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Social Determinants of the Significance of the Child in a Micro and Mezosocial Perspective

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1. Contemporary dilemma of an ageing civilization of prosperity

“Child constitutes the hope of the world,” by the means of these words Barbara Smolińska-Theiss concluded the 20th century within the context of the achievements of the Convention on the “Rights of the Child,” legislated on November 20, 1989 by the United Nations General Assembly. While agreeing with the significance of these words — about the hope that the humankind stakes on the succession of generations — what seems interesting is the deep plane of this emotional and declaratory phrase. Are the contemporary societies, after experiencing not long ago the tragedies of human fate, both connected with the calamities of wars, dictatorships, as well as unconcern in formulating the principles of economic politics, the consequence of which was massive exclusion, marginalization and poverty to the extent of indigence, sensitive to the fate of children, or not? How are the Convention provisions respected, if some years ago even the biggest optimists did not suspect that in a short period of time over 200 countries will implement the resolutions of the Convention. We need to acknowledge that the document was recognized by the international society because of at least several reasons, among those of key importance are:

- (a) adequacy of the Convention provisions in the face of the defined (in a peculiar consensus) situation of children in the world and their usability in the creation of the children politics in the countries — signatories of the Convention;
- (b) complementarity and juridical harmony of the Convention provisions in the face of the local (domestic) law as defined in Art. 41 of the Convention, which states that: “Nothing in the present Convention shall affect any provisions which are more conducive to the realization of the rights of the child and which may be contained in the law of a state party or in the international law in force for that state”;
- (c) subjectivization of a child as a completely autonomous social being, at the same time acknowledging the fact that the rights of a child are human rights and are of a universal character.

We could suppose that in many countries, owing to the act of the ratification of the Convention, the situation of children would improve and indeed it happened. What influenced it were the changes that the Convention induced in the local legislation, adapting it to its requirements. What is more, the Convention became the framework for the actions undertaken by UNICEF and also had its impact over the activity of UNESCO, WHO and ILO. Nevertheless, still in many parts of the world the situation of children is critical, they are the subject of a unitary/institutional exploitation, captivation and violence. Their value is estimated in the category of economic profitability, by the means of various types of exploitation, including human trafficking, trading their organs, employment in sex business, as well as forced participation in military conflicts and fights among organized crime groups.

Therefore, the reflection upon the actual respecting of the regulations of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is still essential. The repetition of Ellen Key’s postulate concerning the implementation of “the century of the child” is a task to execute that calls on us to act. What is surprising is that in spite of the fact she formulated this call at the beginning of the 20th century (1900) it is still up-to-date and sometimes sounds as empty as a claptrap dressed in a politically-correct narration.

These words are strengthened by the significance of certain facts, which confirm the necessity of a constant strive for the realization of the regulation of the Convention, both on a local and global level. Amid the recent research and press reports on the situation of children the regulations which become visible are those which concern the situation of children in Ukraine, Somalia, Romania, Ruanda, Brazil and Poland.¹

¹ The examples of ruining childhood and of a bad fate of children in the contemporary world:

Many years ago, apart from Ellen Key, it was Janusz Korczak² who in his *Myśl Pedagogiczna*, published in 1933, wrote: “we cannot leave the world the way it is [...] what a tragedy is the contemporary world and

- (a) On Thursday, June 20, 2013, this year the UN accused Israel of maltreating Palestinian children, including torture and using them as human shields. In the period from January 2010 till March 2013 fourteen instances of *using Palestinian children as human shields and informants* were reported. The children were forced to enter possibly dangerous buildings before the soldiers, or forced to stand in front of military vehicles to prevent them from being pelted with rocks; Source: Reuters <http://www.kampania-palestyna.pl/index.php/2013/06/22/onz-oskarza-izrael-o-tortuowanie-palestynskich-dzieci/>
- (b) The Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC), in its report, states that children in Bulgaria are very often illegally or arbitrarily deprived of freedom for longer periods of time. It constitutes an infringement of the international human rights, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, according to which the deprivation of one's freedom should be applied for the possibly shortest period of time. The report (in Bulgarian) also states that the children who are deprived of freedom are susceptible to violence, abuse, social discrimination and the lack of observance of their civil, economic, social and cultural rights. Source: <http://www.liberties.eu/pl/news/detencja-dzieci-bulgaria-raport-bhc> January 12, 2015, Bulgarian Helsinki Committee.
- (c) In Poland approximately 2 million people suffer from extreme poverty. Their income does not allow them to satisfy their needs. Another 5 million people face difficult living conditions. The data provided by the Central Statistical Office and Diagnoza Społeczna (Social Diagnosis) researchers from 2011 suggest that the poverty sphere in Poland decreases in number. Since 2009 the number of households, which cannot afford to satisfy their current needs, has decreased from 28% to 26%. However, at the same time the number of poor people who make their living off such means of support as social benefits, disability and attendance pension is ever-growing. In case of the number of poor people in Poland the indicator has risen since 2009 from 28.5% to 36.4%. Poverty poses a serious risk to, first and foremost, incomplete families, families with many children, which raise three children or more. The factor that distinguished the Polish poverty in the European Union is its rural character — since the most difficult situation is among families and children who live in the countryside. Source: Web site of the Central Statistical Office <http://www.stat.gov.pl/gus/>; Web site of the European Statistical Office <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/eurostat/home/>; Report by UNICEF: *The Children Left Behind*. Warszawa 2011.
- (d) For the first time Mali was included in the report. The authors claim that the conflict between the army and the Islamists from the north, which has lasted since the last year, caused “painful suffering” to the children. Dozens of people were killed or injured in combat, explosions of mines and during bombing raids organized by the Malian army and the French, who support them. Boys aged 12–15 are forced to fight by various military groups and the girls are sexually abused. “It is a systemic practice applied on a massive scale” — the authors of the report warn. Source: http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,14094577,Okaleczane__gwalcone__tortuowane__Raport_ONZ_nt_.html#ixzz3PsLtvhLw

