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Multidisciplinary Journal of School Education

**Good Practices and Challenges
Regarding the Fostering of Resilience
in Educational Settings**

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Editorial

Today's reality of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity requires the constant adaptation of both individuals and communities to the world around them. At a time when situations and events are highly unpredictable, and when there is a need to respond to the volatility of the reality around us, we offer another issue of our journal with the leading theme of "Good Practices and Challenges Regarding the Fostering of Resilience." The wellbeing of any human being, especially a young person or a child, is the goal of effective education. As we can read in one of the articles in this issue, people are faced with constant changes, many of which generate stress. Therefore, resilience is useful for everyday functioning. The authors of the articles within, in analyzing the crisis that contemporary society is experiencing and referring to various research areas, look to resilience for adaptive solutions. Strengthening resilience, they claim, can take place through a variety of activities, such as sport, outdoor activities, art classes, adventure activities, problem-solving games, dancing, singing, reading, social volunteering, or learning a foreign language. In educational contexts, enhanced resilience is needed to face the stress generated by learning mathematics, for example. The importance of the family and non-family environment in the development of mental resilience is also discussed in this context. In these texts we find not only various situations requiring resilience, but also examples of biographies that can provide educational tips for enhancing resilience. Those biographies contain elements of good practice of applying resilience to life situations that are challenging for the person involved. Thus, enhancing resilience seems to be a practice that should not disappear from the field of educational activities.

We also invite you to read the articles in the Miscellaneous section, which deal both with issues related to research in the field of education and with different perspectives involving educational activities.

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Thematic Articles



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“Learning to Learn” as a Way of Making the Most of Experiences of Failure

Abstract

This article focuses on the educational principle of action as a means for personality development. In a climate of self-improvement and reflection, well-prepared educators can guide children and young people to be able to learn from the experience of failure in their lives. In particular, we analyze the extent to which the doing-doing methodology proposed by Tomás Morales in his work *Forja de Hombres* [Forge of Men] can contribute to the development of the key *personal, social and learning-to-learn competency*, incorporating the Sustainable Development Goal of Health and Well-Being.

Keywords: comprehensive education, active methods, personal, social and learning-to-learn competency, Sustainable Development Goals, self-improvement

Introduction

The sociocultural context and the health context in which we are currently immersed means that “people are faced with constant changes, many of which generate stress,” as described by the Spanish Resilience Institute (n.d.). These stressors include changes in social relationships; parental job instability, which affects children; lack of motivation to find

meaning in life; family conflicts; and the pressure for social success, which determines who is deemed valid and who is not. These factors place a greater burden on those who, for various reasons, are in a situation of vulnerability, such as minors or young people who have not yet developed a strong and secure personality. Therefore, contributing to the development of a mature and balanced personality is once again one of the main challenges for education in all its spheres: family, school, informal, and state. As the Spanish Resilience Institute (n.d.) again points out, “equipping children and young people with emotional, cognitive, and behavioral skills leads us to strive for more holistic education.” This is not a novel idea, as many educational efforts and options have already been generated to this end; however, it may serve to reinforce or update its position as a priority, helping to balance the value we place on other objectives, such as the mastery of technical advances or the acquisition of new virtual realities and languages. We can all contribute to the promotion of the right to health and well-being, what is nowadays called *healthy living*, and we can start by adopting lifestyles ourselves that are more respectful of human nature. While not touching on the efforts that the competent state authorities will rightly need to take – in our opinion, especially in terms of investment and financial support – we would like to focus on the important aspect of personality formation and the role of educators – mainly families and teachers – in the formation of learners’ characters.

1. The development of skills to better manage life:

Learning to learn

Where to start? Social changes require support, as recommended by the European Council (EU, 2018), so that everyone can achieve the key competencies for their personal and social development, with all the implications that entails. Furthermore, in Point 3.2 of its recommendations, it commits to “supporting teaching staff, as well as other stakeholders who support learning processes, including families” (EU, 2018), and it is therefore appropriate to help these institutions to comply with these

recommendations. Among all the key competencies, this study can highlight *personal, social, and learning-to-learn competencies* for improving life management.

The development of personal potentialities – which are not identical in everyone – offers the person a vocation and calls them to leave the initial point where they currently are in order to, in the expression of Domínguez (2007, p. 9), “go further.” This personal process involves a journey that respects each person’s unique nature, resulting in the most original version of each person. This process of maturing leads to each person developing the ability of learning how to learn. In exploring the core competencies for the development of a full and happy, and therefore healthy and balanced, personality, this work pays close attention to learning to overcome adversity in life. For what real life has no adversity? In other words, we see the importance of learning from failures in order to emerge stronger from them, to grow as a person, in a word, to mature along with life’s realities. This will not happen by merely reading about concepts of resilience or listening to lectures on resilience – which can certainly help – but rather it is something that requires *action*. As such, we focus on two elements that foster the development of these skills and personality: action and the relevant role of the educator.

1.1. Action as a means of personality development

The process of personal maturation referred to above requires self-education and self-empowerment as its fundamental resources. This means that this process cannot be replaced by another person. For example, a mother, father, or educator cannot take their child or pupil’s place in the process; if the child or young person is not given sufficient space in this process, they will not mature. The protagonist of the action is an autonomous, self-regulated subject who does not limit themselves to merely acquiring knowledge, but drives it, and along with procedures and attitudes, gives rise to the acquisition of competencies.

The need to view the learner/pupil as the protagonist of their own learning, in which personal experience plays a central role, became a central educational approach starting in the 19th century. From authors

such as Dewey, Kilpatrick, and Bovet himself, who coined the term *active methodology*, to modern study plans, there have been and there continue to be many initiatives and methodologies working towards this, though with unequal success, it should be acknowledged. The reality is more complex than it may seem at first sight: a certain natural resistance appears in the person (Blanco-Navarro, 2020, p. 151), a tendency toward passivity, especially when energy needs to be expended in a cooperative way, so it is also necessary to educate in this sense of *activeness* and *working with others*. Properly understood, activeness could mean students active in reflection and thought construction, or attempting to produce a scientific text. On the other hand, it could also involve people merely moving from one place to another, driven by an active form of laziness, avoiding a task that is in fact a priority for them because at first it seems tedious or boring. We refer to *activeness* not as the production of external works, but in the sense of “operation,” of “building oneself in the inner forge of one’s own consciousness” (Titone, 1981, p. 53) as a guiding educational principle that emphasizes the cultivation of inner individuality centered on the experience of the subject.

Over the centuries, the combination of this educational element of action and various anthropological conceptions has resulted in the emergence of various pedagogical forms and new methodologies that seek to take it on board. These include the more personalized conception of education put forward by García Hoz (1989), which highlights the *person’s* capacity for *action* through *reflection* and involves two principles, *thinking* and *acting*, united and committed to one another, going beyond mere activity. We recognize that these proposals are very much in keeping with the reality of the human being understood as an open being (see Blanco-Navarro, 2021) with the capacity for transcendence, called to go beyond oneself and confront reality: things, ideas, circumstances, *others*, and history.

1.2. The role of the educator as a motivator and driver in self-improvement

It may seem contradictory to insist on the importance of developing learner autonomy while emphasizing the relevant role of educators:

parents, teachers, or other responsible persons; however, we should not forget the initial protective role they play at an early age, during infancy and childhood. Faced with this reality, the question is to what extent and in which aspects this protection should be continued without being overly protective. Overprotection results in a high degree of immaturity in coping with difficulties, which makes the child more vulnerable and less able to develop resilience in the event of a traumatic situation. Strengthening autonomous development is key in these situations and it is here where educators can make use of other key factors: the transmission of values such as reflection, constant daily work, and learning how to prioritize fundamental objectives for each individual. The existence of "empty spaces" in a child's life, spaces in which not everything is decided about what they must do, in which they have time to be left to their own devices, will allow them to develop creativity, which in turn will allow them to face the adversities that arise in their day-to-day life.

From this perspective, the intervention of educators as children and young people grow up is more a matter of transmitting incentives than of giving directions. It consists of motivating the learner to carry out certain activities that they would not undertake on their own initiative, such as those related to the world of culture – reading books and listening to or playing music. At this point, we should mention the influential role played by the mother figure of neurosurgeon Ben Carson in the film *Gifted Hands* (Carter, 2009), since it is based on real events. The woman had no education, yet was able to transform her children's school habits in such a way that they act autonomously, with the positive results that this entails in their schooling process, to the point that one of them achieved excellence.

Any experienced educator will confirm that this balance is not easy to achieve: the tendency to dominate by coercion ("do this because I tell you to") or to supplant ("I'll do this for you so we can get this over and done with more quickly"), leads us to consider that eliciting collaboration, or getting others to do it, is an art. We often find among educators and authorities (family, school, and society) that people are more willing to "give it their all" than to take a step back and encourage others to take

responsibility or delegate work. The consequence of this situation is expressed graphically by Tomás Morales in one of his works: “untapped potential” (Morales, 2003); a youth and childhood devoid of resistance, we might say. This educator was able to integrate what he had experienced so many times in dealing with the young people he was leading or training into a pedagogical principle called *doing-doing*, helping them to integrate more actively into society. This is a case that we will explore in more detail as an experience of how it is possible to carry out personalty development with learners.

2. Teaching to think by doing – how a few were forged and how many more can be forged

As indicated above, this section will focus on the experience of Jesuit pedagogue Tomás Morales (1908–1994) with the intention of looking at the methods and tactics he used with the young people he trained, given that his actions stemmed from a deep conviction about the value of youth and the priority of character formation in education.

What will become of a world comprised mainly of young people with no one to guide them, without educators to shape them, living role models in whom they can see an ideal of life reflected? Only truly educated people, educators who are not afraid to make demands of themselves and others, with a strong ideal in their hearts that drives them in their lives, can answer this worrying question. And those people are none other than the young people of today, the young people whom we, as their educators, have to train for the enormous task that awaits them. (Morales, 1987, p. 7)

Their educational action is non-formal and falls within the current of Christian personalism. It is linked to an active methodology based on “teaching to think by doing once the subject reflects on lived experiences” (Gómez, 1998, p. 277). The author did not intend to develop a theory of

learning or to create an alternative system to the one proposed in his time, but he started working in the 1950s with the young people he was leading, and time proved him right. One of his works, *Forja de hombres* [Forge of Men], first published in 1966, was inspired by the experience of those years (1946–1960). It was expanded and republished several times along with the experience of the following years (1987) until 2008, when it was presented in a compendium, "Pedagogical Works," as the second part of the collection *Life and Work of Tomás Morales, S.J.* It has been translated into English, German, Italian, French, and Polish.

It presents the educator as a compass, with four cardinal points that can guide their actions: I) Mystique of demand, II) Fighting spirit, III) Cultivation of reflection, and IV) School of constancy. All of these are involved in the tactic of *doing-doing*, which consists of allowing the young person to act, guiding their action to be orderly, fruitful, and for the good of others; to do this, it is essential that the educator knows the young person. Logically, if we apply this to childhood or adulthood, the degree of delegation or responsibilities must be commensurate with their reality. Experience shows that people who are included in or delegated a task or responsibility – even a simple one – feel like they are part of that activity, company, community, or family and they contribute their best. This is what some of these young rebels experience in today's secondary school classrooms, when their teacher – still trained directly by Morales – gives them "secretarial" tasks in the classroom, giving them the confidence from which they can begin to propose challenges to overcome themselves. More latent energies are given the opportunity to surface, and in most cases, unknown potential is awakened. This global approach is discussed in more detail below.

2.1. Action as a competence – the doing-doing methodology

After looking at the need to prioritize the promotion of harmonious personality development, we proceed to pointing out a concrete way to help achieve this: action, going beyond mere theory or discourse about the value of knowing oneself, of developing one's own potential, or how important it is to appropriate new resources in the face of difficulties.

The aim is to confront the subject with reality in such a way that they are forced to intervene, and in this way, to put into action their personal resources. Morales is clear about this, and when he brings the children together to propose an objective, they must first organize and then act. Learners are discouraged from finding problems with everything and encouraged to work using proposals and initiatives. Each of them leaves the meeting with a task and, in this way, all the young people involved will have to do their best and will feel like members of a team. Over the years, this approach would become, with experience, a methodology of its own. Let's take a closer look.

The title Gómez (1998) chose for a study on the pedagogy of Tomás Morales, in which he presents the methodology, is significant: "Article one. Doing-doing. A response to a problematic reality" (p. 302). The author explores the historical context in which this mode of action is proposed: young people infected by a trend for convenience and minimal effort, the consequence of the poor education received with these approaches, which leads to a lack of thinking and a tendency to refuse to work. This is the logical and repeatedly demonstrated consequence of these principles, and we can therefore question the substantive validity of such a policy proposal. These approaches are contrary to the effort that generates joy, the self-improvement that leads to personal development, and the discipline or rules that allow a person to exercise their freedom in safety.

Faced with this problematic situation, but also confident in young people's potential and aware of the disastrous results that authoritarianism had led to in those environments, Morales proposed a practical alternative through educational action in groups, as a means of encouraging collaboration. "The aim is to stimulate others at work, distributing tasks, controlling needs, and exercising discreet and paternal authority" (Gómez, 1998, p. 302). Pre-planning and a long-term project are necessary, as is simple but practical programming on the part of the educator to enable people to manage their own work. It is about allowing them to do, to take initiative, to take responsibility, to fail, and to succeed. If we are afraid of this, we run the risk of settling into infantilism, of succumbing

to the idols of consumerism, of a comfortable, convenient life without finding meaning. Morales offers this methodology in the non-formal sphere, while calling on the relevant social institutions to promote educational models that teach people to think. Currently, some research projects related to the training and involvement of future teachers are inspired by this methodology. One expression of this is the work coordinated by Ramos (2020) which offers educational workshops for schoolchildren. The workshops are carried out by trainee teachers in cooperation with the research group *Innovación y Metodologías Docentes para la Enseñanza y Aprendizaje (Fray-Innova)* (*Innovations and Methodologies for Teaching and Learning*).

The starting point for this pedagogue by trade, therefore, is reality. The young person or child in question must be taken as they are in order to lead them patiently to the comprehensive development of their potential. And from there, they launch into action: an action that is thought-out and proportionate to their strengths, in which they are the protagonist and will have to be held accountable. This is certainly a risk, the risk of relying on inexperienced youths to galvanize them into action for the common good. However, it must be considered that the key to the success of this procedure – validated by experience and still used to train teachers through the annual Pedagogical Classrooms – lies in the confidence that the educator places in the potential of the learner, overcoming first impressions and employing a great deal of patience. It is not a question of disengaging once it becomes clear what needs to be developed; it rather consists of the educator choosing a discreet place from which to keep track of the person to whom they have been delegated, encouraging them when necessary, getting to know each of them in more and more depth, and guiding and, if necessary, correcting them. This requires the educator to *forget about oneself* and to allow others to shine. Experience taught this character builder that if you act with tact and patience, young people become involved in the action, so that they acquire responsibility and thus enhance their qualities, while they themselves will influence other young people, multiplying the action. This is still the experience of those who, having personally assimilated this style

of self-improvement, do not allow their students to complain in class and guide them to see the positive aspects of situations; the initial expressions “what a drag” and “why do we have to do that” before a task are corrected with “that’s good, that way we learn more” – or in their student jargon, “cool, that’s great, that activity is great.” Progressively, the young people themselves assimilate this disposition, so that intervention from the educator is less and less necessary in this aspect. The children even transfer it to their family environment, to the surprise of their relatives.

Having accepted this method of action, we analyze the work in which our author’s experience was collected through various tactics, as we believe we are analyzing an example of acting while bearing in mind the reality of the situation.

2.2. *Forja de Hombres*, a mature work and the age-old question of *how*?

“How some men were forged” (Morales, 1987, p. 15) is the inspiring idea with which Morales’s work begins in its dedication. The age-old question of *how* already seemed to be intuited by the author himself, who continues the sentence by adding “and how many more can be forged.” In order to understand this work, it seems necessary to consider some preliminary information regarding its conception, its audience, and the historical context of the time.

2.2.1. Some preliminary aspects to understanding *Forja*

As we have already indicated, we are not dealing with an *a priori* reflective writing, in the form of a program or action plan to be implemented later on. “*Forge of Men* is a book that matured in the heat of a passionate experience made the object of constant reflection,” writes the prestigious pedagogue García Hoz in the prologue to the book (Morales, 1987, p. 11). As the ripe fruit of the tree, we enjoy in this book the *a posteriori* reflection on the author’s work with hundreds of young people in an ecclesial apostolic movement. Thus, one characteristic that requires consideration is that the training had an added benefit for both the educator and the learner related to the life of grace, i.e. that which is specific to a person who has

been baptized. However, the basics are inherent to the person, and this is a common denominator for every human being. Therefore, it is possible to transfer most, if not all, of the person-oriented training. Finally, we should bear in mind the historical context of the experiences narrated in the original work, as some realities may be shocking in our times or may no longer exist; likewise, we may find that some examples related to the reality in which children and young people live today are lacking. One of these elements, for example, refers to his constant use of the term "man/men," due to the fact that at that time he only worked with men, though it was gradually extended to include women as time went on. However, this should not cause any problems in understanding the meaning of the work. What is most important is the person; the experiences of other educators show that the procedures are still valid and relevant (e.g., Abilio de Gregorio, 2007).

The written work brings together many experiences with young people under the apostolate and character formation, detailing the commitments that the young *militants*¹ or sympathizers of the movement had to take on, how they had to overcome the human aspects, what to do in the face of apparent failure, the repercussions that this action had on their own lives, etc. As García Hoz points out in the substantial prologue to the fourth edition, a multitude of experiences are described "with varied ways of doing things: study circles, youth missions, marches and camps, spiritual exercises" (Morales, 1987, p. 11), arranged according to the four cardinal points of the compass described above. We leave it to the reader's curiosity or interest to read them consecutively, or to choose them from the table of contents; in this way, we are applying the principle of not supplanting the personal process of each individual. The following is an analysis focused on some of the aspects that are characteristic of the realist pedagogy proposed by the *forger of men*, Tomás Morales.

¹ This is the name given to those involved in the youth movement called *Militia of Saint Mary*.

2.2.2. Effort brings about joy and this requires a *fighting spirit*

Together with the group methodology of *doing-doing*, which necessitates the educator giving up the spotlight, we highlight the spirit of self-improvement, which in Morales we can identify with what he calls the *fighting spirit*. It has nothing to do with violence, harm, or destruction. It is an inner disposition, "an inner attitude that pushes the soul to be in continuous and serene tension of will, constantly fighting a great battle with itself" (Morales, 1987, p. 103). He then goes on to specify where he believes young people need to face tension: "The young person must be educated in the fight against laziness, sensuality, fear, curiosity, vanity, the pressing desire to always look good, [and a] lack of control of the imagination and sensitivity" (Morales, 1987, p. 174). Undoubtedly, it is a "battle" that cannot be won by an educator who is not equipped with the courage to make demands of himself and others, avoiding two opposing and equally paralyzing poles: perfectionism and paternalism.

A central idea in Morales's pedagogy thus emerges: "effort begets joy" – the natural spontaneity in education contrasts with the joy gained by the effort of a job well done. We must accustom them to courageous and daring action, to swim against the tide so as not to be swept away by their own passions and by the dehumanizing environment, which invites us to renounce our values. It should come as no surprise to readers of this article that some of these educators impose the obligation to arrive at the school half an hour before the morning start time for those who, for the third consecutive day, have arrived late for class; in addition, they will have to carry out social service tasks for the school itself during this time. Or that a management team frees the tutors of children from the age of 10 upwards to have several hours a week in which to carry out personal tutoring. During this tutoring meetings when faced with tasks performed incorrectly or with a certain laziness, when faced with unachieved objectives, they dedicate personal time to these students, one by one, so that they can repeat the task, looking at how to improve it, or encouraging them to try again, setting achievable goals, extending – as Blanco (2009) indicates – "the exercise of tutoring to all aspects of the teaching/learning process" (p. 115) and of personality formation. These

tutoring meetings encourage those who feel they have failed or made mistakes to start again with the inspiration that apparent failures can become a springboard for improvement.

So important is this aspect of overcoming failure that one of the headings of the cardinal point of the fighting spirit is entitled "knowing how to fail." In it, Morales alludes to the fact that the first battle must be fought above all against the fear of failure, as a primary objective for the educator, which requires a great deal of serenity. In our opinion, this is a very interesting section, since it first warns of the consequences that failure can have on a superficial soul, such as apathy, distrust, lack of motivation, or discouragement. In this case, the educator will have to expend greater energies than in the case of more profound spirits who know, on their own, how to discover new challenges in the face of negative or unexpected results. And he dares to take his proposal one step further: Not only should they not be surprised or discouraged by failure, but they should come to rejoice in such situations, which will enable them to grasp the value of failure itself. This disposition will allow us to discover with objectivity, and without blaming others, the reasons that led to this situation. It may be a poorly defined objective, having used the wrong means, being carried away by improvisation, working without a method, excessive theorizing, not having left a wide enough margin of responsibility and initiative, etc. On a personal level, failure makes us more humble, docile, cautious, and aware of reality and this provides a greater capacity for empathy in social relations with others.

The book shows in its experiences how young people are sometimes successful in their goals and sometimes not; the difficulties and fears that arise are not omitted, but the prevailing spirit is that of victory, which is found not in success but in the trying. The simile of the fountain is used to explain this: "The fighting spirit is like a fountain; it springs spontaneously if it bubbles up inside me" (Morales, 1987, p. 104). Curiously, the term *resilience* cannot be found in the text; this is a term coined in the field of mental health, based on research from the late 1980s, in which – as Morell, Barrero, and Martín (2017) point out – interest arose from the fact that people and families who had suffered extreme difficulties (abandonment,

domestic violence, abuse, or others) overcame these vicissitudes. Subsequently, research in psychology, child protection, and even social skills has led to a general interest in this term, considering that all people experience stressful situations of varying degrees of difficulty, ranging from everyday events to life events or truly traumatic situations. In all of them, personal strength-building elements can be discovered that prepare the person to be able to respond successfully. This is as old as humanity itself.

In particular, we can recognize that many of the experiences in the *Forge of Men*, before these issues were described, allowed young people to reflect on themselves, forced them to manage their time effectively, made the work collaborative, and led to the development of resilience in these boys. Good training was combined with action, in which they had to creatively develop ways of initiating or guiding a conversation, taking a critical stance, and making decisions from that stance – all in an atmosphere of joy and self-improvement, which left them feeling good at the end, despite the fact that at times they had to struggle or experience moments of tension. All this was accompanied by a positive, understanding, encouraging attitude toward apparent failures when things did not go as expected or when complications and even persecutions arose. Hence, the analysis of *Forge of Men* can be approached by identifying some of those empowering elements that, in the words of Kateb (2019) create “a protective shield to resist and overcome the obstacles of existence” (p. 11). This is the task we will carry out next.

3. Action helps us to emerge stronger from adversity – some techniques

We are all surrounded by the realities of the flow of life, like the pilgrim who stumbles several times along the way and may even fall on occasion. Who has not experienced this? Tripping up, getting confused, forgetting an appointment or an order, spilling coffee in a hurry – these are all everyday experiences of every *homo viator* on their way through life. The driver who goes over a bump while driving, or the novice speaker

who experiences stage fright – there is no end to the experiences in life that place us between success and frustration, which commit us to making a personal decision of either giving up and backing out or putting more energy and serenity into the next opportunity, or why not, even laughing at ourselves, at our own errors. As Bártoli (2020) points out, "not only are the realities we face in life not good, but often they are simply bad, contrary to our desire and happiness" (p. 130), referring to the need to develop patience on life's journey. For all these reasons, the overprotective environment that sometimes develops in the family or at school, preventing children and young people from having to face the difficulties inherent to their daily lives and proportionate to their current developmental stage, is contrary to this. And it is not only in the face of difficulties that these children and young people are sometimes even prevented from taking on tasks or responsibilities. A kind of goodwill seems to envelop parent-child relationships, as if they were fragile children to be protected from any attack. As a result, they do not know their own potential and are not prepared for the hard knocks of life.

Morales's experience with his students takes a different approach. One of the central objectives of the educational action carried out will be to empower the learner. This cannot be achieved without discovering the potentialities of each of them and helping them to develop that potential to the fullest, like someone who manipulates the switch to turn on a light. This will require the human techniques of irradiation and influence, which the educator must master. We highlight some of those found in the work and how they develop elements that enhance resilience.

One of the most characteristic working techniques was *meeting* as a school for launching and landing action. Finding fault was prohibited here; instead solutions had to be positively proposed with the results borne in mind. This is important in order to avoid two serious dangers that hinder the maturity of the personality of those who attend: destructive criticism – a sign of weakness – and excessive verbosity, due to deficient integral education. This also prevents personal limitations from acting as a brake on group action. Each individual has to learn to own themselves and to be in control of their actions, so that they can cooperate with

others. It requires integrity and the ability to be problem-oriented, applying what they have learned in the past. "Not lamentation, but action" was the *leitmotiv* of these meetings. By learning to live together, we reflect; this encourages us to work together, reviving the ideal. The role of the educator here is of great importance in order to generate the confidence and security needed to continue in the action, analyzing beforehand any obstacles that may arise and interfere with the process.

These life experiences were an impetus for the protagonists and, not infrequently, served as a testimony for others, when they listened to the experiences of their peers in another of the techniques used: *assemblies*. In these large group meetings, at the end of an activity or before starting it, experiences were shared and, once again, it was necessary to excel in public speaking and overcoming desire and fear. An underlying idea was held in the face of the desire to complain or give up, when discouragement reared its head: "Never tire of always starting." We do not know the origin of the phrase, but given Morales's broad culture he would probably have read it somewhere. What is certain is that he taught it as a way of life and lived it, which is why today it is recognized as being uniquely linked to him. What was the result of these experiences? The young people were excited to have done something for others, surprised and very happy to discover their own potential, encouraged to start a new task in the face of goals – achieved or not achieved – and reflective as they used difficulties as a springboard. Along with this impulse, the educators in these schools proposed stories of sportsmen, musicians, explorers, young people, or characters in general who had to face very difficult situations in their lives and managed to overcome them. An example of this for older children is the book *No Excuses* by the weightlifting champion Kyle Maynard, or the story of the eagle who did not want to be a chick for younger children. At the same time, these educators avoid using songs or stories that incite sentimentality or withdrawal into oneself.

The main techniques include an *examination of conscience* at the end of the day, as a key element of reflection. This is an individual action of introspection, in an atmosphere of silence, in which each person takes stock of the fundamental aspects of the day's events, becoming aware of the

positive aspects that deserve gratitude and the failures (in terms of the intentions set for that day), especially with regard to the reform of personal character or dealings with others. This technique is essential for self-knowledge and to find the roots of difficulties one faces, from which all other failures tend to spring. As a final point of this stock-taking at the end of the day, which should take about 15 minutes a day at a fixed time, learners try to devise self-correction or a resolution for improvement for the following day, which keeps the person not in a spirit of defeat, but in one of overcoming each day as a new opportunity. This element is key in the educational proposal of Tomás Morales and Gómez develops it further in his study on the pedagogy of this author, defining it as "detail of personal improvement related to the root of the failure" (1998, p. 200) and including it in the method of learning by personal discovery.

Marches and open-air camps stand out among the actions proposed in *Forge of Men*. Camps with a profoundly educational purpose are still held in Spain, Germany, and the United States, annually in the summer or holiday months, following the book under study. Contact with nature brings multiple benefits in terms of a physically and mentally healthy life, which in a way forces us to live more austere (we cannot carry everything in our backpacks) and in which the possibility of overcoming a goal together with our companions promotes the spirit of collaboration and altruism. The recreational activities most commonly used to foster resilience, according to Barquero and Enith (2015), are sports, outdoor activities, artistic activities, adventure activities, problem-solving games, dance, singing, community volunteering, performing dynamic arts, and evening recreational activities. Through these types of activities, due to the constancy and dedication they require, different aspects come into play and interrelate, such as the emergence of new challenges, the acquisition of new skills that can strengthen self-confidence, socialization with peers in an uninhibited way, the clearing of the mind, the capacity for self-expression, critical thinking, conflict resolution, cooperativeness and discipline, the development of coordination skills, empathy, mobility, creativity, and many other valid tools for the development of resilience. Joy is often one of the most highly prized goals in overcoming

the proposed challenge of hiking, or climbing a peak, without it becoming an athletic competition, but rather an experience of friendship. Singing, silence, and good humor play a fundamental role in these activities, which we highlight below as elements of strength in the face of adversity.

The demand for *silence* at certain times does not at all refer to keeping quiet about whatever negative thing might have happened, or taking refuge in not exposing it so as not to complicate one's life. On the contrary, this silence is for the brave and requires and forges the capacity for personal self-control to understand that on a daily basis there is a time for silence and a time to speak. It is more about acquiring the ability to *know how to behave* and to create the necessary atmosphere for calm reflection on what is happening or the possible consequences of one's decisions. Silence allows us to look at reality objectively, to listen to others, and to discern the signs of the times. After prolonged silence, the person is better prepared to communicate more profoundly, and even to ask for help in a way that is more appropriate to their needs. From silence we can discover the beauty of so many realities that haste and superficiality do not allow us to appreciate.

Interestingly, the times of silence, prayer, and examination of conscience are combined with singing and good humor. *The songs* that are interspersed at different times reflect this spirit of joy and self-improvement. From the mountaineering song "¡Ánimo, pues, ánimo pues, que la montaña es mantequilla!" to songs of their own composing, or the more frequent custom of modifying well known songs with their own lyrics. All this is an exercise in creativity and initiative, as well as the ability to reach agreement and the possibility of discovering qualities in some that are not only intellectual. Undoubtedly, there are many anecdotes that, while camping, challenge the young people who participate in these training experiences to get away from themselves and overcome simple actions such as a small intervention in public, in a group, or on their own. In addition, this develops the capacity for empathy, as experiencing difficulties first-hand allows the young person to be more sympathetic to possible weaknesses in others.

As a complement, *good humor* is not only expressed with the songs and jokes at youth evenings, where everyone can participate more or less successfully, but as an accompaniment that adds extra flavor to the action in general. The spirit of self-improvement also means being able to keep smiling in the face of adversity. Sandrin (2018) argues that "humor maintains strong links with resilience ... to cope with difficulties and to grow well as people even in the midst of deeply painful and highly traumatic experiences" (p. 101), which reaffirms the idea proposed here. We know that smiling is universal, that it allows us to establish good relations anywhere in the world, regardless of language. A smile has liberating and positive effects for the person who expresses it and for those around them; smiles make pain more bearable and convey calmness in difficult situations. They have a direct positive effect on one's physical state and increase one's enjoyment of any activity; it is even considered by experts such as Viktor Frankl (as cited in Sandrin, 2018) to be a "weapon with which the soul fights for its survival" (p. 85). The benefits of good humor are therefore many and there is every reason to take fun seriously. This has been considered by some companies in the world of work that have abandoned the *serious business* model to adopt a spirit of professionalism with good humor, obtaining notable results; such is the case of *Yahoo Iberia*, *Southwest Airlines*, and *Pike Place Fish*, where they have found that laughter reduces anxiety and stress and the positive mood helps to prevent depression and other illnesses. In addition, they emphasize the promotion of creativity in solving situations, well-being and a sense of belonging, and even the economic benefits of such enterprises (see Jáuregui and Fernández, 2004).

We can recognize a significant contribution of the experiences narrated in the *Forge of Men* to the competency of *learning to learn* in failure, which leads to a healthy life for the subjects of these experiences. In this regard, Sustainable Development Goal 3 on Health and Well-being (UNESCO, 2017) can help in the ideation and practice of education as human development, especially with regard to prevention strategies, the development of empathy, and the ability to demand, through the expression of ideas and the promotion of policies for health and well-being. Perhaps there are

differences here with regard to what is understood by *well-being*, and we also consider that the proposals made by international organizations for their development do not take into account certain aspects which, from the perspective of this work, we consider to have produced good results. In the establishment of daily routines, for example, references to creating spaces and times of silence, the enjoyment of music and nature, the freedom to be found in austere living and temperance, and the desirability of abstinence at appropriate times are missing, to name but a few elements that stand out in the experiences of the written work and which are undoubtedly a cause of inner joy, the main objective for good health and personal well-being.

4. Conclusions

Education cannot and must not lose its bearings, so let us use the compass. Whatever contributes to the humanization of a person, to their holistic development, to bringing the person to fulfilment with a view to their happiness, must be the aim of education. And it cannot be reduced to other, more partial objectives. In the sociocultural and health context in which we find ourselves, we can identify important stressors that influence people, especially the most vulnerable, among whom we include children and young people, as they have not yet developed a mature personality. As a consequence of this situation, we can identify in the different areas the priority educational challenge of focusing on holistic education that aims to form a strong, balanced personal character.

A contribution to the development of this healthy personality can be found by supporting the development of the key competency of *learning to learn*, so that the learner is able to manage their emotions, decisions, and even life's challenges. In this personal development, we can highlight two educational elements as enablers: action and the role that the educator can play as a motivator. Action puts us to the test and provokes in the person the development of capacities in order to overcome the situations in which we find ourselves or to creatively seek new ways

of dealing with them if previous attempts have failed. If, in addition, this is done in collaboration with others, the experience is more enriching and the forces are multiplied, while the subject gets a clearer idea of their own personality. Letting learners take responsibility is not an easy task, partly because of the educator's desire to be a protagonist and partly because of the learner's own resistance. Only those who have a clear idea of the contribution this makes to the development of their personality, as well as the ability to make loving demands, will be able to involve them in their own development.

As an experience of those who have been able to carry this out, this proposal to strengthen people, especially children and young people, through the educational action of Tomás Morales, as reflected in his book *Forja de Hombres* [Forge of Men], narrates multiple experiences that proved to be valid in the training of young people in non-formal education and which are still valid in families, projects, and individuals – most of which are linked to education. Based on the analysis of the book, we are encouraged to use procedures such as *doing-doing*, action techniques such as assemblies or marches in the mountains. Above all, we learn how to achieve, through various training actions, the objective focus on the learner's gradual self-improvement and the acquisition of a spirit of commitment to oneself and to others. We can recognize various elements involved in this education, complementing with current authors and using the language of the moment, as enhancing the capacity for resilience. These include the capacity for reflection, patience in the face of difficulties, and a sense of humor. All of this is wrapped up in a spirit of self-improvement that is marked from the first moment of the educational action, without having to wait to be confronted with dramatic situations, and as a preventive action in order to be strengthened in the event that they arise.

For this reason, we can recognize a significant contribution of the experiences narrated in the *Forge of Men*, through social competencies, particularly that of *learning to learn in failure*, that leads to a healthy life for the subjects active in these experiences. As we have already seen, by being thrown into the action with more or less experience, young people – and today children with whom this lifestyle is still practiced – develop

a self-awareness that leads them to accept themselves and others, enhance their qualities, become more self-confident, and go out to meet the needs of others and society. These approaches can be strengthened by the institutional proposals made by the major bodies; specifically, the Sustainable Development Goal of Health and Well-being can help to achieve these goals of mature personality development.

We close these conclusions and the article by returning to the initial idea of the current difficulties that our society faces in the socio-cultural sphere. We are committed to the value of forging, little by little, children and young people in the development of a strong personality, through methods, strategies, techniques, and lifestyles that promote personal improvement in small daily habits, which allow them to assume responsibilities at the psycho-evolutionary level of each one. This will be the best preparation for living a happy life, in spite of the sometimes traumatic difficulties.

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Self-education and Resilience: The Case of Agota Kristof (In an illiterate world we are always illiterate)

Autoformación y resiliencia: A propósito de Agota Kristof (En un mundo empalabrado siempre somos analfabetos)

Abstract

It is evident that we live in a world rich in languages and tongues. Such a situation determines that human formation is an open work, never completely finished, because there are always languages and tongues to be known. Hence, the human being can be considered a kind of illiterate, as the Hungarian writer Agota Kristof (1935–2001), who took refuge in Switzerland in 1956, wrote in a short autobiographical account, published posthumously (2004). The example of this author, who had to learn French in order to survive in Switzerland, shows how learning languages strengthens and prepares us to face and overcome extreme life situations.

Keywords: Literature, Pedagogy, world rich in languages, self-formation, resilience

Resumen

Es evidente que vivimos en un mundo empalabrado, rico en lenguas y lenguajes. Tal situación determina que la formación humana sea una obra abierta, nunca acabada del todo, porque siempre quedan lenguas y lenguajes por conocer. De ahí que el ser humano pueda ser considerado una especie de analfabeto, tal como la escritora húngara Agota Kristof (1935–2001), que se refugió en Suiza en 1956, dejó escrito en un breve relato autobiográfico, publicado póstumamente (2004). El ejemplo de esta autora, que tuvo que aprender francés para poder subsistir en Suiza, muestra cómo el aprender lenguas y lenguajes nos fortalece y prepara para hacer frente y superar situaciones vitales extremas.

Palabras clave: Literatura, Pedagogía, mundo empalabrado, autoformación, resiliencia

Introducción

Hace unos años el padre capuchino Jordi Llimona escribió un libro que tituló *Siempre nómadas* (1973). Entonces, se mantenía una polémica entre aquellos que defendían las virtudes del sedentarismo y aquellos otros que, como Llimona, abogaban por un mundo presidido por el nomadismo, una realidad que la globalización no ha hecho más que corroborar. De hecho, el nomadismo también tiene relación con los exilios y las diásporas, con los desterrados y perseguidos, siempre presentes en la historia. De tal manera, que aquel libro de Jordi Llimona nos ha inspirado el título de este trabajo que constata que el ser humano vive en un mundo empalabrado, donde se dan lenguas y lenguajes, y que por razón del nomadismo que nos hace ir de un lugar a otro, como verdaderos transterrados – en el mundo hay millones de exiliados, desplazados y refugiados – nos obliga a ser siempre analfabetos. De ahí el interés de la breve narración *La analfabeta*, de la escritora húngara Agota Kristof (1935–2011), una autora que conoció al final de su vida el reconocimiento por su obra *Claus y Lucas*, que reúne la trilogía formada por *El gran cuaderno* (1986), *La prueba* (1988) y *La gran mentira* (1991), libros que se han traducido a más de treinta lenguas diferentes.

Por lo demás, el ser humano presenta un proceso de autoformación, de antropogénesis al decir del profesor Octavi Fullat (2003), que no concluye nunca, que siempre permanece abierto, lo cual posibilita una perspectiva hermenéutica en el sentido que el ser humano es receptivo a cuantas vivencias y experiencias sean significativas para su formación, o, mejor aún, su autoformación. Por su parte, Romano Guardini, que lideró el movimiento juvenil del *Quickborn*, escribió para la formación de la juventud sus conocidas cartas, dirigidas a los jóvenes alemanes, entre 1921 y 1924. Entre otras cosas, Guardini señaló: «El hombre se forja a sí mismo un destino y le es lícito luchar hasta el último aliento para que ese destino sea ancho y hermoso» (Guardini, 2000, p. 103). Guardini también apunta en la dirección ya señalada por Fullat, en el sentido de que el hombre es libertad y apertura. Pero no por naturaleza, sino que debe conquistar en cada momento esta libertad (Guardini, 2000, p. 119), sobre la base de que «tenemos que llegar a conocernos a nosotros mismos». (Guardini, 2000, p. 120). Además, Guardini, preocupado por la formación espiritual de la juventud, indicaba algunas de las estrategias a seguir: silencio, soledad, descanso y espera como caminos hacia dentro (p. 142). Junto a esto, Guardini remarcaba la importancia de la lengua que es comunidad, que «hace que exista un ámbito común en el que los hombres puedan estar y actuar» (Guardini, 2000, p. 173). Dicho de otro modo: gracias a la palabra el ser humano crea la vida colectiva, el Estado (Guardini, 2000, p. 174). Cuando existe tiranía –como la que aconteció en Hungría con las ocupaciones nazi y soviética– la palabra queda destruida (Guardini, 2000, p. 178).

Si nos centramos en la obra de Agota Kristof, es obvio que desde una perspectiva pedagógica nos interesa el juego de espejos que se establece entre *La analfabeta* y *El gran cuaderno*, que como hemos avanzado forma parte de la trilogía *Claus y Lucas*, dos obras en las que nuestra protagonista refleja muchos episodios autobiográficos, que se pueden completar con la lectura de *Ayer*, un relato también vivencial. De su trayectoria vital, hay que resaltar el periodo de la infancia, que coincidió con los estragos de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, sobre todo por los acontecimientos que se dieron entre 1944 y 1945. No en vano, la biografía de Agota Kristof nos remite a la historia reciente de Hungría que después de conseguir

la independencia del imperio austro-húngaro en el Tratado de Versalles (1919) –una paz cartaginesa, según John Maynard Keynes– fue dirigida por el régimen autoritario del almirante Miklós Horthy que, como regente de una monarquía sin rey, gobernó el país entre 1920 y 1944, cuando claudicó ante los nazis, lo que provocó la invasión del país por las tropas de la Wehrmacht. En aquella coyuntura, Hungría, se convirtió en un apéndice del III Reich con el gobierno títere de Ferenc Szálasi, líder del Partido de las Cruces Flechadas –los nazis húngaros– que desencadenó todo tipo de tropelías, con una persecución sistemática de judíos entre 1944 y 1945. Es bien conocido que entonces el Danubio –que Magris ha descrito con sus paisajes– se transformó en un río de dolor, dado que las víctimas de la represión caían a las aguas fluviales por los disparos de los asesinos. El «monumento de los zapatos» que se erigió en 2005 en la orilla del río es un testimonio impresionante de aquellas atrocidades. Se ha dicho que Budapest se convirtió en una ciudad mártir que recuerda los sufrimientos que Varsovia soportó, ciudades que sufrieron la represión nazi y los excesos de la entrada soviética, sin perder de vista la persecución de los judíos que el embajador español Ángel Sanz-Briz y el italiano Giorgio Perlasca, que se hizo pasar por cónsul español, intentaron poner a salvo, cosa que consiguieron desgraciadamente solo en parte.

No podemos orillar que diferentes autores (Sándor Márai, Arcadi Espada, etc.) han dejado constancia de aquel horror que sacudió la infancia de Agota Kristof que vivió aquellos años en Kőszegi, en una zona rural cerca de la frontera con Austria, cuando la madre se quedó en la capital y el padre marchó al frente. Allí, en aquella población, existía una importante comunidad judía que fue la última que se deportó a Auschwitz y también un campo de trabajo donde murieron docenas de personas que, en los últimos instantes, fueron obligadas a emprender una de las marchas de la muerte, sin contar con la epidemia de tifus, que ya había disminuido la población reclusa. Por lo tanto, Agota vio cómo tras la ocupación de las tropas germánicas, el Ejército Rojo liberó Hungría para imponer un régimen totalitario que practicaba una política de rusificación que afectó al mundo educativo. Naturalmente, este doble proceso –primero de germanización y más tarde de rusificación– hizo que Kristof, como el resto de húngaros,

sufrieran el yugo de las potencias extranjeras, lo que determinó que en la escuela pasaran en pocos años de estudiar el alemán al ruso, el idioma de la nueva ideología hegemónica, que había impuesto el Partido Comunista magiar. Mientras tanto, los húngaros –que ya se habían levantado contra los austríacos en más de una ocasión– protagonizaron en otoño de 1956 un movimiento de revuelta, en favor de la independencia nacional, que ocasionó treinta mil muertos, al ser sofocado por los tanques rusos con la excusa de la firma del Pacto de Varsovia (1955).

Fueron unos acontecimientos que sacudieron la vida europea, en plena Guerra Fría, y que los noticiarios cinematográficos como el NO-DO difundieron con diversos reportajes sobre la Hungría-mártir, un país sacrificado y víctima del bolchevismo (NO-DO, n.723A. del 12 de noviembre de 1956; NO-DO, n.723B. del 12 de noviembre de 1956; NO-DO, n.724A. del 19 de noviembre de 1956; NO-DO, n.724B. del 19 de noviembre de 1956). De esta manera, en Occidente, la causa de Hungría fue la causa de la humanidad, según proclamaba el NO-DO, n.725A. del 26 de noviembre de 1956, mientras informaba del éxodo de población civil hacia Austria y del refugio del cardenal Mindszenky en la legación de los Estados Unidos, donde permaneció refugiado durante muchos años (Mindszenky, 2009). Así se recogió la noticia sobre la entrada del cardenal Mindszenky en la legación de los Estados Unidos, donde permaneció protegido hasta 1971, año en que salió del país. Hay que recordar que el primado de Hungría era prisionero de los soviéticos desde hacía ocho años, si bien fue liberado por los patriotas magiares en los días que estalló la revolución de 1956 contra los comunistas viéndose obligado a solicitar asilo a la embajada americana después de la invasión de los tanques soviéticos (NO-DO, n.725A. del 26 de noviembre de 1956).

Con este panorama, Kristof decidió huir de Hungría con su esposo, que había sido su profesor de historia, y con quien se casó cuando tenía diecinueve años, y una niña de cuatro meses, atravesando clandestinamente la frontera con Austria el 27 de noviembre de 1956. A pesar de que América era el destino buscado, Agota se vio obligada a iniciar una vida de refugiada que la llevó hasta Suiza, a Neuchâtel, donde trabajó en una fábrica de relojes, una tarea mecánica que le permitía soñar con la literatura,

un campo que la había atraído desde época bien temprana, pues tenemos constancia de que escribía desde los trece años. Ahora bien, y ante la necesidad de aprender francés, Agota durante cinco años no pudo leer. «Cinco años después de haber llegado a Suiza, hablo francés, pero no lo leo. Me he convertido en una analfabeta. Yo, la que sabía leer cuando tenía cuatro años» (Kristof, 2015, p. 56). Además, en Suiza empezó a vivir un desierto social y cultural, si bien el francés fue –por un azar vital– la lengua que la convirtió en una escritora de alcance mundial. «Estoy obligada a escribir en francés. Es un desafío. El desafío de una analfabeta» (Kristof, 2015, p. 57). Por la propia dinámica histórica, Kristof arrinconó la lengua húngara, si bien al final de su vida la continuaba hablando, aunque la escribía con algunas faltas.

El itinerario personal de Agota Kristof. Entre la palabra y la escritura

A través de la lectura de su obra, buena parte de los cuales han sido traducidos, tomamos conciencia de que vivimos en un mundo empalabrado, circunstancia de gran repercusión pedagógica, dado que como ha dicho el profesor Enric Prats, la literatura y la pedagogía siguen vidas paralelas, porque «la buena literatura, además de narración y magia, contiene una lección» (Prats, 2016, p. 13). Propiamente, la literatura permite una comprensión o lectura pedagógica que puede contribuir, sin lugar a dudas, a la formación humana. De modo que su basamento teórico no hay que buscarlo solo en la filosofía como muchos pedagogos han expresado, como Fichte y Dilthey, sino también en la literatura, una tendencia que se agudizó cuando la postmodernidad impugnó –Lyotard fue sin duda uno de los apóstoles del postmodernismo– las grandes narrativas, desde el cristianismo al marxismo, que habían dado sentido a la historia de Occidente. Es obvio que este giro narrativo es fruto, a su vez, de otros dos giros, que se implican mutua y recíprocamente. Nos referimos, como es lógico, al giro lingüístico que fue proclamado por la filosofía de Richard Rorty (*The linguistic Turn*, 1967) y por el giro hermenéutico

que autores como Hans-Georg Gadamer y Octavi Fullat han aplicado a la pedagogía, a la vez que proclaman que la educación siempre significa un proceso de autoformación, inherente a la tradición del ideal formativo (*Bildung*) de la Alemania neohumanista (1780–1830), presente en Goethe y en la mayoría de novelas de formación (*Bildungsroman*), una idea que de una u otra manera también se puede encontrar en el pensamiento de Agota Kristof.

Bien mirado, las historias de Agota Kristof nos dan cuenta de la importancia del lenguaje, lo que en su caso viene avalado por el hecho de que vivió en casa la atmósfera de los rituales escolares, porque su padre era el único maestro del pueblo durante su infancia en tierras magiares. Se puede añadir que el estilo de Kristof es breve y conciso, casi telegráfico. Todo es directo y punzante, y aunque a veces parece el reflejo de una realidad que es descrita sin más, detrás de sus palabras se esconden las contradicciones de la condición humana y, muy especialmente, la tragedia de Europa, es decir, el derrumbe de un continente que tras la contienda bélica (1939–1945) experimentó la Guerra Fría, con tensiones culturales e ideológicas que sometieron naciones como Polonia, Checoslovaquia y Hungría al dictado del imperialismo soviético que aún hoy es justificado, a través de un ejercicio de empatía hermenéutica, por algunos historiadores que hacen el esfuerzo de comprender el estalinismo (García Voltá, 2012). En este punto, podemos añadir que Agota recuerda cómo vivió en la escuela el día de la muerte de Stalin (1953), una prueba palpable del adoctrinamiento ideológico que terminó con la creatividad del pensamiento libre.

De tal forma que resulta evidente que la analfabeta –personificada en Agota Kristof– da cuenta y razón sobre cómo vivió en Hungría en plena guerra, cuando el padre estaba en el frente, circunstancia que la familia agradeció por su carácter autoritario, mientras la madre permaneció en Budapest. En este ambiente, ella y su hermano, se transformaron en unas pequeñas fieras salvajes que vivían en el hogar de una abuela imaginaria que no conocía los beneficios de la higiene y que, además, no sabía leer. Hay que tener en cuenta que nuestra autora siempre mezcla la realidad con la ficción, si bien podemos considerar que este estado

de libertad robinsoniana permitió que Agota y su hermano –que en *Claus* y *Lucas* son gemelos– vivieran unas historias a menudo extrañas, tal vez mágicas, y, lo que no es menos importante, practicaban pruebas de endurecimiento con ayunos, ejercicios de ceguera y sordera, de inmovilidad hasta llegar a extremos insospechados, con algunas escenas ciertamente cruentas, como la historia del ahorcamiento del gato, y personajes marginales, como la chica de la cara de conejo. En estas pruebas, se detecta el instinto de supervivencia y de defensa cuando se vive en unas circunstancias hostiles, con el trasfondo de la guerra, sin ningún tipo de seguridad y la presencia en su casa de un oficial alemán.

No puede sorprender, pues, que alguien como Agota, apasionada por la lectura y la escritura, recuerde en sus obras, siempre con referencias autobiográficas, los años escolares. Ahora bien, aquellos años de estudio se interrumpieron por causa de la guerra y los hermanos optaron por seguir un proceso de autoaprendizaje para ir a parar, finalmente, a un internado de la época soviética, en plena etapa estalinista. En este contexto, palabras concretas como yeso, tinta, papel, cuaderno, lápiz, ponen de relieve cuáles son los objetos que configuran un universo escolar que enfatiza la importancia de la lectoescritura. A su vez, este universo escolar necesita el complemento de otros escenarios como puedan ser papelerías, librerías, bibliotecas públicas y privadas, como la del cura del pueblo, para conseguir libros. Nada extraño, pues, que Kristof destaque la importancia de tres herramientas escolares básicas, a saber, la Biblia, el Diccionario y el cuaderno escolar, a las que en algún momento añade la enciclopedia.

Para nuestros estudios contamos con el diccionario de nuestro padre y la Biblia que hemos encontrado aquí en casa de la abuela, en el desván.

Damos lecciones de ortografía, de redacción, de lectura, de cálculo mental, de matemáticas y hacemos ejercicios de memoria. Usamos el diccionario para la ortografía, para obtener explicaciones y también para aprender palabras nuevas, sinónimos y antónimos.

La Biblia sirve para la lectura en voz alta, los dictados y los ejercicios de memoria. Nos aprendemos de memoria, por tanto, páginas enteras de la Biblia. (Kristof, 2007, p. 30)

Como vemos, se trata de toda una declaración formativa en que la Biblia, el libro que se leyó intensivamente durante siglos, sobre todo después de la Reforma luterana, ocupa una centralidad manifiesta. Esto significa que una vez leída se empezaba de nuevo, en hogares donde había pocos libros, e incluso donde no todos sabían leer. De tal manera que este universo escolar y cultural se convierte en la clave de bóveda de un sistema de autoaprendizaje que recuerda al método de Jacotot, aunque ambos hermanos no partían de la nada.

Vamos al colegio durante dos años y medio. Los profesores se van también al frente y les substituyen profesoras. Más tarde cierra la escuela, hay demasiadas alertas y bombardeos. Sabemos leer, escribir, y calcular.

En casa de la abuela decidimos proseguir nuestros estudios sin profesores, solos. (Kristof, 2007, p. 17)

Así las cosas, y dado que vivimos en un mundo empalabrado, la presencia del diccionario se hace imprescindible, ya que constituye una herramienta necesaria para conocer la ortografía y el significado de las palabras. También, y junto a la Biblia y el diccionario, se debe mencionar el cuaderno escolar, que da título al primer libro de la trilogía *Claus* y *Lucas*, nombres ficticios de Agota y de su hermano. En relación a este último punto, cabe decir que Agota en el instituto escribía un diario en húngaro, de manera que los objetos necesarios para el estudio son considerados un tesoro guardado en el desván. «La Biblia, el diccionario, el papel, los lápices y el cuaderno grande, donde todo está escrito» (Kristof, 2007, p. 105). En fin, estos utensilios configuran una especie de fetichismo por la lectura y la escritura, una especie de obsesión presente desde la infancia, un tesoro que hay que preservar y conservar hasta el último momento. No por azar, en muchas casas se guardan todavía hoy los diccionarios

escolares, algunas ediciones de la Biblia y, sobre todo, cuadernos escolares antiguos, como una verdadera reliquia del pasado.

De ahí que Kristof describa un itinerario personal que transita de la palabra a la escritura, con episodios destacables como cuando ingresó en un internado a los catorce años, en un momento histórico en el que Hungría ya giraba en la órbita soviética. En efecto, conviene consignar que entonces, en 1949, los comunistas ya habían convertido Hungría en un país satélite de la URSS, hasta el punto que la educación en aquella coyuntura implicaba un adoctrinamiento a través de los libros de «lectura obligatoria». Así las cosas, después de la liberación soviética, la prioridad de las lenguas también cambió y el ruso ocupó un lugar central. «En los colegios, el idioma de nuestros libertadores es obligatorio, mientras que las demás lenguas extranjeras están prohibidas» (Kristof, 2007, p. 139). Es fácil entender cómo Agota, encerrada en un internado, experimentó un estado de soledad, al permanecer alejada de la familia, mientras el padre estaba en la cárcel. Así se acabó la libertad de movimientos bajo un régimen escolar disciplinario, mientras el frío atenazaba los alumnos en el aula. «En la escuela nos quitamos los abrigos y nos levantamos a hacernos ejercicios gimnásticos para calentarnos cada cuarto de hora» (Kristof, 2015, p. 32). Y en medio de todo ello, Agota –desde una radical afirmación de su yo– comienza a escribir sketches después de haber leído mucho, primer paso de las obras de teatro que escribirá en Suiza.

Naturalmente, en aquel internado que seguía las orientaciones comunistas la lengua que se había impuesto era el ruso, que así entraba en contradicción con el húngaro, una lengua urálica que emplea el alfabeto latino y no el cirílico. En este punto, hay que recordar que Hungría fue un país cristianizado, lo que explica la importancia de la Biblia para nuestra autora que –se quiera o no– se mueve dentro de los parámetros de la cultura del libro (García-Pelayo, 1997). En todo caso, no era la primera vez que nuestra protagonista se dio cuenta de que existían otras lenguas, porque durante su infancia había escuchado el habla de los gitanos, que eran estigmatizados por la sociedad húngara y que fueron perseguidos por los nazis. Tampoco hay que perder de vista que Agota vivió en la zona fronteriza de Kőszegi, donde residía una minoría alemana, por lo que era

consciente de que existían varios idiomas. Con este telón de fondo, Kristof considera que hay lenguas enemigas como el alemán, que desde la época del imperio austríaco había sido impuesta a los húngaros, a pesar del compromiso (*Ausgleich*) de 1867 que dio lugar a la monarquía dual o bicéfala austrohúngara (Fetjő, 2016). Si antes la lengua dominante era la germana, con los soviéticos se imponía el ruso que nadie conocía, ni los maestros húngaros, que tuvieron que adaptarse precipitadamente gracias a cursos acelerados. Desde este prisma, la Unión Soviética ejerció a los ojos de Agota una función etnocida, porque aparte de imponer una economía planificada y una ortodoxia filosófica, intentó ahogar las culturas y las identidades nacionales de los diversos países (Kristof, 2015, p. 40). Es decir, la educación se rusificó no sólo lingüísticamente sino también en cuanto a los contenidos, al ser contaminados ideológicamente, hasta el extremo de afirmar que «de las escuelas sale una generación de ignorantes» (Kristof, 2015, p. 36).

A los veintiún años, en 1956, Agota Kristof llegó a Suiza sin conocer el francés, que primero aprendió a hablar y, años después, a escribir. Entonces se sintió como si fuese una vagabunda, sin poderse identificar en ningún pueblo, por lo que tuvo que salir en búsqueda de una nueva identidad, en tierra extraña y rodeada de un lenguaje desconocido. Tal como ella reconoce, se encontraba inmersa en una especie de desierto, en medio de grandes dificultades económicas, dado que además se había separado de su esposo, mucho mayor que ella. Mientras tanto, la situación de los húngaros en el extranjero se hacía insostenible y algunos retornaban a pesar de las represalias del régimen comunista y otros se quitaban la vida. Así fue testigo de varios suicidios de gente cercana.

La autopsia demostró que Vera se había envenenado con somníferos.

Nuestra primera muerte.

Otras se sucederían poco después.

Robert se cortó las venas en su bañera.

Albert se colgó dejando sobre su mesa una nota escrita en nuestro idioma: «Quedáis despedidos».

Magda peló las patatas y las zanahorias, luego se sentó en el suelo, abrió el gas y metió la cabeza en el horno.

Cuando por cuarta vez se hace una colecta en el bar, el camarero me dice:

—Ustedes, los extranjeros, se pasan la vida haciendo colectas para comprar coronas, se pasan todo el tiempo en entierros.

Yo le respondo:

—Cada uno se entretiene como puede. (Kristof, 1998, *Ayer*, p. 35)

Con todo, ella luchó hasta convertirse en una escritora de obras de teatro que se representaban en cafés y que se leían en audiciones radiofónicas, de acuerdo con los sketches elaborados durante los años de escolaridad en el internado. Aparte, escribió un libro que envió a tres editoriales conocidas y, finalmente, Seuil aceptó publicar la trilogía *Le grand cahier* (1986), *La Preuve* (1988) y *Le troisième mensonge* (1991), que conforman el volumen de *Claus y Lucas*.

Igualmente, otro aspecto a tener en cuenta estriba en considerar la distancia que se da en su literatura entre la realidad y la ficción literaria, entre la historia y el sueño onírico. Tanto más cuando a menudo se asiste a una cierta banalización de las palabras, como ella reconoce. Aunque no podemos profundizar en este aspecto, conviene fijar la atención en la cuestión de la verdad y la mentira, siempre en el umbral entre la apariencia y la realidad, porque en última instancia la verdad también es una invención a través del engaño, que los dos hermanos practicaron a menudo y que Kristof adopta como técnica narrativa. Después de todo, la última obra de la trilogía se titula *La tercera mentira*, en un contexto en que la verdad se difumina como sucede en el mundo postmoderno en el que lo que más interesa es que las cosas sean verosímiles, al margen de si son verdaderas o no. En la entrevista con Riccardo Benedettini reconoce que la abuela es un personaje inventado, «pero su trabajo no lo es» (Kristof, 2019a, p. 77). En la tergiversación siempre permanece algo real y así la línea de demarcación con la realidad se ha diluido hasta hacerse intangible. Hay que añadir, además, que en el mundo postmoderno la frontera entre verdad y mentira, entre certeza e incertidumbre ya no existe, porque

después de la experiencia de los totalitarismos probablemente no hay ningún fundamento (*Grund*) sólido que aguante un mundo que se ha hecho líquido y en el que Dios se ha hecho escurridizo, más aún para una persona como Kristof que vive el descreimiento. En último término, todo son palabras, únicamente palabras, que a fuerza de repetirlas han perdido su significado original, su fuerza originaria.

Conclusión

Podemos colegir que para Kristof el mundo no tiene un sentido trascendente, porque su vida nómada, de húngara errante, la convenció de que el ser humano siempre se encuentra en camino, en tránsito, como si se tratara de un peregrino, una nómada sin otra seguridad que el lenguaje que nos hace siempre analfabetos, porque cuando parece que dominamos una lengua necesitamos otra. El sueño esperantista del Dr. Zamenhoff, un judío polaco que conocía el ruso, continúa siendo una quimera que ha sido imposible llevar a la práctica, salvo algunos círculos minoritarios como los libertarios que propugnaban un ideario internacionalista y pacifista en la línea de Comenio y Leibniz. Y aunque el inglés se ha convertido en una nueva koiné universal, lo cierto que vivimos en un mundo en que conviven infinidad de lenguas y de lenguajes (filosófico, político, técnico, etc.) que nos postra en una situación de indigencia permanente (Ortega, 1966), de analfabetismo sempiterno, de nomadismo lingüístico (Steiner, 2002).

De cualquier modo, hay que notar, que a la vista de lo que escribe Agota Kristof, la vida solo tiene sentido a través de la lectura y la escritura, gracias a la Biblia y a los diccionarios, los lápices y los cuadernos escolares. Añadamos una apostilla final. Para Kristof tampoco hay esperanza escatológica, de modo que el Logos del Evangelio de Juan, según el cual Dios se ha hecho Verbo y Palabra, no es más que otra ficción literaria. Ciertamente, en la literatura de Kristof se detecta un nihilismo que no es trágico sino vital, que surge de las peripecias del siglo XX. No obstante, para hacer soportable este nihilismo contamos con la ayuda de la lectura

y de la escritura, que así se convierten en dos técnicas de supervivencia, mucho más que simples terapias, que ayudan al curso de la vida con valentía y dignidad. En definitiva, los seres humanos estamos condenados a ser unos analfabetos impenitentes que peregrinamos por el mundo en busca de un sentido que se encuentra de una manera empalabrada. No en vano, Heidegger en la *Carta sobre el humanismo* (1946), tras leer poetas como Hölderlin, ya afirmó que el lenguaje es la casa del ser.

Con todo, no acaba aquí la cosa porque justamente el hecho de que el ser humano viva una realidad empalabrada, entre lenguas y lenguajes, permite que pueda ser resiliente ante la adversidad y sobreponerse, aunque sea aprendiendo una nueva lengua, como tuvo que hacer Agota Kristof en circunstancias poco favorables. Por ello, la palabra dicha y escrita contiene un potencial enorme que puede ayudar en la formación humana no solo para ser más competentes en el dominio lingüístico, sino también para poder superar las situaciones límites. En fin, la lectura de las obras de Agota Kristof es muy recomendable para nuestros alumnos universitarios, en aras a alcanzar aquella mayoría de edad –o empoderamiento– necesario para que devengan personas resilientes y puedan enfrentarse, como ella hizo, contra el infortunio y la adversidad, especialmente si se mueven en un plano intramundano.

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Pandemic(s), Crisis, and Bibliotherapy

Abstract

The COVID-19 crisis has led to a re-definition of our lives and a significant de-stabilization of our mental condition. Research shows that we tend to conceive of challenging realities in terms of war and battle: thus, we have struggled with depression, low spirits, and a lack of human interaction. If so, how can we counteract such depressive tendencies? Although today it seems that both writing and reading are efficient in mitigating feelings of loneliness, historical records of the reactions to the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918 reveal that silence and evasion are also possible. Using the method of wide reading, I first examine the divergent responses to the crisis. Through close reading, I then explore the manner in which literature may be therapeutic for both writers and readers. Finally, I argue that the literary choices of the reading public, recently re-directed towards (auto)biographical fiction, may soon impact the canon within education. This, in turn, prompts a final hypothesis concerning a generic re-shaping of a future literary canon.

Keywords: crisis, pandemic, bibliotherapy, literary canon, autobiography

Introduction

The outbreak of COVID-19 may be conceptualized as an unexpected, disruptive event which has rocked the foundations of established daily routines in virtually every sector of everyday life worldwide. Evidence for this has been found in research conducted synchronously in various European countries, most notably in Italy, the second most affected country in the world by COVID-19 (Gennaro et al., 2020).¹ In a report on the current situation in Italy, Gennaro et al. (2020) find it almost impossible to predict the repercussions of the pandemic, and they list the possible outcomes. In consequence, a distinct divide has been created between recollections of the pre-pandemic world and projections for a future reality. Such rhetoric bespeaks the conceptual categorization of the ongoing pandemic in terms of a crisis, with a critical division into a pre-COVID-19/post-COVID-19 dichotomy.

Conceptualization of *crisis*

A simple search on the Internet is proof enough that the phrase “COVID-19 crisis” has established itself permanently in our vocabularies; the state of emergency has now lasted long enough to create the necessary distance between the categories of pre- and post-pandemic. The issue of temporality seems particularly relevant since an event or a situation can only be labelled critical with hindsight, asserts Ansgar Nünning (2012, p. 2). Moreover, Elena Semino (2021, p. 50) argues that the current pandemic has been repeatedly imagined as the front line in a battle: In her research on the current political discourse in Great Britain, the scholar furnishes numerous examples of militaristic rhetoric,² which she dismisses

¹ For more information about Italy’s situation in Europe during COVID-19, see Ortenzi et al. (2020).

² The scholar quotes from a statement on COVID-19 on 17 March 2020 by Boris Johnson, who labels the virus a deadly enemy, or an alien (Semino, 2021, p. 50f). As in Great Britain, in Poland too we have been exposed to such rhetoric: see an article

as both inappropriate and counter-productive.³ Although questioned by scholars, the militaristic metaphors applied in COVID-related utterances are, in fact, used on an everyday basis by both politicians and the general population worldwide; this, warns Semino, can provoke, or even strengthen the feelings of anxiety, fear, and dread.

Investigating the etymology of *crisis* lends a certain legitimacy to the militaristic conception of the recent pandemic. Even though Semino (2021) deplors the war imagery metaphorically applied in the current, political discourse worldwide, the original uses of the term legitimize and justify the military context. A derivative of the Greek verb *κρίνω* – which can mean to distinguish, to decide, or even to win (a battle)⁴ – namely, the noun *crisis* (*ἡ κρίσις, -εως*), is on rare occasions used to denote a decisive moment in a battle.⁵ However, this meaning is not the major application of *crisis* in classical Greek literature, in which the semantics of the battlefield more often refers to the power of judgement, usually during a trial or at court. Thus, the original saliency of the term is not exclusively tied to war; there is also a further context, namely, a medical context that is also a legitimate use of the noun *crisis*.⁶ Interestingly, when used in both of these less frequent contexts – the military and medical – a certain passivity is implied in the use of the lexeme; in contrast to the courtroom,

in *Rzeczpospolita* available at <https://www.rp.pl/Koronawirus-SARS-CoV-2/210409464-Koronawirus-Reuters-o-sytuacji-epidemicznej-w-Polsce-To-jest-wojna.html>

³ Instead of war metaphors, Semino (2021) proposes fire metaphors as being better suited for the COVID-19 context.

⁴ If not indicated otherwise, all references to the Greek lexemes follow information found in *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, available at <http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu>. For the military context, see meanings II, 2 b and c under *κρίνω*.

⁵ See the idiom “*κρίσιν σχεῖν*” – of a war, to be decided – discussed under *κρίσις*, meaning III. Interestingly, it implies a certain passivity as well as contingency in a war *crisis*. By contrast, active espousing is implied in the context of a trial or judgement, as evident in *Crisis*, the original title of an ancient drama which dealt with the judgement of Paris. For more information see <http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu>.

⁶ In the medical context, *crisis* used to imply a sudden change for better or worse; when applied to human anatomy, it denoted the middle of the spinal column; see <http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu>, under III, 2 and IV, respectively.

a *crisis* in a disease or a battle may occur as a result of a series of events unforeseen by a participant – the narrating focalizer – and thus be conceived of as contingent and accidental, without the agency of an external power or action. Thus, the militaristic conceptualization of the current battle against the COVID-19 pandemic is likely informed, although unconsciously, by the etymological legacy of *crisis*.

Pandemic(s): The Spanish Influenza and COVID-19

If the etymology provides a linguistic foundation for the militaristic conceptualization of the COVID-19 pandemic, European history shows that the metaphorical correspondence between the source domain of war and the target domain of disease, though quite common (Semino, 2021), is not a hard and fast rule. Another pandemic and another war fought in Europe a century ago should be considered, namely, the outbreak of Spanish influenza in 1918 (an H1N1 virus),⁷ which coincided with the end of WWI. If juxtaposed, the prescribed codes of conduct and recorded scenarios appear quite similar during both pandemics as quarantine, isolation, and containment measures were strongly advised both then and now. It seems people suffered from the social restrictions and isolation a century ago as in the present circumstances. However, despite the advice, the pandemic in post-WWI Europe was apparently disregarded by the war-worn population: as Mark Honigsbaum (2014) observes, a century ago, people failed “to register the enormity of the death toll from the Spanish flu” (p. 207). Furthermore, the scholar quotes a famous modernist writer, Virginia Woolf, whose fleeting reference to the ongoing Spanish pandemic reads, “we are, by the way, in the midst of a plague” (Woolf, as cited in Honigsbaum, 2014, p. 225).⁸

⁷ According to official data, the virus had spread worldwide by 1919 and resulted in at least 50 million deaths – see the data given at <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic-resources/1918-pandemic-h1n1.html>.

⁸ Interestingly, Woolf also links war and ill health in the quotation, ironically stating, “we are, by the way, in the midst of a plague unmatched since the Black Death,

Today, in the midst of the pandemic frenzy encouraged by the media,⁹ the quotation sounds surprising; nevertheless, its wording suggests that the immediacy of war and its overwhelming presence in the minds of post-WWI Europeans prevented a comparison of battlefield atrocities with a life-threatening flu.¹⁰ Thus, although researchers today propound that the abstract nature of illnesses, both physical and mental, welcomes “the potential therapeutic utility of metaphors, which may be used to conceptualize [them]” (Tay, as cited in Demjén & Semino, 2017, p. 371) – and, as shown above, COVID-19 is particularly conceptualized through war metaphors (Semino, 2021, p. 51) – the 1918 pandemic was marginalized as a result of the temporal juxtaposition of war and illness (Honigsbaum, 2014, pp. 207–227). The scale of suffering exceeded anything we might imagine today; in fact, it left people speechless and disinclined to invest it with any further metaphorical meaning.

Resilience to Crisis: Bibliotherapy

As regards resilience to crisis, there are numerous possible scenarios. However, two major tendencies in dealing with a crisis emerge: either the victims eschew any reference by not directly addressing the issue in question, or else they are completely preoccupied with the problem in an attempt to translate the critical event into familiar terms, and thus reduce it to manageable dimensions. Both the 1918 and 2019 pandemics provoked these divergent reactions, although in the case of the former

according to the *Times*, who seem to tremble lest it may seize upon Lord Northcliff, & thus precipitate us into peace” (Woolf, as cited in Honigsbaum, 2014, p. 18). Honigsbaum’s study of Woolf’s health problems is an interesting contribution to the studies of medical treatment in the early 20th century.

⁹ The present article was written in the late 2021, with COVID-19 as a top priority in the public discussion; since then the threat of the war in Ukraine has overshadowed that of the pandemic.

¹⁰ Honigsbaum (2014, pp. 207–227) examines the “forgotten pandemic” in terms of a trauma.

a failure to openly confront the issue prevailed.¹¹ As Honigsbaum (2014) suggests, the horrors of WWI being followed by the despair at hundreds of thousands pandemic casualties in Spain, and indeed throughout Europe, prompted attitudes different from those seen today in the face of COVID-19. In his study, Honigsbaum (2014, p. 207) argues that ironic detachment from the crushing death toll recorded around 1920 was a natural reaction to an emergency of an unprecedented scale. Certainly, excessive stress fosters repression, and in 1920 this can be observed in statements from the time: "So vast was the catastrophe and so ubiquitous its prevalence that our minds, surfeited with the horrors of war, refused to realize it" (Honigsbaum, 2014, p. 207). Interestingly, the silence surrounding the 1918 pandemic also extends to later accounts of both the Great War and the Spanish influenza pandemic: in *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Paul Fussell (1975/2013) only once mentions Spanish flu in the context of demobilization.¹² A similar tendency is discernible in several autobiographical narratives from the period in which the pandemic is mentioned, yet marginalized.¹³ Thus, Honigsbaum (2014) appears to be correct in his conclusion about the possible reactions to crisis by stating that "the enormity of the event renders individual experience irrelevant. To recover the individual story it is necessary to invest it with meaning and significance" (p. 226), which, in the case of WWI and Spanish influenza, has been only attempted from the 1970s onwards.

¹¹ As regards the 1918 pandemic, a deeper reason for such repression might be either political (i.e., maintaining stability on the home front during the war) or psychological (i.e., repressing trauma); more in Honigsbaum (2014, Chapters 6 and 7).

¹² It is a fleeting remark regarding Robert Graves's illness, to which he had almost succumbed (Honigsbaum, 2014, p. 237). See also the aside by Virginia Woolf quoted in Note 7.

¹³ The 1918 pandemic is mentioned in Vera Brittain's *Testament of Youth: An Autobiographical Study of the Years 1900–1925* and in Robert Graves's *Goodbye To All That*. For a discussion of Graves's work in view of WWI and the pandemic, see Fussell (2013, pp. 236–238). A well-known war poet, Siegfried Sassoon, was also affected by Spanish flu, which he mentions in *The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston*. For more on the waves of Spanish flu and WWI, see <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4181817>.

By contrast, today the COVID-19 pandemic seems ubiquitous, visible not only in official statements broadcast in the media – which, as shown above, apply militaristic metaphors in the discourse on crisis – but also in private conversations and contemporary literature. It seems that today the second approach to a critical event has become pervasive, namely, a direct treatment of the catastrophe. This may be due to the relative political stability in Europe, on the one hand, and an arguably deeper understanding of the psychological processes – compared to the scientific knowledge available in 1920 – on the other hand. