



10/2011 (20)

**Wit Pasierbek**

Akademia Ignatianum w Krakowie  
Wydział Pedagogiczny

## ***The Transcendent and Horizontal Anthropology of „Horizons of Education”***

### **SUMMARY**

The Author analyzes the achievements and academic program of the past 20 issues of the “Horizons of Education” which can be described as “to genuinely educate the man to be the man complete”. The Author uses two doctrines of anthropology: individualism and collectivism as the basis for his reasoning. The crisis of the “sad man” is another analyzed concept. The conclusion is that the program of the Editorial Board is fulfilled thanks to transcendent-horizontal anthropology, supplemented by analytical method.

→ **KEYWORDS** – HORIZONS OF EDUCATION, TRANSCENDENT-HORIZONTAL ANTHROPOLOGY, PERSONALISM OF DIALOGUE, INDIVIDUALISM, COLLECTIVISM

The academic journal “Horizons of Education”, published by the Faculty of Education (Institute of Educational Studies) of the Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow, celebrates with this 20<sup>th</sup> issue its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The 20<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary is called “China”, the 10<sup>th</sup>-“Tin”. The “China” celebration, that goes after the “Cristal” (the 15<sup>th</sup>), firmly binds family, while the “Tin”, that goes after the “Pottery” (the 9<sup>th</sup>), marks quality, endurance and the character. All these years of our activity give us a chance to rethink our program and all the job done. Especially, that our journal has secured its place among academic databases, which is proved by several hundred subscriptions.

The Editor-in-Chief in the first *Editorial* outlined academic assumptions and aims of investigations of the “Horizons of Education”: “Our main goal is the reflection on the nature of man and presenting new horizons of life from the perspective of faith; new challenges of education; and reaching for the truth about the man”<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> W. Pasierbek, *Editorial*, „Horyzonty Wychowania” 1/2002 (1), p. 5.

So-who is the man today? Or rather, does he know, who he is; is he aware of himself, his substance and nature? Can he find his due place in the world of technology and nature? Even more, can he find his place among others and among everything that is different than himself?

We asked similar questions 10 years ago, when we were preparing the framework of the program of the “Horizons of Education”. We know, of course, that there are no simple, certain answers to the above-mentioned questions, and until the unequivocal end of the humanity, we will not have such answers. We know that every diligent and fair scholar looking for the truth about the world and the man shares such vision. This is not a fatalistic program of yet another futurology, but commonsense reflection on the *status quo* of the man and the world. I am sure that in the next hundred, thousand and maybe even hundreds of thousand years similar assumptions on the nature and the destination of man will be made. I am sure because such questions have been asked since the beginning of the humankind and since the very beginning of rational reflection on the man and the world, but we still lack sure answers.

Until now, nobody has enough courage to propose a complex and holistic system of knowledge about the man, his nature, his substance, his existence, and his destination. Many have tried to provide serious anthropological reflection but nobody could answer this very simple question: who is the man? Nobody can “grasp and handle” him in a holistic way.

Why is that? I think that the first problem is deeply rooted in the psycho-somatic (or spiritual-material) nature of the man. The body is material, perceptible, empirical and complete, but the spirit, the soul-this is a completely different sphere: non-material, strange and therefore hard to understand. The second problem is connected with our inability to define the beginning of the man, his origins; even if we had three theories: creationism, evolutionism and progressive creationism, none of them could provide the unquestionable answer about the beginning of the man. This is one of the reasons why it is so hard to trace the history of the existence of the humankind. The other problem is connected with a variety of possible definitions of the man: as the rational entity; as the part of the nature; as the person; as the psychic entity; as the autonomous, cognitive being; as the omniscient entity. One can enumerate endlessly. Our life is driven by

many forces, being the object of their drive. This leads us to the problem connected with the dynamic development of the man in his psychic, personal and physiological manifestations. So, the final notice should point out that this is the question about the place of the man in the universe: it seems that the man is the only being fully rational, but at the same time the man is but a part of the whole cosmos; the part which is not strong enough to rule upon everything.