² J. KORCZAK: *Dzieła*. Vol. 3, pp. 223—227.

what a disgrace it is for this generation, which passes on a disorderly world to their children.”³ Therefore, a great many times he pointed toward the meaning of the development of the idea of the love of a fellow human being in the 20th century, in which he led children from the shadow to the epicentre of the social concern, children who were supposed to be liberated from various, characteristic of this period of time, bondages! Nowadays, according to the examples previously mentioned in the footnotes, we deal with new, however, also those not solved for years, bondages of the subjective nature of a child. Therefore, what seems valuable is the reference to not only the intellectual but also the spiritual and emotional legacy of the “Old Doctor,” since it still retained the value of a permanent usefulness. At least because the Convention was also founded on Korczak’s intellectual achievements. Indeed, many years ago he claimed that: “Children will not only become, but already are human beings [...] in their soul there are germs of the thoughts and feelings, which we have.”⁴

Apart from that, he tried to draw attention toward the necessity of not only respecting the rights pertaining to a child, but also his or her emancipation. He specified a horizon in the individual perspective, as well as noticed the necessity of perceiving childhood and children as a separate social category and an independent subject/object of psychological/pedagogical research. Today, it all seems obvious to us, however, considering the different cultural and civilization context (the beginning of the 20th century) Korczak’s ideas were innovative, almost revolutionary.

The Convention lays down explicitly formulated expectations and objectives for societies and countries. Their lifespan frequently becomes overshadowed by global societal, cultural, economic and political changes, which leave their clear stamp on the present time. The globalized world that we are surrounded by is too often perceived through a simplified perspective of homogenization, standardization and flattening of the perspective, as well as processes concentrated on the dominance of economic effectiveness over social reason. Paradoxically, it competes with rakishness and an egoistic elevating of separatisms and local perspective.

It is achieved through promoting distinctness, separatisms, fervent protection of one’s borders and space. It couples with the tendencies of being together versus being apart in the face of the global challenges. A contact between the two elements occurs, both the similar ones and these clearly and extremely different. The result of the meeting can be both a march toward the good, as the well as generation of evil.

³ IDEM: “Ku otwarciu Domu Sierot.” In: *Mysł pedagogiczna Janusza Korczaka, Nowe źródła*. Warszawa 1983, p. 242.

⁴ Cf. IDEM: *Idea miłości bliźniego...*, p. 226.

One of the evident global problems is the procreational diversity of the “old” Europe and a most unusual dynamics in the countries located on the American, African or Asian continent. Ageing in Europe, settled in prosperity and social-existential security, stands in contrast with the procreational dynamics of people from Africa, both American continents, countries in Asia, or also India. What we observe there is overpopulation, excess of births in the presence of the impossibility of economic and social support of families with many children. Nevertheless, in the public discourse there is a clear disproportion in the accentuation of these phenomena, with a sensitivity to the demographic stagnation in Europe. The available reports suggest that the ageing society, aware of the threat of self-annihilation due to the procreational tardiness, simultaneously does not create socialization paths for the following generation that would be attractive and patent enough. Since we still face a situation, in which the real needs, including the social ones, are changed for the artificial needs of egoistic self-worship and self-fulfillment, be it through promoting singleness, a lonely life but attractive and economically predictable. Therefore, the real needs are changed for their fetishes, which have the power of compensating the depravity of what is natural and characteristic of the human kind. They come into being as a result of the frustration connected with the lack of fulfillment of elementary needs. They are their faint echo, like an ersatz, in situations when the society defines the criteria of success, desired examples of behaviour, desired attributes of a career, paths of recognized promotions!

The society of excess, focused chiefly on consumption, excess of goods, and simultaneously which has distinct social inequalities, visible in the fields of marginalization and exclusion, becomes also a threatened society, risk society, as it is defined by Ulrich Beck (1986), in our depiction also threatened with self-annihilation.

