

Selected Representations of the Phenomenological Orientation of Polish Pedagogical Thought

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Abstract

This article indicates the basic premises and differentiating contexts that underlie the conceptual specificity of phenomenological pedagogy. In this context, three original positions of phenomenological orientation in Polish pedagogical thought have been presented. In accordance with their specific features, the first position refers to the phenomenological problematization of issues related to pedagogical axiology in a particular way, the second position refers to issues associated with pedagogical teleology, while the third relates to matters connected to pedagogical anthropology. Each of these positions is based on original theoretical solutions that have raised interest and initiated discussion on phenomenological pedagogy in Polish literature, beginning in the 1980s.

Keywords

Polish pedagogical thought; phenomenology of education; pedagogical axiology; pedagogical anthropology; pedagogical teleology

Introduction

In the relevant subject literature, a distinction can be made of different receptions of phenomenology with regard to sciences of education and different motives of phenomenological philosophy,¹ which became a central point underlying the receptions. However, when we mention various receptions of phenomenology, we can mean different types (concepts) of phenomenology and also their interpretation from the perspective of specific social sciences. In the first case we can differentiate, for example, eidetic phenomenology, transcendental phenomenology, existential phenomenology or hermeneutic phenomenology (Spiegelberg 1994, 696–699, 111–113, 380–386; see also Spiegelberg 1975, 54–71). The other case should cover psychological and social receptions of phenomenology, which from the perspective of these sciences has been interpreted and applied under specific attitudes and research procedures. Those field-related – psychological and social – receptions

¹ Wilfried Lippitz specifies five such motives identifiable in sciences of education in the German literature, connected with different „variants” of phenomenology-oriented pedagogy and its representatives. The motives include: 1. „descriptively depicted experience”, 2. „reinforcement of the philosophical mind”, 3. „transcendental consolidation of the unity of the sense of experience and cognition”, 4. „experience of the world of daily life”, 5. „discursive and critical motif of the genealogy of interpersonal human diversity” (Lippitz 2005, 1123).

of phenomenology, merging with pedagogy immediately arouse the problem of mediation of phenomenology and its interpretation which is specific from the point of view of a specific field of knowledge. The manner of exploring phenomenological issues can be also considered taking into account its specific conceptualizations demonstrated by different philosophers, such as Martin Heidegger, Max Scheler, Roman Ingarden, Alexander Pfänder, Hedwig Conrad-Martius, Dietrich von Hildebrand, Nicolai Hartman, Karl Jaspers, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jan Patočka, Emmanuel Levinas, Bernard Waldenfels, or Jean-Luc Marion, who – identifying themselves with specific findings of the phenomenology precursor Edmund Husserl, and polemicizing with others – have given to it specific features and understanding.

The first representatives most closely related to Husserl and attempts of referring phenomenology to pedagogical issues include Aloys Fischer, Friedrich Copei, Edith Stein and Eugen Fink. The full bloom of phenomenology-oriented pedagogy in the German language literature was connected mostly with pedagogical and anthropological studies and the so called “anthropological breakthrough” which was chiefly inspired by the Dutch pedagogue and psychologist Martinus Jan Langeveld and the German pedagogue and philosopher Otto Friedrich Bollnow. Moreover, the stances of Werner Loch, Käte Meyer-Drawe, Wilfried Lippitz, or Max Van Manen (Krüger 2005, 97–102; Meyer-Drawe 1997, 157–162; Danner 1998, 141–169) can be also considered as representative for the broadly understood phenomenological studies in the relevant subject literature – various forms of phenomenology in pedagogy and specifications of research issues made within its scope.