How can we approach to investigations on human nature? How can we start proper anthropology? What kind of methods and methodologies should we use?

1. Last centuries praised and adored the man so much, that it led to his solitude; although living among other beings, including those similar to him, he has started to feel lonely and lost. The man lost his proper relations with the environment, with other people, and created tensions, leading eventually to conflicts. The world wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are the best evidence of such claim. Two ideologies stays at the roots of such situation: individualism and collectivism. The first one treats the man as the entity existing only for himself, enclosed within his own limits, with all the rights he is entitled to; as a result: the man is untouchable, equal only to himself. The man has become the individual who can only praise himself. The result of such attitude is ubiquitous tolerance claiming that anybody can do anything and no one can violate man's property and dignity; as a result it leads to the passive attitude to the others-one must not be interested in the activities of the others because one has to be tolerant. Such situation encourages further solitude and withdrawal of the man who becomes more and more aggressive, willing to overcome his frustration and loneliness. The man becomes indifferent to the world and lives in his own imagined world, the world where he is the center. Such situation cannot retain too long, because this is the man that really becomes alienated.

Collectivism is the second ideology. Here – the direction of the main interest is just the opposite to the individualism: one does not see the individual but the society, the group which attracts the man at a loss. The group becomes the focus of his interests, the group becomes responsible for all aspects of his life<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>2</sup> See: M. Buber, *Problem człowieka*, Warszawa 1993, p. 87-90.

The loneliness disappears but with this disappearance the man loses his own uniqueness, his individuality; loses his own identity, even dignity; the man becomes incapacitated because the group decides everything. It was perfectly described in the poem *Lenin*, by Vladimir Mayakovsky, who praised the soviet communism: “A ‘1’ is nonsense. A ‘1’ is zero.” With such words he praised the communist party, as the collective being of Russian socialism. But “man in a collective is not man with man. Here the person is not freed from his isolation, by communing with living beings, which thenceforth lives with him; the “whole”, with its claim on the wholeness of every man, aims logically and successfully at reducing, neutralizing, devaluating, and desecrating every bond with living beings. (...) Modern collectivism is the last barrier raised by man against a meeting with himself”<sup>3</sup>.

2. Here, I would like to quote the letter of French bishops to the French Catholics, published the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 2010<sup>4</sup>, in which the bishops envisage the nearing catastrophe. The letter of the Episcopate, preceding their presidential and parliamentary elections, encourages hope and responsible actions, despite the crisis people now experience. The letter is of the greatest importance because it describes the man as the most endangered during the crisis and as the cause of this very crisis. The bishops point out four most important elements.
  - a. We are at the moment of financial and economic crisis. In the countries of the West it started several decades ago, the worst effects of the recession are still to come. The bishops say very bitter warnings to the youth: younger generation would never enjoy such prosperity as their parents and grandparents: “Current lifestyle cannot be transplanted to other countries and cannot be preserved here”. Because of this the episcopate asks the French not to expect the impossible from the politicians.
  - b. The bishops state that it is necessary to clearly redefine human dignity in the times of the technological and scientific progress. Our society is still fascinated by the

---

<sup>3</sup> M. Buber, *Between Man and Man*, New York 1945, p. 239.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.eglise.catholique.fr/conference-des-veques-de-france/textes-et-declarations/elections-un-vote-pour-quelle-societe-12713.html> [access: 6.01.2012].

progress, but does not understand the risk connected with the progress.

- c. The episcopate points out that we are facing the end of homogeneity of western societies. As the result of growing migration there are people of various ethnic, cultural and religious origins. Such situation creates, hardly bearable, feeling of instability among the native French. The newcomers feel rejected by the society they could not quit now.
- d. Another problem, pointed out by the bishops, is connected with the growing demandingness, accompanied by the declining understanding of our duties. The French bishops ask for being careful while using the mass media. We live in the hypermedia era and we are bombarded with information, but we should not be deceived by slanders and false propaganda.