The instance of a horizontal vista (along the entities’ biographic paths) of risk that await those who start their journey through life, in comparison with those who are in the twilight of their life — are of both a common and a separate character. Taking into consideration and giving one’s consent for some radicalism of this comparison, the area of common risk of the ascending and the descending generation are to be found, among others, in such phenomena and conditions as: lifestyle diseases, inequalities of social and economic nature; health and social system dysfunctions; natural disasters; armed conflicts. Whereas among those which more often take the separate character are: being the victim of human trafficking; abuse in sex business; organ trade; economic exploitation as a cheap labour force; being a victim of mediatized world, including cyber or technology addiction.

Pointing toward some experiences of contemporaneity believed to be the manifestations of everyday democratic risks, I explicitly separate these, which are more common in those who, because of various reasons do not have enough competence, potential of a different type to “chase away” these risks. The absence of this power is to be found usually within three scopes: poverty, the frailty of the environment of upbringing and socialization, as well as the potential of the very person and/or negligence, desistance, abdication of mezostructural institutions, which *should* support all in the spirit of social solidarism through self-development and realization of life objectives.

The contemporary times are filled with alternative offers related to how one's life, which seems to be rushing (in the 21st century) with a overwhelming speed, can be planned. It translates into dynamic (because of their tempo, sometimes perceived as radical) changes, both in the area of normativeness, economics, the character of a community (including the definition of a family), recognition of the obligations toward other human being (*neighbour*), concentrating around an idea (e.g. Fatherland, National Country), faith and the Church. Among the areas, in which the changes leave the clearest trace, is the family and its changing character, the main appraisers of the actual versus media reality, State and its changing role in the face of globalization and unionity; homogenization of culture, with its macdonaldization, commercialization of human relations, culture of consumption and sensations. In a broad trend of so many changes new communication pathways, different from the current ones both in the intra and the intersocial perspective, are constructed. An individual becomes embroiled and harnessed in new technologies and social networks, it also has new forums and means of self-presentation. It brings so far not known forms and intensity of satisfaction or its lack (selfies, likes, dislikes, hates...). This dissimilar from the so far known quality and form of entering into communication “about oneself” and “with oneself”, on a different level situates also the feeling of responsibility for the truth, consequence of one's actions and judgments. It restricts the relations of “intra” versus the intensification of the “inter” relation. If we are in a society, which is characterized by various types of dehumanization, then in an unavoidable way these can and in fact do affect the youngest ones. They (children) become an object (subject) of various interests, passions, desires, among which are also these, which are induced by the need for sensations, maximization of consumption, caused by a necessity of an immediate gratification and total fulfillment. These states do not subjectivize the human being, quite opposite they depart from the principles and respect toward the dignity of the human being. It happens that they constitute an infringement of all pos-

sible human rights (here children) and in particular the regulations of the Convention.

2. The richness of the childhood in an individual-ontogenetic perspective and in a community-family perspective

Yet our sensitivity to the fate of a child developed and still develops from the awareness of the *fundamentality* of the young generation for the duration of the human kind, as well as societies and nations. In many fields of science, humanities and social sciences we encounter crucial reports emphasizing the universalism of the richness of childhood. This richness was perceived both in the perspective of its experiencing by an individual, its relatives (family, parents) and also in a social, community perspective. The richness of children's naivety, honesty, straightforwardness, very often becomes visible in everyday functioning, however, under one condition, namely the presence of a keen sense of sight, sensitive hearing and a motherly/fatherly heart burning with parental love. Only when we spend enough time with children, and when this time is used knowingly, can we be enchanted by the whole richness of a fresh, not defiled children's sensitivity. Therefore, instead of seating the child in front of any screens or inducing sleepiness by the means of psychotropic drugs, we should merrily and intensively enjoy every moment that we are allowed to spend together. Sometimes it happens that one of the parents takes the main professional and economic duties, which as result limits his presence at home. It is not exclusively about the very time (its large amount devoted to a child is important, however, we should not absolutize it), what is crucial is the style and way of spending it. A beneficial postulate, from the point of view of the educational impingement and creation of a bond, is the concern for the *quality* of being together and its contexts! It is better when it is conducted in a stimulating, kind, warm atmosphere that will give the child a chance of natural expression, creativity and feed the child's curiosity. It is in the children's questions, a natural need of coming up to something/ someone, expressed directly, without a particular caution, that we can find the carpet of sensitivity weaved from the inspirations of the heart, movements of eyes, or ears and free associations of both the child and his or her immediate family.⁵

⁵ Surely everybody is capable of recalling situations, which were engraved in our memory because of their exceptional spiritual beauty, when we are/were giddy with the

How easy it is to scare it off, trample it down. Unfortunately, it does not require any particular measures, it is enough to show dryness — lack of coddling the love toward a child and not showing interest in him or her. A child not noticed, ignored, child “hindrance,” with time disappears in the mist of invisibility that enwraps it. After all it is a creation of reactivity on both sides — adult (parent) creates its structure by the means of announcements intentionally/unintentionally addressed to the child: “I do not see You!/I do not communicate with You!/I do not care what You do!”

