interest of such people. This situation may in turn give rise the attitude of animosity and conflict ness. In this, functioning but often unrealized defensive mechanism, may give rise in one of them – as disabled, to feeling of determination, submission and debasement, while in others – as healthy the same mechanism may strengthen the attitude of non-tolerance and domination (i.e. significant advantage and strength).

The areas and rules of „growing up to co-being”

¹ Dymara B. *Wartości w uczeniu się kompleksowym – kuszenie stereotypów*, [w:] B. Dymara, M. Łopatkowa, M. Z. Pulinowa, *Dziecko w świecie wartości*, Kraków 2003.

² Dykcik W., *Społeczeństwo wobec problemów autonomii osób niepełnosprawnych*, Poznań 1996.

³ Placha J., *Pedagogika personalno-egzystencjalna w służbie rewalidacji osób niepełnosprawnych*, [w:] *Wielowymiarowość osób z niepełnosprawnością*, red. Cz.Kosakowski, ks.C.Rogowski, Olsztyn 2005, s. 117-125.

⁴ Więckowski E. FSK, *Integracja a rewalidacja – współczesne formy kształcenia dzieci niepełnosprawnych*, [w:] *Wielowymiarowość...*, op. cit, s. 132-143.

Raising the problem of „growing up to co-being” of the disabled, I would like to draw your attention to three principal predicators essential for discussed process, namely:

- › *Social formation* – which is created by the disabled irrespective of their sex, age or type of their diagnosed disability, functioning on the background of their environment (i.e. family, friends or peers);
- › *Social participation* of the disabled in the life of their environment, in compliance with their natural right to live and develop and to fulfil social functions, resulting from sex, age, intra-family arrangements, individual interest and needs of and its belonging to social group;
- › *Dialogue with others* – enabling communication, determining the rules of co-being, partnership and individual liability for ourselves and for other people.

As it results from this, I perceive the „growing up to co-being” as specific processual and formistic procedure, enabling gradual growing of the children and youth saddled with determined type and degree of disability into one with social and cultural sphere of the issues associated with their everyday life, growing into one determined by the status of physical, psychological and social development of an individual. The “growing up” understood in this way is not and can not be an asymmetric communication act, but a symmetric, comprehensive act occurring in the communication process. An act, which enables among others “growing up to a role”, creating a base for dialogue, as a social construct, based on friendliness, mutual respect and understanding. However, there are determined principles, which occur in the process under consideration, whose observance is associated with realization of certain „social agreement”, which binds the interlocutors, an agreement determining full participation of both these subjects (i.e. sender and receiver). The subject of a dialogue on one part may be a person with disability symptoms (i.e. a child, adolescent or an adult) as a partner and facilitator necessary in creation of above mentioned communication act. The quality and contents of the communication (i.e. built and communicated information) shall to a great extent depend on the attitude or intention of the latter one. Information may be communicated in form of spoken text (i.e. linguistic and verbal text) or signaling text (e.g. gesture, mimic or gesture and mimic).

Let’s notice that the determined principle, assigning to the partners (mother – child) of communication act the role of a sender (speaking) or receiver (listener) underlay the effective interpersonal communication basis, already on prenatal level. Similarly, the process of “growing up to co-being” is guided by such rules, which should not only be known to the persons working with the disabled, but also observed by them consistently. And here are some

examples of the rules, which I would only like to touch on, not devoting to them much attention. I treat these rules as the basic canons, very important for the assumed process of social development, and by the same also for „growing up to co-being”:

- ▶ The principle of equal rights - consisting in building the feeling of safety in children and youth with saddled with symptoms of any type and extent of disability, by standards of the needs and perceptive and receptive abilities of an individual;
- ▶ The principles of knowledge about the reasons of difficulties faced by the children and youth with disability diagnosis, the knowledge of the course and the symptoms of disturbances in their development, resulting from character of organic injuries and tissue and organ dysfunctions;
- ▶ The principle of kind attention and assistance, consisting in the closeness of children and youth to significant persons, knowing how to gain their trust, to endow them with emotions, accepting attitude and respect for their every effort aimed at building dialogue approaches as one of the most essential conditions of „growing up to co-being”;
- ▶ The principle of building and undertaking the situations favourable from educational point of view, in which both the children and the adolescent youth showing symptoms of psychical or intellectual disability, shall be able to gain prestige and respect among their closest, i.e. family, friends and relatives. We should notice that only the persons understanding the nature of their difficulties may create a suitable co-being and responsibility atmosphere for and around them. Without such attitude of the environment the disabled shall not be in condition to overcome the barrier of their fear of establishing a social contact (especially in the situation, which is new for him/her, involving a person or the persons unknown to him/her). The incuriosity from interlocutor part depresses him/her, blocks his/her organs of speech. Similarly, lack of interest in his/her person, explicit ignorance, irreverence of his/her person as well as irreverence of his/her statements shall not teach him/her the culture of being;
- ▶ The principle of respect for dignity and tolerance for otherness and distinctiveness,
- ▶ The principle of granting necessary social support to children and/or youth with many symptoms of psychical (in this sensorial) or intellectual disability, depending on the condition and functionality level of senses, enabling any cognizance and opening to new contacts with external world. The approach of supporter (supporters) enables them coming into the social roles and relations appearing in various stages of mutual partner co-operation. The level of acquaintanceship between the supported person and the

person granting the support determines, among others, their mutual readiness to carry direct, fully effective and partner dialogue.

Pedagogics in the creation of moral and cultural aspects of the disabled „growing up to co-being”

Pedagogy (from Greek *pais* – ‘child, *ago* – ‘I am carrying’), is a partially forgotten term, but it can be more frequently met in the content-related literature⁵, though it most probably lost the meaning, originally assigned to it. In the opinion of S. Staszic *pedagogy* is the „science of search for the easiest method of providing information to other people in the shortest possible time”⁶. The same prominent pedagogist recommended learning of this difficult art through: 1) theory (...), through 2) „seeing of an example”, and also through 3) own and third party’s experience⁷. In turn, S. Karpowicz was of the opinion that *pedagogy* is the art of education⁸. A little different opinion about pedagogy was expressed by D. Chętkowski⁹, who defied „gogy” to pedagogy, admitting the predomination of one over the other, from the point of view of pupil and teacher activity. It is worth to pay some attention to both these categories, drawn up in form of table, as differing by their function and contents. The author of above mentioned work shows intentionally the essence of „growing up to co-being” on the example of a role of a pupil and a teacher. It seems that the situation of the disabled is similar, isn’t it?

Interpersonal communication, determining partner co-being between healthy and disabled individuals may be realized both on linguistic and non-linguistic level. These two ways of communication between children and youth saddled with disability, either physical or intellectual, may be for them not only fully effective, but also fully satisfactory.

Summary and conclusions

Focusing on the problem of „growing up to co-being” I intended to show the complexity of the relations between the children and youth saddled with physical (in this sensorial) or intellectual disability. I have expressly underlined in my study, that the difficult art of communication between people and the ability of distinguishing between that what is valuable and invaluable, should be learned gradually and consistently. The efficiency of communication of children and youth with surrounding world, and mostly with their parents,

⁵ Kwieciński Z, *Ku pedagogii pogranicza*, Kraków 1990.

⁶ za: Okoń W., *Nowy słownik pedagogiczny*, Warszawa 2001, s. 285.

⁷ Ibidem, s. 285.

⁸ Ibidem, s. 285.

⁹ Chętkowski D., *Z budy. Czy spuścić ucznia z łańcucha?*, Kraków 2003, s. 164.

teachers or educators or peers is determined by many essential predicators, among which we should emphasise special role of example of the environment, personal and individual experiences, gathered with certain difficulties, as the effects of undertaken endeavours and not always fully successfully but interpedently made attempts,. A modern man may avail himself of almost unlimited methods of symbolic communication with use of various, linguistic or non-linguistic signs (e.g. touch, gesture, facial expression, proxemic signs etc.). One of the basic form of effective communication of children and youth, whatever the status of their development (i.e. correct or disturbed), is a dialogue, which may take various forms (e.g. touch, mimic, gesture and mimic or linguistic and verbal as the optimum one among those, which are available), which is learned by the unborn child through his relations with mother (e.g. through senses and touch or hearing and touch). It may be concluded from the above that the precondition for the „growing-up to co-being” is coming into being of a Subject (e.g. a child, adolescent or adult), kind and step- by-step accompanying him, systematic accustoming him to partner action and participation in these actions, as certain type of communication act, whose background is the need of love, acceptance, appreciation, delight, activity, scoring a success and uninterrupted gaining of new, unique impressions and experience. On the example of hardly signalized, approached in this way problem, the following conclusion may be drawn:

- › Moral and cultural co-being of the people among whom the disabled with various needs and possibilities of development live and grow up, is a form of social initiation (growing into one), based on the example, tradition and culture;
- › Liaison in favour of improvement of co-being culture of the family, school or any other social group, composed of persons, especially children and youth with special needs, may contribute to improvement of the quality of their functioning in the society, and by the same to the improvement of conditions favourable for creation of mutual relations between people, mutual respect and liaison, mutual friendliness and mutual responsibility for one another;
- › In controversial situation (which are quite common in these days), instead of this what degredates a man (especially a disabled man, irrespective of the phase of ontogenesis), who is extremely sensible being to negative reactions of the environment, to incomprehensible behaviours of parents or teachers and/or caretakers which are incomprehensible for him, in spite of his sex, age, orientation or world view of his closest, that what makes him nervous and overwhelmed, we should try to create –

wherever it is possible – friendly space for communication (transitional spaces) and favourable conditions for co-being and partner dialogue.

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Summary

The pedagogy of co-being as a strain of personalistic strand, close to „pedagogy of a heart” represented by Korczak, Łopatkowa or Montessori seems to be bound with that what we nowadays determine as external and internal integration. It gives to the disabled persons the feeling of independence and coherence with social group, which is created by family, school or peer society. The satisfaction from belonging to the group and the well being of an individual are provided by such mutually evinced abilities as attachment, empathy and altruism. The above mentioned “pedagogy of a heart” is a modern strand in education, aimed at supporting of a child in his development, whether it is fully fit and healthy or disabled.

The purpose of this study was explanation of a term „growing up to co-being” and showing the importance of the task faced by the parents, teachers and caretakers, which is rational, gradual and systematic accustoming the disabled child to social life mainstream, to the tasks and duties awaiting him in the future.

Dorastanie do współbycia czyli w poszukiwaniu lepszych dróg integracji społecznej niepełnosprawnych

Streszczenie

Pedagogika współbycia jako odmiana nurtu personalistycznego, bliska „pedagogice serca” Korczaka, Łopatkowej czy Montessori, wydaje się mieć powiązanie z tym, co dziś określamy mianem integracji zewnętrznej i wewnętrznej. Daje ona osobom niepełnosprawnym poczucie niezależności i koherencji z grupą społeczną, jaką tworzy rodzina, społeczność szkolna czy rówieśnicza. Zadowolenie z przynależności do grupy i dobrostan jednostki zapewniają takie obopólnie przejawiane zdolności, jak: miłość, przywiązanie, empatia i altruizm. Wspomniana „pedagogika serca” jest współczesnym nurtem wychowania mającym na celu wspieranie dziecka w rozwoju, niezależnie od tego czy jest ono w pełni sprawne i zdrowe, czy też niepełnosprawne.

Celem opracowania było wyjaśnienie znaczenia terminu „dorastanie do współbycia” i ukazanie, jak ważnym zadaniem stojącym przed rodzicami, nauczycielami i opiekunami jest racjonalne, stopniowe i systematyczne wdrażanie dziecka niepełnosprawnego w nurt życia społecznego, w czekające go zadania i obowiązki.