I would like to comment on some of the fragments of the letter.

**The youth will never enjoy such prosperity as their parents and grandparents have enjoyed**

Last 40 years of the economic growth in Europe was based on the assumption of 5-percent of annual growth. First, it was achievable in the Western Europe and later in Eastern European countries, too; but now, we suffer the major recession and even the United States cannot enjoy such growth. There are, of course, emerging markets with the growth rates higher than such 5 percent, but they were underdeveloped for so long, that even such impressive growth can change their prosperity but a little. Such situation has resulted in the second recession in just few years time-span and we cannot name any symptom of improvement. Greece is almost insolvent and is just about to be bankrupt. Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Italy and some of the East European states face very serious economic problems. The European Union has adopted Euro Plus Pact to help the EU member states facing serious financial problems, but the fact is that the Pact is sponsored mostly by Germany and France that provide for almost the whole EU budget. The European Union aims at imposing the same economic rules to all member states, but the level of their development varies. So, the Eastern European states cannot catch up with the old Western Europe. We still have “peripheral” Eastern European states and the European Union

does not offer them any remedy. There is yet another problem: “replacement rate” – because of the decline of fertility rate there will be sub-replacement rate, especially in Eastern Europe, and such situation will threaten the pension systems there.

### **Human dignity versus science and technology progress**

In Poland and in Europe we can notice that the human good is endangered; the example of this is euthanasia, threatening the human life. The economic consideration, supporting the idea of euthanasia, make the man but an unnecessary ballast. The same apply to abortion or in-vitro fertilization. The growing pace of technological progress does not treat the man and human dignity as the ultimate good. I think, however, that we can agree that the man is more important than just economic considerations; this assumption should be widely accepted. Such procedural consensus can help us to accept common good.

### **The end of homogenous societies**

There is no doubt that societies of Europe, especially the Western Europe, have become multicultural and multiracial; the mentality and traditions, however, still remain monocultural. As the result we can trace growing tensions between “newcomers” and “hosts”. During the long centuries of European history there has been no notion of “multi-“. All nations have their own histories and traditions that define their unquestionable identities. The growing wave of new migrants from Africa, Asia, and South America “infringes” the old tradition and the Europeans cannot easily share their land with the newcomers, because the land has always been ours. Today, London is not English culturally, Paris is no longer just French. Europe has to learn that the German could be of African origin and the English could come from Asia.

### **Growing demandingness; decline of the sense of duty and responsibility for community**

The younger generation shows growing demandingness, reclining any responsibility for community. Last three decades of the growth of living standards resulted in extreme consumerism. One can easily notice such approach in Ireland, Greece, Spain, countries that received substantial multi-billion financial support. Just 40 years ago, in the 1970s, one could see in Athens, the capital city of Greece, people riding the donkey; now they use only the best brands: Mercedes, BMW or Yamaha. Countries

and people lacked good-tempered evolution: generational and technological.

I think that French bishops' letter provides great hope, because they comment on such important issues as human dignity, the future of the youth, multiculturalism and threats of technology. I wish other episcopates, including Polish one, issued so serious letters and reflection on the Europeans and Europe of today.