As a result, after several attempts of dispersing this mist, the child becomes accustomed to its veil, acknowledging that it is a particular type of intimacy — runs into the *invisibility paradox* — starts reasoning in the following way: “I will become invisible, if that is what you want from me” — it seems that he or she announces to the adult, believing that owing to it he or she will gain attention/acceptance with the adult. He or she does not take into consideration, since he or she does not know, for he or she has too little experience/knowledge of the fact that since he or she is not so visible then I do not have to react, since I do not notice his or her presence — the adult reckons. The borrowed veil of a nebula of a parental distance toward his child, which should have been the connecting thread, separates even stronger, muffles better...

In the past the children’s spontaneity and straightforwardness manifested itself by the means of a naive belief and conviction that all adults strive for the well-being of children. Since the parents, grandparents, multi-generational families proved that, then this conviction overflowed with an overwhelming trust and openness toward others. The Jesus’ gesture of open arms, so amazingly triggered with a subtle squat, when the child runs toward us — becomes replaced with fright and doubt: “can I, should I, how will it be understood?”

children’s sensitivity, the simplicity of assessments, accuracy of associations... The house in Mokry Dwór, near the city of Wrocław, which belongs to Mr. and Mrs. Golem. We kneel down to say our evening prayers. Next to the parents — Amelia and Dominik, their kids 4-year-old Karol and 2-year-old Estera. During the prayers we move on to specifying the intentions that we want to pray for. The very moment Karol turns toward his Father and poses a question: “Daddy, what is the color of intentions?” Other time, while I was wandering in Roztocze, I headed for Zwierzyniec, where walking amidst old oak trees I came up against two little children. Ignacy (aged 6) and Stefania (aged 7), who passionately were helping some snails cross the road. Since it was a typical period of time when Roman snail were in abundance, the children had their hands full. Nevertheless, they did not cease to heartily support the column of (they believed tardy) snails in crossing the road. In any case they were informing the snails why they were doing it and where they are taking them, making sure that the snails “do not drift away from the chosen track,” which the children thought of the snails followed.

A political correctness, based on the EU directives connected with the Istanbul Convention, as well as the pressure to ratify the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, exerted on the EU and UN member states, forces its way into the educational and socialization reality with the power of a tornado. It is therefore difficult to selectively analyse the regulations of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, nevertheless it is worth referring to its following articles:

Art. 5: “States Parties shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents [...] to provide [the child with] appropriate direction and guidance [...]”

Art. 6: “States Parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life,” and also Articles 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13, which refer to the commitments of the child’s family, parents, legal guardians, leading to Art. 14, and in particular its 3rd point, which claims that: “Freedom to manifest one’s religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.”⁶ The observance of the Convention regulations has contemporarily an important meaning, since currently we have to deal with a great many legislative initiatives, resulting from cultural and civilization changes, which relativize the definition of a family as a relationship of two people of different sex, introducing many different versions. It creates, in a socialization and educational meaning, a completely new situation, dissimilar from the already known, in the perception of the basic social unit, which the family is called, as a matter of fact, the same way but completely different.

It is connected, among others, with an evident distinctness of the roles of a father/mother, be it in the case of people of the same sex. It is in opposition with the natural phenomenon of love of two people, the high point of which is the act of procreation. “God wanted the relationship of love between the husband and the wife to be the source of new life.”⁷ “Family is [...] the fullest community from the point of view of human bonds. There is not a bond, which would bind people more than the marriage bond and the family bond [...]”⁸ “The woman [...] is above all the heart of the family community. She gives life — and she is the one to bring up. Naturally, she is supported by her husband and she systematically shares with him the entire scope of the parental and educational

⁶ Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on November 20, 1989 (*Journal of Laws* from December 23, 1991)

⁷ JOHN PAUL II on February 19, 1981 during the Holy Mass for families in Cebu, the Philippines.

⁸ JOHN PAUL II on June 3, 1991 sermon during the Holy Mass on the airfield of the flying club in Maślów.

duties.”⁹ “Fatherhood is the responsibility for life: for life at the beginning conceived in the woman’s womb, then born, in order to let a human being appear in it, a human being that is blood from your blood and body from your body.”¹⁰ “There is no doubt that the public authorities have in the area of education their rights and duties, since it is the well-being of all people. Nevertheless, they cannot stand in for the parents, since the mission of the authorities is to provide support to the parents, to help them fulfill their rights and obligations connected with raising children in accordance with their religious and moral beliefs.”¹¹

