



## *The Gender Theory and Project of a New Social Pedagogy* *Teoria gender i projekt nowej pedagogiki społecznej*

### ABSTRACT

**RESEARCH OBJECTIVE:** The aim of the article is to compare gender-based concepts of the human being and their educational implications with classical pedagogical models – axiocentrism and paidocentrism.

**THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND METHODS:** The research problem is an attempt to explicate the educational and social postulates of the leading author of the gender theory movement, Judith Butler, and to conduct a comparative analysis with the assumptions of axiocentrism and paidocentrism.

**THE PROCESS OF ARGUMENTATION:** The fundamental anthropological and educational assumptions of axiocentrism and paidocentrism were presented. Then, the deconstruction of the concept of the human being emerging from the works of Judith Butler and pedagogical consequences resulting from them, were presented.

**RESEARCH RESULTS:** Butler’s anthropology is characterized by an extreme preference for individualism and processualism, where an individual is not attributed with fixed sexual identity or personal identity. Butler advocates for social development changes by abandoning the binary gender model and multiplying new categories of gender. Their goal would be establishing a new, autonomous individual who would choose own gender independently of any biological or cultural determinants.

**CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND APPLICABLE VALUE OF RESEARCH:** Butler’s postulates do not fit into either the axiocentric or paidocentric model; her ideas can be classified as part of the project of a “new social pedagogy.” The main characteristics of this approach include the glorification of individualism, the multiplication of “gender roles” to relativize traditional binary distinctions, the rejection of biological determinism in development, and complete freedom in choosing gender roles – both biological and cultural. Traditional models of marriage and family are rejected as outdated and overly restrictive of individual expression. Equal recognition is granted to homosexual and polyamorous relationships. These concepts appear as the polar opposite of the assumptions of Christian anthropology and pedagogy.

→ **KEYWORDS:** JUDITH BUTLER, GENDER, AXIOCENTRISM, PAIDOCENTRISM, UPBRINGING

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## STRESZCZENIE

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**CEL NAUKOWY:** Celem artykułu jest porównanie genderowych koncepcji człowieka i wynikających z nich konsekwencji wychowawczych z klasycznymi modelami pedagogicznymi – aksjocentryzmem i pajdocentryzmem.

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**PROBLEM I METODY BADAWCZE:** Problemem badawczym jest próba eksplikacji postulatów wychowawczo-społecznych głównej autorki nurtu genderowego Judith Butler i przeprowadzenie analizy porównawczej z założeniami aksjocentryzmu i pajdocentryzmu.

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**PROCES WYWODU:** Dokonano prezentacji podstawowych założeń antropologiczno-wychowawczych aksjocentryzmu i pajdocentryzmu. Następnie przedstawiono dekonstrukcję koncepcji człowieka wyłaniającą się z prac Butler i wypływających z niej konsekwencji pedagogicznych.

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**WYNIKI ANALIZY NAUKOWEJ:** Antropologia Butler cechuje się preferowaniem ekstremalnego indywidualizmu i procesualizmu, w której jednostce nie przysługują atrybuty stałości płciowej i tożsamości osobowej. Butler postuluje zmiany rozwoju społecznego poprzez odchodzenie od modelu binarności dwupłciowej i namnażanie nowych kategorii płciowości, ich celem miałyby być wykształcenie nowej, autonomicznej jednostki, która wybierałaby swoją płeć niezależnie od jakichkolwiek uwarunkowań biologicznych i kulturowych.

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**WNIOSKI, REKOMENDACJE I APLIKACYJNE ZNACZENIE WPŁYWU BADAŃ:** Postulaty Butler zasadniczo nie mieszczą się ani w modelu aksjocentrycznym, ani pajdocentrycznym, jej idee można zaliczyć do projektu „nowej pedagogiki” społecznej. Jej głównymi wyznacznikami są gloryfikacja indywidualizmu, namnażanie „ról płciowych” w celu zrelatywizowania tradycyjnej binarności, odrzucenie determinizmu biologicznych czynników rozwojowych, pełna swoboda w wyborze pełnionych ról płciowych, zarówno biologicznych, jak i kulturowych. Tradycyjne modele małżeństwa i rodziny są odrzucane jako przestarzałe i zbytnio krępujące możliwości indywidualnej ekspresji. Równoprawne miejsce należy się związkom homoseksualnym czy poliamorycznym. Koncepcje te jawią się jako biegunowe przeciwieństwo założeń antropologii i pedagogiki chrześcijańskiej.