3. Modern anthropology is located somewhere between individualism and collectivism/globalization. There are some efforts to reconcile both tendencies, aiming at better understanding of the man to make him happier. Growing tension and anthropological frustration can lead to dangerous solutions. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century we saw such solutions, as I have already mentioned. Global financial and economic crisis, revolutions in the Arab states, conflicts in Africa, crisis in Europe, EU instability are just some of the examples. That was the context of framing the program of the "Horizons of Education" and later efforts to carry it out. I would like to present it further. Of course, this is not going to be a strict data analysis since I will focus on the main concepts of the program and most important implications. As it was already mentioned, in the first issue of the "Horizons of Education" the Editor-in-Chief stated that the aim of the Editorial Board was to investigate rigorously the modern man and to show new perspectives in education. The very same *Editorial* stated that "The main focus is the reflection on the man and the new horizons of education as seen from the perspective of faith; new educational challenges and quest for the truth about the human nature. We would like to join those that care for proper education. We would like to investigate these fields of human activity that shape individual person from the perspective of humanism, at the same moment emphasizing the Christian understanding of humanity.

The Editorial Board of the "Horizons of Education" would like to invite to stimulate the reflection on the modern man, as perceived by educators, theologians, philosophers, teachers of religion, sociologist as well as physicists, doctors of medicine, specialist of new technologies: everyone really caring for education. We would like to show how various fields of human activity help to educate the man or to distort him. This

is the reason why the “Horizons of Education” wants to be the forum of exchanging ideas and experiences of various Polish academic centres, as well as foreign institutions. “In all our activity we would like to focus on the man as the subject that shapes the reality, not only on the reality that shapes the man as the object. At the turn of the new millennium we must ask the question: How can we educate the man to be complete, to make his life better, to make him happier? How can we transfer universal values that should be the basis of any creative dialogue?”<sup>5</sup>

We asked Prof. Stanisław Palka to review our achievements when we were celebrating the 10<sup>th</sup> issue and five years of Editorial Board’s activity. Prof. Palka honestly pointed out three main fields in which we achieved our goals: investigations in the man, that is the reflection on his nature and the truth about him; investigations on the fields of human activity that shape the individual, as seen from the perspective of humanism; and the third field, connected directly with education (“real and proper education of modern man”)<sup>6</sup>. Prof. Palka was very kind in his opinion about the work of the Editorial Board; such opinion really obliges us and calls for further serious investigations on the condition of the man today.

We have asked Prof. Andrzej Radziewicz-Winnicki to evaluate the last ten issues of the “Horizons of Education”. His evaluation is published in this anniversary issue.

So, what kind of man and what kind of education do we care for? The answer is given in this simple statement: “to educate the man to be the man complete (...), since it is all about the man as the subject that shapes the reality, not the reality that shapes the man”. It means that the most important problem is “complete humanity” which should be contrasted with the “objectification” of the man. Is it really happening today? Abovementioned anthropological doctrines (of individualism and collectivism), as well as our “simplified” description of the contemporary crisis of the man: being only the object of his own creation, the economic and financial depression, overuse of technology, difficult relations

---

<sup>5</sup> W. Pasierbek, *Editorial*, „Horizonty Wychowania” 1/2002 (1), p. 5-6.

<sup>6</sup> See: S. Palka, *Opinia na temat „Horizontów Wychowania”*, „Horizonty Wychowania” 6/2007 (11), p. 16-17



within societies (connected with recent migration problems), military conflicts – these are but proofs that the man is in crisis and needs new anthropology. We do not have to explain, as it is known even by children, that conflict, crisis, discontent, etc., are created by the man himself. This is not just by accident, it is not bad luck, everything happens because of the man. It does not matter if we accept the Bible or not, but we should agree that the man is “to fill the earth and subdue it” (Genesis 1:28), among all living creatures only the man has reason and ultimately only he can decide. Such were the original considerations of the Editorial Board when we were preparing our program for the years to come. We would like to be active in the quest for self-integration of a lonely and unhappy man, we would like to help him to find his authentic nature.

### What are our basic assumptions?

The man has to meet himself. This is possible only in the situation when he meet the other. It has to be a meeting in dialogue, when “I” and “you” come together. The necessary space for the meeting is created and filled by the Transcendence – God<sup>7</sup>. This is the necessary condition for discovering man’s personality and man’s existence; this is the basis for finding who the man is. Christian anthropology claims that it is the transcendent-horizonal anthropology because it combines four essential relations of the man: to God, to the other man, to the world and to himself. The quality of these relations defines our humanity. Despite the historic trends of dualism, despite overemphasizing only some of the dimensions, we do understand the man as the spiritual and physical being that constitutes personal unity. These were our basic assumptions and our plan that we still would like to follow.

---

<sup>7</sup> In the 1930s Martin Buber, Ferdinand Ebner, Franz Rosenzweig, Eugen Rosenstock-Heussy, Herman Cohen, Friedrich Garden and Gabriel Marcel formed so called – personalism of dialogue, which claims that subjectivity of the man, his very nature, is based on the relation with the other, “you”. For the majority of us “you” can mean only God. The main achievement of personalism of dialogue is the assertion that the man can achieve his own personality only in relation with the other as the other person. Personal existence means always being in the relation. See: W. Pasierbek, *Człowiek w jednoczącej się Europie*, Kraków, 2004, p. 68-74.



---

Why have we accepted such a choice? Can we educate the man according to these assumptions? Our method is the answer.

What is our *modus procedendi*?

We have assumed that the man discovers these four essential subjectivities on three levels: macro-, mezzo- and micro-. The macro-scale reveals the relation to the world. This relation is very complex, but also appealing, intriguing by its mysteries and magnitude. Moreover: the man is but a tiny part of the universe, although very important and meaningful. Here we have to ask about the Transcendence, about God, about the origins of our existence, about the place of the man in such universe. Then, we have the mezzo-scale: our Europe, our homeland, national identity and citizenship, family, man as a part of smaller, well-defined social group. We live and work within such defined structures in a completely different way than we could live in a foreign land. Here, we are not anonymous. We are responsible for ourselves, for the others, for the state and family. We have probably examined these two scales in rather too superficial way. But we have noticed that there is still the question of the man as such.

We have devoted seventeen issues to the third: micro-scale, or simply to the man. Beginning with the vast realm of the universe, through the more defined, tribal and family centered, we come to the most limited, micro-scale – to the man himself. We have assumed, that the best approach would be to analyze him bit by bit. This is not like the dissection, but rather in a way described by one of our authors: “Almost everything depends on what is the man and what is his identity. The perfect example of the importance of this question is this story. A child kneels down over some blocks, covered with fragments of colourful pictures – typical puzzles that can represent the map of the world or something similar. The child is busy for quite long, rearranging the blocks but cannot compose the map. By chance the child notices that on the other side of the blocks there are fragments of a picture of man. So it decides to arrange the man and after some efforts it succeeds. At this moment it turns out that the map arranges itself at the same time. So, as our author says, *if we can “arrange” the man, the world can arrange itself. How can we achieve this in practice? We should start with “arranging”*

ourselves. So, the old call of Socrates – “*know thyself*” is still up-to-date<sup>8</sup>. This is the condition for the real truth about the man, only in such circumstances the man can learn who he is. This is the reason why we have started with the analysis of the identity, social responsibility, axiology (with the understanding of the good and the evil), conscience, dignity, liberty, spirit and spirituality, body and carnality, reason and rationality, understanding, fears, and now – creativity. This is but a part of the humanity. The rest is still ahead of us.

Does it really help to “arrange” “complete humanity”, “real humanity”? Do we help to educate the modern man this way? Only the Reader and the Reviewer can judge. The reason and modesty suggest us that maybe it is not possible, because every man is unique in his essence and existence. Providing ready answers would be pretty close to pride. But we can, for sure, assist in the quest for the truth about the man and God. The rest will soon follow. And this is the program and aim of the “Horizons of Education”.

Translated by Radosław Rybkowski

---

<sup>8</sup> Zb. Mirek, *Tożsamość człowieka w kontekście relacji natura – kultura – sacrum*, „Horyzonty Wychowania” 2/2003 (4), p. 15.