In the Polish subject literature, receptions of phenomenology, not to mention even the research attitudes of phenomenology identified at the source, are rare (see Przybylski 2007; Gara 2009; Sosnowska 2009; Ryk 2015; Przanowska 2019; Krupska 2021; see also Gara 2015; 2016; 2017a; 2017b; 2019a; 2019b; 2020). Similarly, the manner of talking about phenomenology, if at all, comes down to a few slogans and statements that are as enigmatic as superficially comprehended. In most cases the receptions do not differentiate any statements and postulates of phenomenology considering its conversions, development and different variants being their product. Therefore, sources of phenomenological thinking and phenomenological investigation techniques are to a great extent insufficiently identified. Despite the evident gaps in the Polish subject literature, it is important to note some significant attempts to make references to different phenomenology motives connected with its diverse “forms”. Remarkable works include among other things the works² of Władysław Cichoń (axiological orientation of the “pedagogy of the life-world”), Jacek Filek (teleological orientation of the “pedagogy of the life-world”) and Krystyna Ablewicz (anthropological orientation of the “pedagogy of the life-world”).³

² The following presentation of selected concepts is based on parts of the work published in Polish (Gara 2009, 28–36).

³ An assumption can be made that the works of the authors mentioned here is linked, considering specific elements and emphasized issues to the circle of the „Cracow philosophers” such as: Roman Ingarden, Józef Tischner, Władysław Stróżowski, Jan Galarowicz, Adam Węgrzecki, Andrzej Połtawski, or Tadeusz Gadacz (see: Gara 2009, 29–36). Of course, the most influential figure should be considered the disciple of Edmund Husserl, the original and important for the development of phenomenology R. Ingarden. (See: Cichoń 1995; Ablewicz 2020).

Axiological orientation of the “pedagogy of the life-world”

Władysław Cichoń (1924–1987), philosopher and pedagogue, involved with the academic circles of the Jagiellonian University, performed his analyses referring to phenomenological stances of Roman Ingarden and Max Scheler. His scientific works did not go unnoticed, winning recognition in the philosophical and pedagogical circles in Cracow (Adamski 1996, 5; see also Ablewicz 2001b). Theoretical studies undertaken by the author in his postdoctoral dissertation are focused on stressing the importance of axiological issues for the theory of education. Values are manifested both in specific contents, methods, and aims of educational impact, which represents a prerequisite for considering axiologically (Cichoń 1980, 123–125) the issues of the theory of education and the process of education. At the same time the theory of values represents for him a point of departure for the theory of education and an unquestioned foundation, which constitutes the “identity” of education. The issues of the theory of values and the theory of education should be thus treated inseparably as “axiological and educational” issues.

Values are something for which an educationalist should undertake his/her activity, and also something s/he tries to cultivate in an alumnus. They are also something that on the one hand arouses human dilemmas and conflicts, and on the other hand – makes it possible to overcome them and represents a basis of the ability to live a full and artistic life, the ability which should be acquired with the help of the educationalist (ibid., 5).

This “axiological and educational” perspective of research attitudes of the author is based on the assumption that “a human being as a subject and object of education” has his/her own specific characteristics, of which their presentation allows for looking more closely at a human being and the process of his/her education.

Therefore, the formulated pedagogical ideals and the design of the pedagogical practice must derive from “the understanding of the axiological specificity of the human nature” (ibid., 6). This understanding makes the knowledge on human education in its fundamental axiological intentions touch upon anthropological issues. Identification and understanding of the “pedagogical sense of axiological issues” opens thus the way to look for an answer to the question on the *conditio humana* and the ontic structure of a human being (ibid., 6; see also Cichoń 1987). In response to questions phrased in this manner, W. Cichoń attempts to search for “constituted moments” of a human being and his/her personal dimensions of being for which the concept of a person plays a role in the “discretionary centre of a human being” (Cichoń 1995, 212; see also Ablewicz 2020, 5–9). Even the mere term of the “process of education” – according to W. Cichon – reveals “some non-pedagogical features and aspects”, revealing before us its specific intentions which do not fall within the narrow (mono-)disciplinary logics of approaching pedagogical problems. Such a state of affairs makes it necessary to go beyond the point of view of pedagogy in analyses of the process of education, reaching sciences which both formally and materially determine its philosophical fundamentals (Cichoń 1980, 117–122).