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→ **SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:** JUDITH BUTLER, GENDER, AKSJOCENTRYZM, PAJDOCENTRYZM, WYCHOWANIE

## Introduction

In recent years, both in Poland and elsewhere in Europe, gender concepts have been embraced rapidly in legal regulations and educational programmes. One of the leading figures in this respect is Judith Butler, an American philosopher and feminist whose *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Butler, 1990, 2008) has become the foundation of contemporary gender studies. The paper offers an interpretation of Butler's anthropology and a perspective on its potential implications for education. The application of Butler's theory in education can be called into question, as she herself fails to address the area of education in her work. However, any attempt at investigating the

human condition, which is also pursued by Butler, must provide a description of the essence of humanity and the factors that foster or inhibit its development. Such interpretations usually imply “postulates for recovery,” which are not necessarily expressed by Butler herself. The paper sets out to deconstruct Butler’s theory. Butler’s anthropology and her concept of social education will be juxtaposed with a matrix of pedagogical models known as axiocentrism and paidocentrism (Ostrowska, 2006; Zubelewicz, 2002).

## Two Traditions in Education: Axiocentrism and Paidocentrism

Pedagogy is rooted in the pedagogy of upbringing. For centuries, philosophers and theologians have explored questions such as “how to live” or “what is good and what is evil,” whereas educators have tried to apply their findings to provide an upbringing for future generations. The answers to these questions are inextricably linked to axiology. Naturally, educators demonstrate selected values to their charges, either through their conduct or by intellectual means. The attitude to values proves to be instrumental in the upbringing process, since “upbringing relies on the selection of values” (Czerny, 1997, p. 44). Similarly, “upbringing has always been linked to values, and as a process it necessarily needs values” (Czerny, 1997; Ostrowska, 2006, p. 409). Accordingly, the nature of values must be investigated, especially whether values are independent of the human (objectivity) or are established by the human (relativity). As demonstrated by Zubelewicz (2002), the former and the latter imply two different philosophies of education and upbringing: axiocentrism and paidocentrism.

Axiocentrism, which is otherwise known as conservative or traditional education, draws on the legacy of Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Herbart, Woroniecki, Nawroczyński, Dobson, and Mascolo (more recently). Paidocentrism (progressive, modern, or permissive education) derives from Rousseau’s philosophy, which was later developed by Neill, Perry, humanistic psychology (Perls, Rogers), and Gordon (more recently). With some degree of simplification, Sartre’s Existentialism, Neo-Marxist views, and Postmodernism can also be said to adhere to paidocentric concepts.

The two philosophies of education offer two divergent views on the nature of the human, the nature of evil, educational goals, and educational means and methods. They also differ in their respective approaches to values. Axiocentrists believe that values exist as objective entities, whereas paidocentrism derives from relativism.

Axiocentrists assume that human beings are prone to both good and evil, and that people vary in their intellectual capabilities; in other words, axiocentrism is elitism. As a duty-oriented approach, axiocentrism requires that individuals adhere to social norms and standards while performing their adopted roles in the family and society. Aggression derives from the conflicts of interest and values, moral permissivism, and natural human proclivities. Violence is an immanent part of nature, and as such it must be restricted. This is possible through acts of solidarity with the victims and more stringent laws. Axiocentrism is based on indigenous tradition and culture that derives from ancient Greek

philosophy, Roman law, and Christianity. Axiocentrism refuses to accept the concept of multiculturalism whereby all cultures and traditions are treated on an equal footing. The tradition and culture of our little homelands or neighbourhoods shape our identity. "Multiculturalism strives to bring plurality to what is primarily singular: my identity as a social individual. By describing the world as a set of equally legitimate 'life styles,' 'cultures,' and 'values,' we forcefully create choices where there are none" (Scruton, 1993, p. 5). Young people should be provided with an upbringing that helps them to cope in a variety of conditions and settings. Letting go of ethics will not help them to achieve this. What they need instead is discipline and morality. This is where authority figures come into play: parents, teachers, schools, and institutions that should serve as pillars of society and provide moral guidance in crisis or adversity. Educators should rely not so much on empathy as on friendly and tolerant detachment, as their role is primarily that of authority figures and experts who provide advice whenever their charges ask for it. Axiocentrism promotes a code of conduct that is different from the free expression of emotion, which is typical of paidocentrism. The main focus of axiocentrism is on loyalty, gratitude, commitment, and honour; the sense of entitlement in any shape or form is frowned upon. While paidocentrism is against punishment in education and social life, axiocentrism offers views to the contrary; axiocentrists believe that punishment is necessary to regulate interpersonal relations. In the schooling process, punishment regulates these relations, while "fail" marks and repeating a year at school are the necessary conditions to provide quality education. Axiocentric concepts are consistent with the Christian vision of the human being and education (Filipczyk, 2018; Gałkowski, 2016).

Embraced by paidocentrism, the relativist approach to values was originated by a sophist called Protagoras, who believed that while "man is the measure of all things," things should not be taken for what they are but what value people and their subjective emotions give them. Relativists propound that no values exist in themselves as objective entities. They appear as one's subjective sensations (feelings or perceptions) and are always related to somebody or something. Accordingly, values are determined by one's culture and environment, etc. This means that values can be interpreted using a variety of determining factors that change the way we perceive and experience values; they are also prone to change and dependent on time, place, and circumstances, as well as those who relate to them or participate in them. The fundamental tenet of paidocentrism was formulated by Rousseau, who argued that people are good by nature; they are prone to evil because of civilisation and regression from nature. Happiness is attainable once civilisation has been rejected for the people to return to their true selves. The concept has recently been developed by humanistic psychologists who elaborate on the necessity to return to one's "true self" (Perls, Rogers). Paidocentrism corresponds with egalitarian views. If the student fails to complete his or her assigned task, paidocentrists put the blame on the teacher, methods of teaching, or curriculum. They describe human life as a creative and joyful adventure that sets individuals free from limitations of any kind and helps them to relate to one another. The onus to provide the necessary conditions for such a model of life is on the state. Aggressive behaviour occurs when people are

deprived of their needs, defend their own interests or various strictures instilled in them by axiocentric upbringing; aggression can also derive from imperfect human nature. In order to minimise aggression, paidocentrists promote mutual empathy, muticulturalism, human rights, and interpersonal communication; they also frown upon corporal punishment. Paidocentrism puts multiculturalism above indigenous traditions. Reality should be transformed to provide an environment for people of different natures, and various cultural and social rigours should be eliminated. Instead, children or young people should be offered a variety of opportunities to spend their time at school, including leisure time. However, since individuals sometimes fail to abide by the rules, axiocentric terminology is replaced with their “softened” semantic equivalents (Peeters, 2010). Paidocentrism rejects strict discipline, rigour, challenging exams, and “fail” marks by reducing them to an absolute minimum. Instead, paidocentrists offer means deriving from individualism that have as little to do with institutions as possible. Classical rigour and discipline are replaced with human rights, children rights, student rights, cosmopolitan education, and promoting philosophy among children. Education should be based on partnership and empathy while validating children’s needs and their sense of entitlement. Paidocentrism is open to experiment both in the classroom and, more broadly, in educational institutions. Paidocentrists believe that difficulties or challenges may be done away with by continuous reform.

Undoubtedly, the above-presented model of educational theories, which were divided into two fundamental traditions, may be treated as a simplification of some sort. One point that may provoke an instant discussion is whether the authors were attributed to the right traditions. This, however, goes well beyond the scope of this paper. That said, the model seems to be justified due to the differentiated ontological status of the values and their underlying postulates for education. I am going to investigate if Butler’s anthropology is a new and original proposal or whether it adheres to either of the two models of education and upbringing.

## The Instability of Substance as the Basis of the Gender Anthropological Concept

Butler’s considerations on gender and personal identity are utterly unrelated to the findings offered by life sciences or theory of personality (except for psychoanalysis). The readers who expect Butler would refer to contemporary theories of personality or the neurobiology of the brain may feel dismayed, since no such references are made. In Butler’s view, only developmental factors such as culture or language have an influence on the formation of human identity.

Butler anchors her epistemological and ontological investigations on the nature of the human in Nietzsche’s *On the Genealogy of Morals*: “there is no ‘being’ behind doing, effecting, becoming; ‘the doer’ is merely a fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything” (Butler, 1999, p. 33). Accordingly, Butler refutes abiding substance as such.

The concept of substance is a philosophical term formulated by Aristotle; it denotes the specimen (“this person” or “this horse”) or individual, qua individual, who survives accidental change. For Butler, substances are “nothing other than the coherences contingently created through the regulation of attributes,” whereas “the ontology of substance itself is not only an artificial effect, but essentially superfluous” (Butler, 1999, p. 33). Since there are no abiding substances, no abiding entities such as a person, a man, or a woman exist. Butler quotes extensively from one of Nietzsche’s commentators:

All psychological categories (the ego, the individual, and the person) derive from the illusion of substantial identity. But this illusion goes back basically to a superstition that deceives not only common sense but also philosophers – namely, the belief in language and, more precisely, in the truth of grammatical categories. [...] The subject, the self, the individual, are just so many false concepts, since they transform into substances fictitious unities having at the start only a linguistic reality (Butler, 1999, p. 28).

Thus, since there is no abiding substance, there is no abiding personal or sexual identity, which is a mere derivative of performative language and culture.

Butler’s stance is extremely process-oriented, and she describes reality as both transitory and variable. Since there is no abiding substance, there is no abiding personal or sexual identity, and human identity is defined by language and its grammatical categories. It is impossible to refer to individuals without using gender markers. Language emerges as a grand ontological demiurge. Individual identity is construed with performative acts such as *I declare you man and wife; a boy was born; you are promoted to manager*. However, they are fluid and determined by culture, which is why “there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender” (Butler, 1999, p. 33). In her *Excitable Speech* (Butler, 2021), Butler investigates performativity and its implications for the incidence of hate speech. She goes as far as to define the biological aspects of humanity as performative. She uses de Beauvoir’s celebrated maxim “one is not born a woman, but, rather, becomes one” to provide a differentiation between sex and gender. It is of little surprise that gender emerges as a transitory effect of language and culture. However, Butler claims that sex is invested with the same properties.

If “the body is a situation,” as [de Beauvoir] claims, there is no recourse to a body that has not always already been interpreted by cultural meanings; hence, sex could not qualify as a prediscursive anatomical facticity. Indeed, sex, by definition, will be shown to have been gender all along (Butler, 1999, p. 12).

Hence the celebrated phrase *Nature is the phantasm of culture*, which has been embraced by gender studies as their maxim. Both gender and sex are fundamentally independent of each other; they exist as the functions of discourse and performative actions. Numerous performative repetitions solidify one’s self-concept; however, they are mainly illusions because everything is prone to change and can be regulated from scratch: “there are no true or false, real or distorted acts of gender, and the postulation of a true gender identity would be revealed as a regulatory fiction” (Butler, 1999, p. 180). Hence

there are no true or false individual identities; there are fluid identities only. The same observation applies to sex, which is revealed as “a performatively enacted signification”, and as such can “occasion the parodic proliferation and subversive play of gendered meanings” (Butler, 1999, p. 44). What follows is that the human body is divested of abiding qualities or ontological status. The human body is “a variable boundary, a surface whose permeability is politically regulated, a signifying practice within a cultural field of gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality” (Butler, 1999, p. 177). Butler postulates the term “styles of the flesh” to describe gender-regulated differences and bring out their performative forms.

To sum up, Butler argues that human beings are contingent coherences of attributes that emerge through performative acts.

If sex is replaced by gender, then this entails a number of implications for racial differences. Following Butler’s reasoning, it can be assumed that racial differences are but a result of oppressive language, prevalent heteronormativity and “fallogocentric oppression.”

Butler also devotes much of her considerations to the incest taboo. She argues that the incest taboo only petrifies the heterosexual norms of conduct. Butler elucidates on how the concept of taboo restricts sexual flexibility and capacity for gender subversion. Both incest and homosexual taboos, which are reinforced by psychoanalytic discourse (Oedipus complex), are depicted by Butler as formative gender moments; formative from the prevalent heterosexual point of view, of course: “We have already considered the incest taboo and the prior taboo against homosexuality as the generative moments of gender identity, the prohibitions that produce identity along the culturally intelligible grids of an idealized and compulsory heterosexuality” (Butler, 1999, p. 172). In her considerations on the normative and restrictive incest taboo, Butler remains primarily at an analytical level, and she fails to proceed to explicit postulates for social education. However, if her observations on incest are juxtaposed with “regulatory fictivity” (heterosexuality), one can easily draw suitable conclusions.

Since there is no abiding substance, male and female genders emerge as a result of „the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (Butler, 1999, pp. 43–44). In other words, rigid regulative boundaries are heteronormative, and as such very oppressive. Naturally, Butler is disturbed by this, and the plan for recovery she offers is to deconstruct the substance-based idea of gender and reveal its constitutive acts. The task is not easy because the existing social order is resistant to change. The feminist movement is thus faced with a daunting challenge to change reality. How can they do this? Butler calls for

[...] an effort to think through the possibility of subverting and displacing those naturalized and reified notions of gender that support masculine hegemony and heterosexist power, to make gender trouble, not through the strategies that figure a utopian beyond, but through the mobilization, subversive confusion, and proliferation of precisely those constitutive categories that seek to keep gender in its place by posturing as the foundational illusions of identity (Butler, 1999, p. 44).

According to Butler, the existing heteronormative social order sustains an illusion of the abiding sexual substance. Butler strives to develop perspectives for extending the symbolic and actual possibilities of engineering both sex and gender.

According to Butler, the binary division of gender petrifies the existing social order, which is based on heteronormative and patriarchal rules. Hence her stance that gender is always political. Revolutionary change will be brought by drag queens. Their outfits show that gender is arbitrary and a cultural illusion. Since the two statements cancel each other out, they demonstrate that gender is arbitrary and performative. As in the following quote:

As much as drag creates a unified picture of “woman” (what its critics often oppose), it also reveals the distinctness of those aspects of gendered experience which are falsely naturalized as a unity through the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence. *In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself – as well as its contingency* (Butler, 1999, p. 175).

Subversive bodily acts seem to be one of the fundamental methods that drive Butler’s new social pedagogy. Subversion can also be interpreted as *overthrowing, coup, destruction, damage, and decay*. Oddly enough, the title of her work takes on a new meaning in this context.

### Summary: Risky Suggestions for “New Pedagogy”

Butler’s anthropology propagates fluid and non-committal identities. For human identity, says Butler, is prone to continuous language- and culture-determined change. With no abiding ontological substance, individuals can undergo any change, including their sexuality. Their choices ought not to be restricted by the illusion of binary sexuality, which has been instituted by conservative and heteronormative society. The illusion of binary sexuality is perpetuated by incest and homosexual taboos, which were both propagated and reinforced by Freudian psychoanalysis. Society is petrified, patriarchal, and oppressive, and it victimises women in particular, who are forced into parenthood and standard maternity. Conscious and free individuals ought to overcome these heterosexist limitations, which according to Butler have no real grounds in nature. The American author pays little attention to the family, which she describes as a limitation to one’s individual freedom and a product of heterosexual normativity. In their freedom of self-definition, individuals must be limited by nothing, including maternity and relationships. Oppressive society must be changed to embrace and accept all types of partnerships: heterosexual, homosexual, and polyamorous. Butler’s ideas stand out as extremely individualistic and process-oriented; she also argues in favour of post-modernlike fragmentation, extreme cultural determinism, and performative acts of language. Her concepts, which were laid out in *Gender Trouble*, have been developed and continued in her subsequent books and publications (Butler, 2014, 2015, 2021).

As demonstrated by Boucher (2006), Butler's theory is representative of a peculiar methodological individualism that depicts a classical opposition between the individual and society in such a way that the former is granted only negligible chances to rebel against homogeneous norms. This constitutes a radical moral and political individualism, which disregards moral responsibility that individuals have for one another. Rosiak (2016) and Boucher (2006) point out a fundamental incoherence in Butler's understanding of substance. Her definition of substance as a "contingent coherence of attributes" is a logical trap she sets up for herself. If there are no abiding substances, there are no grounds for distinguishing individuals, and reality as such must be treated as an extremely holistic and undifferentiated entity. Neither autonomous individuals nor other abiding components in the social structure can be distinguished. Accordingly, there are no logical grounds for one of Butler's favourite postulates, namely to grant equal rights to sexual minorities. Rosiak says that in the world Butler has conceived:

The collective prevails over an alleged individual, the majority over the minority, the whole over its parts. Assuming the holistic perspective, no logical grounds can be found for postulating equal rights to any kind of minorities. And yet this is beyond the grasp of those who in their minds "destroyed logic through its genealogy" (Rosiak, 2016, p. 133).

Rosiak demonstrates that Butler strives to postulate performativity as a substitute for substance. However, she fails to use the notion in line with its author J.L. Austin; rather, she understands (and postulates) performative acts as certain attempts at propaganda following the maxim that if you repeat a lie often enough, it becomes the truth. It is worth pointing out that Butler's stance has driven a wedge in the feminist movement, which is mainly focused on exploring the nature of femininity. Out of the two emerging trends, one (Benhabib, 1995; Braidotti, 1995) is more inclined to define "women" in traditional binary categories for gender and social agency; the other, Butler being one of its leading proponents, is against defining femininity. On the one hand, the latter is rooted in the belief that all kinds of identity are fluid by default; on the other, it derives from a calculation that practices such as this would turn out to be less efficient in the political struggle for the feminist agenda.

For Butler, identity is transient and evanescent. This brings to mind an image of sea waves, which change and fluctuate constantly. There lies a trap, however. How can sea waves be shaped? Is it possible to control them? This is obviously impossible. The only thing that is in fact possible is to take on a spectator's stance and follow changes as they emerge. That said, the whole process is also far from perfection. There is nothing more. Accordingly, we should not be bothered with some minorities and their rights, since they are likely to morph into other minorities tomorrow, joining the majority the day after tomorrow. Perhaps it stands to reason to take on the spectator's stance in this case. What sense does it make to educate individuals with no stable identities? Is effective education possible at all for fluid entities such as contemporary individuals?

Implicit in her work, Butler's suggestions for the process of education and upbringing almost completely fail to adhere to either paidocentric or axiocentric views. Admittedly,

they have little or nothing to do with axiocentrism, and they only partially resemble some of the paidocentric postulates. Butler, for example, extols the virtues of individualism. However, her anthropology seems to fail to adhere to the paidocentric model. If we assume that that major paidocentric idea is that of “following the child,” Butler’s arguments for transitory substance, performative sex and gender, transitory “styles of the flesh” go well beyond paidocentrism. This offers little to no room for “following the child,” who left to his or her own devices in oppressive society is very much likely to succumb to the “heteronormative illusion.” Although not formulated explicitly, this new social pedagogy in the making spells cultural change. New education may have the following purpose in mind: an individual who makes voluntary gender choices regardless of their biological determinants. This “new pedagogy” abandons the classical binary division into male and female sex; proliferates “gender roles” to reveal the arbitrary nature of traditional binary divisions; refutes the deterministic nature of biological developmental factors; and advocates for full freedom in choosing both sex and gender roles. Traditional marriage and family models are rejected as obsolete and too stringent for individual expression. Heterosexual, homosexual, and polyamorous partnerships are treated on an equal footing (Butler, 2016). This newly emerging social pedagogy strives to impose new forms of education that drive “gender deconstruction” and play with various relativities. The controversy around hermaphroditism is a good starting point for the project. Her programme can also be broadly illustrated by drag queens, the figures they play and the performances that bring out the arbitrary nature of gender roles. In other words, minor disorders/pathologies serve as a point of reference for new social education. These are theses also strongly emphasized by other authors in this trend (Kochanowski, 2013; Seidman, 2015). Undoubtedly, Butler’s concern is to prevent the exclusion and assimilation of queer, transsexual, and homosexual individuals in contemporary society. There is no way one would refute such an agenda. However, the consequences of her ethical postulations, which also cover the area of education and public policy, go well beyond the sheer description of the condition of sexual minorities. A hackneyed yet fundamental question recurs, namely, to what extent the minority should succumb to the majority, and to what extent the majority should change for the minority. A number of authors (Jones, 2000; Kuby, 2015; Peeters, 2023) argue that the gender-mainstreaming agenda (Butler’s ideas being at the very core of it) is part of a widespread programme aimed at rebuilding contemporary society, neutralising traditional family roles, and promoting individualism. Its ultimate goal is to instigate a top-down revolution.

These concepts appear to be the polar opposite of Christian personalism and the principles of education based on axiocentrism. For authors drawing on Christian personalism, gender concepts undermine traditional gender roles and the principles of axiocentric education; they constitute a dangerous ideology that threatens the family and the roots of Western culture (Bortkiewicz, 2014; Oko, 2016). For practitioners, especially teachers and educators, understanding these differences seems to be an essential condition for conscious education.

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