The above quotations from the numerous speeches delivered by Saint John Paul II in a fundamental (principled) manner remind about the order of social and family relations, which can in a holistic, complementary and proper way be conducive to the development of the child. Moreover, they indicate toward the role and position of a given country and its agencies in this process. If it is currently suggested that the equality of relationships of people of the same sex with heterosexual ones, then in an evident way we separate ourselves from the natural motherly and fatherly obligations and the context of raising a child in the natural presence of two parents of different sex. Any erudite and intellectual measures are not capable of leveling the qualitative difference in exercising motherly/fatherly educational service by a woman/a man, and a person assuming the feminine/masculine role. Both within the somatic and physiological area and the emotional and mental one, different predispositions, individual features, adopted lifestyles, interaction strategies and types of socialization environment are visible, which has a serious influence over the quality of the process of child development. The consequence of this type of changing of roles or role changeability (their fluidity) come to light on several planes of the process of shaping the individual’s self-image, starting from:

- somatic and physiological area (physiological functions, natural behaviour, typical ailments);
- sexual and identity area (gender identity, sexual behaviour);
- sensual area (self-awareness of one’s body, its erotic preferences and changeability);
- area of social competence and taking up social roles;
- area of interpersonal relations and social bonds.

The child, who remains under the influence of the pressure of cultural correctness, is forced into a reality, which promotes and strengthens

⁹ JOHN PAUL II on June 13, 1987 Speech to the Women in “Uniontex” in Łódź.

¹⁰ JOHN PAUL II on March 19, 1981 during the Holy Mass on Liberati stadium in Terni, Italy.

¹¹ JOHN PAUL II on November 2, 1982 during the Holy Mass for Christian families in Madrid.

a belief and a behaviour that is in opposition to Art. 14, point 1, Art. 14, point 3, and also Art. 19 points 1 and 2 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. What constitutes an example here is a coverage and media productions, and also the functioning of institutions (including the country) and organizations, which by taking into consideration the postulates of minority groups aim at dominating over the broadcast, annexing more and more socialization and educational agencies and through them publicizing their minority beliefs. Not only is such a situation the usurpation of pestering ideas but also a cultural and civilizations invasion, which the Country authorities either do not react to or quietly support (vide the examples of “Ponton” sexual educators and/or the activities undertaken by the Minister’s Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment or the Ombudsman for Children).

We are in a dichotomous and schizoid situation, in which, on the one hand, the Convention on the Rights of the Child is postulated and announced, and on the other, an activity, which destroys and shatters this dignity, rights and respect, is promoted and practiced. We have to acknowledge that in such a situation we have to fight for their (children) rights, speak about them loudly, broaden the circle of those, who are willing to participate in multiplying their happiness and good existence.

3. Civilization and cultural danger for the childhood and the child

In the previous consideration I indicated toward the examples (Bulgaria, Syria, Israel, African countries) of a total interference in the fate and the existential safety of children. The contemporary instances are so numerous that what seems essential is a global review of the social attitude toward the phenomenon of childhood and children. The insincere submitting of an ever growing number of new postulates, the original aim of which is to change the fate of the youngest ones, does not find a real reflection. To conclude it in a playful way, it is “giving empty promises.” Many of those, who are responsible for the world politics, and therefore are in possession of the “keys” to a feasible change of its fate, remain in a blissful conviction that the successive resolutions, standpoints and declarations are enough to make it happen. They ignore and/or force out the evidence, arriving from far and wide, of the disastrous situation of children and teenagers all over the world.

Amid those which cannot be ignored any longer are those connected with:

1. Exploiting children in the current armed conflicts, which results in the mortality of children as the war victims, using them as human shields, maltreating them, using them as suicide soldiers (from the UNICEF report: “In the period from January 2010 until March 2013 fourteen cases of *using Palestinian children as human shields and informers* were reported. The children were forced to enter possibly dangerous buildings before the soldiers, or forced to stand in front of military vehicles to prevent them from being pelted with rocks”).¹²
2. Abusing children’s sexually, both during armed conflicts and also situations when armed conflict is not present (the UN report, which described the atrocity, which young Syrian go through, when they get behind bars: “Even 14-year-old boys are abused sexually by intelligence and army officers, who employ such a way to extort the confession of one’s guilt. An alleged sympathizing with the opposition is often the guilt. The tortures, which the children are subjected to — beating, electrocution, sexual tortures and threats — do not differ from those employed in case of adult prisoners.” What is frequent is the sexual abuse of girls by soldiers and Shabiha (armed militia in support of the regime) during the attacks on cities, in prisons and at checkpoints. The rebels kidnap and rape girls from places accused of supporting the government).¹³ An element, which completes this unwanted landscape are statistics suggesting the engagement of the youngest ones in the prostitution business, as well as using them as organ donors, so creating a network of bad adults, for whom the child is precious as long as his or her body can be taken advantage of for financial purposes.

A different symptom of a difficult position of children and “troublesome childhood” are indicators, which suggest that many families live on the verge of poverty. Unemployment, poor education and a large number of children to support are the most serious factors that generate poverty. Families that live in poverty find it difficult to guarantee the fundamental needs of the children. Starting from securing food, clothes, schoolbooks and school utensils, through ensuring appropriate living conditions and finishing with the realization of the ever growing social and cultural needs of the children. The studies clearly show a significant and a non-decreasing scale of children malnutrition in Poland. In 2010 over 130,000 children required extra food. With such a result Poland comes in third

¹² Cf. <http://www.kampania-palestyna.pl/index.php/2013/06/22/onz-oskarza-izrael-o-torturowanie-palestynskich-dzieci/>.

¹³ Cf. http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,14094577,Okaleczane__gwalcone__torturowane__Raport_ONZ_nt_.html#ixzz3PsLtvhLw.

in the European Union, just after Bulgaria and Romania. The poverty of children is not only the issue of childhood in poverty. It is also the problem of inheriting poverty, which leaves entire families on the margin of the social life for a long time.¹⁴

Within the category of extreme symptoms of people's degeneration in behaviour and attitude toward the weakest ones, since in case of the youngest ones successive examples could be provided, and we want to focus on the causes of such a situation, the crucial cultural and civilization accelerators, which, I believe, have influence over the "increase" of these negative phenomena are:

- dehumanization of interpersonal relations (Ortega y Gasset, Z. Bauman; A. Giddens);
- disintegration of social bonds aggregated around the predominance of the "human person," family as the foundation of the social development, while shifting toward commercialization and calculating (McRizer; B. Barber, M. Hobschfeld);
- disparity in the global development, with a clear dominance of the rich north in the face of an ever bigger economic deterioration and impoverishment of the south, with the consequence of this disparity in the shape of a mass exodus of people;
- implementing the elements of "new axiology," connected with dismantling of the current definition of a traditional family, as a relationship of two people of different sex, and moving toward radical gender trends, leveling them with civil partnership and introducing an acceptance for distinctness (in the past deviation) to the public circulation, which today are, according to the order of political correctness, alternative ways of expression and "communicating oneself."

These elements (naturally it is not an exhaustive list) are not in itself devastating. They become such only when a personal factor is added, so the attitude of those, who in the face of the above mentioned changes show disorientation (are lost, and therefore they do not know how to behave in the presence of such situations and how to interpret and understand them) and/or neophytic zeal of those, who after abandoning their recent normative and moral equipment, uncritically take the new ideas or fashions as a model. Apart from that it is worth highlighting that promoting new ideas is achieved nowadays with a significantly greater dynamics than in the past. It is an effect of the mediatization of modern times, placing in the global internet network, which is an environment that

¹⁴ E. TARKOWSKA: "Children Poverty in Poland." In: *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Poland: National report of the Polish Social Watch Coalition and the Polish Committee of the European Anti-Poverty Network*. Warszawa 2011, pp. 57—62.

“absorbs” every content, gives it “space” and justifies it, which causes a situation in which the desired content, which is conducive to development, neighbours content which shatters the gentleness, innocence, frailty of the nature of a “pure human being” (*tabula rasa*).

A different element, which supports the process of the destruction of the modern times normativeness is the social awareness of the *impunity* of those, who commit infamy, sinfulness and crime. No matter how the human dysfunctions and entering into the circle of crime is interpreted, be it as sinfulness, immorality, crime, what we lack here is the evidence that would suggest that the *global community* — mankind — does not want such behaviour. It is accompanied by the abandonment of consequences, leniency toward the perpetrators, imperfection of the support and protection of victims, with simultaneous enormous profits from this business and not distancing ourselves from those who accumulated their fortunes on the wrong done to the children!

4. Concern for the child and childhood as a social and moral task

Taking into consideration the incohesion of the activities undertaken by people/institutions, in the face of the regulations of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, the following should be regarded as justifiable:

1. Creating real (as opposed to virtual) and functional pressure groups, which would exert pressure on decision-makers to make sure that the institutions, departments, structures they manage respect rights and principles, the signatories of which they are! Even if what I refer to seems completely obvious in modern times there is a predilection for questioning axioms, among others, to negate the Kotarbiński's concept of pragmatics in action. Therefore, declarations are often given but not so often implemented.
2. Undertaking activities, which are possible in a personal perspective, so acknowledging that the world can be changed by starting from oneself, from taking the first step toward the direction that is desirable. Since sometimes the global perspective captivates us and/or suggests us that in a personal conviction “nothing will change, since what does my voice regarding the children in Syria, or Benin mean” — we withdraw into apathy, doing nothing. After some time we do not hear the cries of the suffering people, images of executed bodies, or evidence of

victims — we select the content. Since I do not have any influence — I force out the existence of the phenomenon, problem, state. Becoming insensitive to their misery, we leave them for the oppressors and torturers, who owing to the feeling of impunity enter into more and more dim levels of crime. A recommendation here is the appeal to act every time when we are aware of a crime, misdeed, falsehood, or evil.

3. Continuing the perspective of activities, which are in a personal reach, what seems primary is to undertake activities, which become the antithesis of *abandonment*, so a situation in which the child is not sufficiently groomed, cared for, has a feeling that he or she does not mean anything for anyone! It develops better in a conducive, loving, stimulating environment of its own family, which is complete, traditional, based on mutual respect and mutual love.

This line will for sure make a great many Readers to bridle, however, it is not about blocking oneself to this content because of ideological reasons, but about becoming aware that not all that has the “certificate of modern times” is in itself precious and useful. Similarly as with some methods or sensitivity that were the standard of everyday life in the past does not disqualify them because of their historicity. Despite the fact that this paragraph can be perceived as petty, in the face of the global perspective of analyses connected with the rights of children, it seems worth referring to the *priority* of having a child by Parents and for the Family. For I assume, taking into consideration the cultural and civilization differences, as well as economic circumstances, that the primary feeling, which remains ahead of procreation is love and responsibility. In the nature of a relationship of two people of different sex, is the hope for offspring. I believe that it is more often the fruit of well thought-out decisions and call for motherhood and fatherhood, than coincidence. Both states (fatherhood and motherhood) ennoble man, sublimate him or her, under the condition that their quality is flawless. Therefore, the recommendation is the concern for noble parenthood, its richness and a “full-time” character, so adopting the *predominance* of the child’s presence and its fate in his or her own life and family life, over egoistic, narcissistic nature of a man called for freedom from everything.

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JACEK KURZĘPA

Social Determinants of the Significance of a Child in a Micro- and Mezosocial Perspective

Summary

The author touches upon the subject matter of the rights of a child within the vista of the social conditions in the micro and mezosocial perspective. In the initial part of his considerations he indicates toward the challenges that the ageing society has to face, as well as evokes the phenomenon of love — as not only an ontic value but also biological and demographic. A natural destiny and biology of the body is ageing, we should accept such a natural consequence, which for ages has been difficult and led toward negation and acknowledgement that nature can be cheated, or improved. As a result new offers appear, be it within the scope of medicine (medications that help preserve the potency regardless of the age) and also beauty and plastic surgery, which subjects to correction the natural flabbiness of the skin, its senile spottiness and naturalness. What follows the possibilities and technologies is genetic engineering and modification connected with conception, creating new life, as well as its deprivation (euthanasia). The new possibilities kindle human passion, dream of perpetual youth, deny and disclaim the law of nature. They strengthen these “dreams,” elements of cultural narration, which talk people into recognizing new axiology, accepting every “modality” of the current ethical, moral, legal and customary axioms. What also appears within the scope of the “dreams of eternity” is the necessity of commercializing emotions, interpersonal bonds, using human embryos, organs, exploitation of children and their abuse. In spite of the proclamation of rights and respect toward Human Person, regardless of age, the letter of law and declarations are not a sufficient guarantee to protect and care for children and childhood effectively.

In the evoked, numerous examples of destroying the nature of childhood and treating children atrociously, the Author reveals claptrap and ineffectiveness of signatories of manifold documents and declarations on the one hand and touches upon the issue of our individual, personal responsibility for the fate of the youngest ones on the other. He emphasizes, both by generously making use of referred ideas conceived by Saint John Paul II, as well as by referring to Janusz Korczak, or Ellen Key, that the fate of the child is in our, adults’ hands. Therefore, if “our adulthood grows wild,” it is difficult to hope that we will behave properly and accordingly toward those who are weaker, smaller and dependant. In the face of the above, our adulthood, in its humanistic dimension, *must* continuously become better, more mature and also more beautiful, in order to meet the challenges which we face and which are connected with protecting and caring for the youngest ones.

JACEK KURZĘPA

Déterminants sociaux de l'importance de l'enfant dans la perspective micro- et mésosociale

Résumé

L'auteur aborde la question des droits de l'enfant dans la perspective micro- et mésosociale de leurs conditions. Dans la première phase de ses réflexions, il démontre les défis qui se profilent devant une société vieillissante et rappelle le phénomène de la jeunesse comme une valeur aussi bien ontique que biogéographique. Conformément aux lois de la nature et aux processus biologiques, l'organisme vieillit et l'on devrait accepter une telle séquence naturelle, ce qui est quand même difficile depuis des siècles. Cela étant, une attitude visant à contester et reconnaître que l'on peut tromper ou corriger la nature paraît séduisante. Par conséquent, surgissent des propositions non seulement dans le domaine de la médecine (des moyens permettant de garder la puissance sexuelle indépendamment de l'âge), mais aussi dans le domaine de la médecine esthétique qui corrige la laxité naturelle de la peau, sa tacheture et sa naturalité. Ces possibilités et technologies sont appuyées par la génétique et les modifications liées à la fécondation, à la création d'une nouvelle vie ainsi qu'à sa privation (euthanasie). De nouvelles possibilités enflamment les passions humaines et le rêve d'une jeunesse éternelle ; elles nient et contestent les lois de la nature. Les éléments de la narration culturelle renforcent ces « rêves » et convainquent de la nouvelle axiologie, de l'acceptation de toute « modalité » des axiomes éthiques, moraux, juridiques et ceux de mœurs qui étaient en vigueur jusqu'à présent. Dans le courant des « rêves de l'éternité » apparaît également la nécessité de la commercialisation des émotions et des liens interpersonnels, l'exploitation des embryons humains, des organes et des enfants ainsi que leur abus qui, quant à lui, devient de plus en plus fréquent. Malgré la proclamation des droits et du respect envers l'être humain — sans distinction d'âge —, la lettre de la loi et les déclarations ne constituent pas une garantie suffisante pour protéger les enfants et prendre effectivement soin d'eux et de leur enfance.

Dans de nombreux exemples rapportés liés à la dévastation de la nature de l'enfance et au traitement cruel des enfants, l'auteur, d'un côté, démontre le verbiage et l'inefficacité des signataires de nombreux documents et déclarations, de l'autre, il soulève la question de notre responsabilité individuelle et personnelle du sort des enfants. En puisant amplement dans les pensées du Saint-Père Jean-Paul II et en se référant à Janusz Korczak et Ellen Key, il souligne que le destin de l'enfant se trouve entre les mains des personnes adultes, c'est-à-dire entre les nôtres. Si « notre maturité devient sauvage », il est difficile d'espérer que l'on se comportera comme il faut à l'égard de ceux qui sont plus faibles, plus petits et sous notre dépendance. Cela étant, notre maturité — dans sa dimension humaine — doit sans cesse devenir meilleure, plus mûre et plus belle pour surmonter les défis qui se posent devant nous et qui concernent la protection et le soin des enfants.

Mots clés : enfant, droits de l'enfant, déterminants sociaux, menaces civilisationnelles et culturelles

JACEK KURZĘPA

Le cause sociali determinanti della rilevanza del bambino nella prospettiva micro e meso-sociale

Sommario

L'autore intraprende il tema dei diritti del bambino nella prospettiva micro e meso-sociale dei loro condizionamenti. Nella fase iniziale della sua riflessione indica le sfide che dovrà affrontare la società che sta invecchiando, e ricorda anche il fenomeno della gioventù come valore sia ontico, sia biologico-demografico. Il corso naturale del destino e della biologia dell'organismo è il suo invecchiamento e dobbiamo accettare questa sequenza naturale, cosa che da secoli è peraltro difficile, quindi pare allettante il cammino che porta a negarlo e a riconoscere che è possibile ingannare o migliorare la natura. Di conseguenza appaiono non solo proposte nel campo della medicina (mezzi che permettono di mantenere la potenza indipendentemente dall'età), ma anche nel campo della medicina estetica che sottopone a correzione la normale flaccidezza della pelle, la sue macchie e la naturalezza. Vengono in soccorso alle possibilità ed alle tecnologie la genetica e le modifiche legate alla fecondazione, alla creazione di una nuova vita, come pure alla sua privazione (eutanasia). Le nuove possibilità accendono le passioni umane, il sogno dell'eterna giovinezza, negano e smentiscono i diritti della natura. Gli elementi della narrazione culturale rafforzano tali "sogni" che convincono le persone ad una nuova assiologia, all'accettazione di ciascuna "modalità" degli assiomi etici, morali, giuridici, di costume finora validi. Nella corrente dei "sogni di eternità" appare anche la necessità di commercializzare le emozioni, i legami interpersonali, l'utilizzo degli embrioni umani, degli organi, l'uso dei bambini e il loro sfruttamento diffuso. Malgrado la proclamazione dei diritti, della stima e del rispetto nei confronti degli esseri umani, indipendentemente dall'età, la lettera della legge e le dichiarazioni non sono una garanzia sufficiente per proteggere i bambini e per prendersi cura di loro e dell'infanzia in modo efficace.

Nei numerosi esempi citati di devastazione della natura dell'infanzia e di trattamento crudele dei bambini l'autore da un lato presenta l'ampollosità e l'inefficacia dei firmatari di molteplici documenti e dichiarazioni, mentre dall'altro solleva la questione della nostra responsabilità individuale, personale per la sorte dei più piccoli. Sottolinea, sia fruendo generosamente dei pensieri di san Giovanni Paolo II, sia riallacciandosi a Janusz Korczak o Ellen Key, che il destino del bambino si trova nelle nostre mani, ossia degli adulti. Se quindi "si incrudelisce la nostra età adulta" è difficile sperare che ci comporteremo in modo debito e corretto nei confronti di coloro che sono più deboli, piccoli, dipendenti. Visto quanto sopra la nostra età adulta, nella sua dimensione umanistica, deve divenire sempre migliore, più matura ma anche più bella, per vincere le sfide che dovremo affrontare nel proteggere e avere cura dei più giovani.

Parole chiave: bambino, diritti del bambino, cause determinanti sociali, pericoli legati alla civilizzazione-culturali.