Axiological interpretation of the process of education by W. Cichoń is tightly linked to him exposing the axiological stance inspired by the phenomenological theory of values by Max Scheler. Paths of the theory and practice should include the objective and hierarchical order of values and personal uniqueness of a human being, which is called upon to transcend environmental dimensions of his/her being in order to make himself/herself a personal being.

To be a human being [argues the author in this manner] is above all to act in the name of the highest values considered to be specifically human. This gives rise to an important and exceptionally responsible task for the theory of education. Education is to help an alumnus to become as good as possible, it is to make it easier for him/her to realise his/her own humanity and achieve goals resulting for him/her from the perfection of the choice of positive social and moral values (Cichoń 1996, 164).

Justifications of postulates and goals referring to the theory and practice of education become in this case a resultant of the “axiologically understood idea of a human being” (ibid., 170), for which only the spiritual dimensions of life (“sphere of spirituality”) make it possible to fully experience and cognitively explore “higher levels” of universal values: “The educationalist, cooperating creatively in the development of the alumnus’ personality, should enter with him/her – in the ongoing process of common efforts – newer and newer walks of spiritual life opening the way to new forms of values” (ibid., 165).

Teleological orientation of the “pedagogy of the life-world”

Jacek Filek (born in 1945), philosopher, related to the Jagiellonian University, has aptly, as it seems, operationalized in his work (Filek 2001; see also Filek, 1984a; Filek 1984b) phenomenological assumptions for specific research uses, via which he has carried out eidetic analyses of the phenomenon of education by negatively contrasting it with pseudo-education. Basing on the method of making such analyses it is possible to identify some similarity to the analyses of Adolf Reinach, connected with the theory of negative judgments. In the attempt of “thinking into the nature of the act of education” J. Filek makes an assumption that “education as education” always has a structure of “acting-and-experiencing”. A point of departure for his deliberations is the issue of the structure of education, which is composed of the “subject of action” and “subject of experiencing”. In the case of each of the subjects there is a phenomenon of “cleaving” into direct and indirect subjects. Education understood from the perspective of somebody who acts seems to be also different from the perspective of somebody who experiences it. The subjective position of the person acting and experiencing determines the specific way of feeling and perception of one’s participation in educational situations. Potential tension occurring here reveals at the same time the educational necessity of constituting the unity of the time of “acting” and “experiencing” (Filek 2001, 86–87).

J. Filek, referring in his analyses of the phenomenon of education to the theory of (pseudo)objects by Aristotle,⁴ strives to throw some light on the general theory of education from the perspective of negative ideas. At the same time, he makes an assumption that both discovering the essence of the object, and discovering the *pseúdos* of the object are complementary to each other, and each of these activities, undertaken in isolation from the other one, is doomed to failure. Therefore, it “is not possible to find out what pseudo-education is, not knowing, what education is, but it is not possible either to get to know what education is not identifying pseudo-education” (Filek 2001, 102). In this context the author differentiates four types of pseudo-education: inadequate education, fictional education, alienated education, hobbling education. Inadequate education is defined by not considering specific situations in which there is precise adequacy of undertaken educational interactions. Fictional education should be understood in the sense that the link between acting and experiencing one’s own actions, and also feedback to the actions is broken up. Alienated education is expressed in the manner saying that its aim is something different from the development-related wellbeing of the subject experiencing it. And finally, hobbling education consists in the domination of the experiencing subject by the acting subject by using his/her material or formal advantage. Forms of pseudo-education distinguished in this manner seem to be education, but by nature they are not any education as they do not fulfil the functions education should implement. The first type of pseudo-education implies the interactions which do not make allowances for their situational contexts, the second one emphasizes the disintegration of the unity of “acting” and “experiencing”, the third one puts stress on the fact that educational interactions do not serve the goals of education and are treated instrumentally. And finally, the fourth type makes an assumption that education is a method of securing the interests of the authorities and is used by stronger ones to gain control over weaker ones. According to J. Filek the issue of illuminating the forms of pseudo-education should be considered as a key issue for the phenomenological theory of education, as simulated education which remains unidentified can occupy the place of authentic education and displace it (ibid., 100–115).

Anthropological orientation of the “pedagogy of the life-world”

The works of Krystyna Ablewicz (born in 1957), like in the case of W. Cichoń and J. Filek, a pedagogue linked to the “Cracow circles” and the Jagiellonian University, have contributed a great extent to the introduction and popularization of general phenomenology ideas and phenomenology-oriented studies in the Polish pedagogical literature. In this sense they represent significant and pioneering achievements for Polish pedagogical thought and the theoretical extension of research horizons. K. Ablewicz represents hermeneutic and phenomenological studies in pedagogy inspired by O. F. Bollnow and M. J. Langeveld and other representatives related to the “anthropological breakthrough” and phenomenological profile of “anthropological

⁴ “Contraries [proves Stagirite] falling under the category of relation explain themselves by relating to each other or in any other way; for instance, the double is double in relation to something else for it is the double of something else (...) Those terms, then, are called relative, the nature of which is explained by reference to something else” (Aristotle 1990, 55).

pedagogy”. Beyond any doubt her works display also a link with the philosophical stance of R. Ingarden and his phenomenological results of studies.

In her doctoral dissertation K. Ablewicz identifies herself with hermeneutic and phenomenological research attitudes, assuming at the same time that they cannot come down to methodological issues (Ablewicz 1992). The hermeneutic and phenomenological approaches, treated jointly, have to express something different (Ablewicz 1998, 25–26, 41) – a specific attitude to a human being, e.g., empathy and understanding (Ablewicz 2006, 183), which can finally be reduced to the issue of responsibility:

The act of responsibility [proves the author] gains a specific meaning in the situation when a human being is interpreted as an experiencing being. The educationalist becomes somebody who experiences themselves, but at the same time is responsible for experiences of the alumnus and for the reflection resulting from them and built above them. This understanding of educational situations does not fulfil even the merely functional role of the method – the tool of learning, but becomes [an understanding attitude] deeply rooted in the educating person. It expresses his manner of being-in-the-world, and more specifically in the world of educational situations (Ablewicz 1992, 95).

Central categories, around which K. Ablewicz focuses her attention, and which structure the character of her studies, can be believed to include “natural experience” and “educational situation”. Raising the issue of the “natural experience” she makes an assumption that it should be differentiated both from experiencing something and also having information about this. This experience is not tantamount to the perception, as perceptions cannot be separated from the subject, and therefore, the object-related aspects merge completely with the subject-related aspects, exist for themselves and do not constitute any prerequisite for learning anything. However, experience involves intellect, and this makes some specific changes in the life of a human being happen, constituting at the same time a basis for learning something or understanding something. Experience cannot be reduced to having knowledge about something because given the fact that such knowledge can be transferred to somebody, while transferring it, it is not possible to automatically transfer experience. Experience involves the subject’s presence in something that is the object of the experience, and information can be acquired “over a distance”, and the direct character of the participation in something which relates to the knowledge is not a condition for having it. In this sense knowledge about experience is not tantamount to experience: “My experience is not directly constructive for any other, as everybody has to repeat them on their own, feel [them personally] and live through them on their own. It is not the case that I can replace somebody, e.g., a person related to me in experiencing them” (Ablewicz 1993, 71–72). Experience understood in this manner becomes a basis of reflection on the “educational reality”, and the creative role of “educational situations”, because the sense of the situations has to be checked in relation to the specific type of experiencing – related to maturing and development of a human being. Participation in an “educational situation” – the subject’s presence – becomes a source of experiencing education

both by the person educating and the person being educated. This participation gives rise to a specific relation which based on the common experience of an “educational situation” constitutes different types of perception of this situation. In the case of the person educating, it is the perception and experience of bonds of responsibility for the person being educated, and in case of the alumnus it is the perception and experience of bonds of trust towards the educationalist (Ablewicz 1992, 95–98).

The character of the studio research undertaken by K. Ablewicz in her doctoral dissertation (Ablewicz 2003b) seems to be a natural consequence of studies undertaken previously. Referring to the achievements of anthropological phenomenology-oriented studies it is believed to be justified to separate them from two other basic ways of analysing anthropological issues basing on pedagogical fundamentals. In this manner the profile of phenomenological studies (called “*anthropological pedagogy*”) has to be distinguished from “*pedagogical anthropology*”, becoming the profile of “integrative” studies (“*pedagogical and empirical anthropology*”) and the profile of studies which uncovers “hidden concepts of a human being” (“*pedagogical and philosophical anthropology*”) (ibid., 55–79. See also: K. Ablewicz 2002b). The profile of studies of “*pedagogical and empirical anthropology*” is based on the integration of results from various scientific disciplines (e.g., biology, psychology, sociology, history) into the “comprehensive knowledge” on a human being, revealing at the same time the assumptions of the empirical nature. The profile of studies of “*pedagogical and philosophical anthropology*”, revealing the prior assumptions relating to a human being (his/her “example”, “picture”, “model”), becomes at the same time “frontier knowledge”. Thus, it is assumed here that as much as empirical knowledge about a human being becomes a reference point for the development of philosophical anthropology, the philosophical knowledge about a human being becomes an autonomic source of the knowledge, which cannot be expressed and identified by empirical approach (Ablewicz 2003b, 55–61). In contrast to that the profile of studies of “*anthropological pedagogy*” is expressed in the intentional orientation to the specific phenomenon of the human existence treated as a single representation. A key issue is also the fact that it is not any specific conceptual understanding of a human being that is a point of reference and the object of the research focus, but it is just starting to deal with anthropological and philosophical issues in order to refer them to processes of growth and educational development of a human being as a source of knowledge about human things (ibid., 67; see also Ablewicz 2001a). “*Anthropological pedagogy* – explains K. Ablewicz – is characterized in the first place by taking some cognitive perspective (and also specified methodological stance)” (Ablewicz 2003b, 68). In this sense a human being and the adequacy of observing him/her from an appropriate cognitive perspective and also methodological attitude are the basic issues: “The issue of the possibilities of getting to know a *human being in the process of education* becomes the basic pedagogical task” (Ablewicz 2002a, 86). What is more, it should be believed that the basic “methodological rule says that it is the object demonstrating to the researcher the appropriate method of getting to know it” (ibid., 87). Therefore, it could be said that the approach is a reflection “astride” generalizing philosophical judgments and practical knowledge, to be seen in the process of education, “[interested] in the experience of life and world of life” (Ablewicz 2003b, 69; see also Ablewicz, 2003a).

Based on such assumptions, K. Ablewicz also initiates her own study of educational situations, taking into account in its scope the issue of the “natural experience”, issues related to learning the educational situation, its anthropological and axiological dimensions and the issue of experiencing and realizing the world of values. Experiences of daily life unveil above all before a human being the issue of the existential importance of values and choices made in their context, as the experiences are a specific “medium” of the values (Ablewicz 2003b, 137–267).

Conclusion

The discussed representations of the phenomenological orientation of Polish pedagogical thought also refer to the method and specific issues of the philosophical tradition of phenomenology to varying degrees. In a certain way, they may be considered classical representations in Polish pedagogy. They manifest the three basic areas of research interest and the theoretical solutions formulated within them. Each of these representations also appropriately concentrates on its own aspect of considering pedagogical problems. In the first case, we primarily consider questions of values and their meaning in the context of pedagogical interactions. Meanwhile, in the second case, we reflect on the goals determining the proper sense of pedagogical interactions. Finally, in the third case, attention is given to portraying a manner of understanding people and the role pedagogical interactions play in implementing the possibilities of human development.

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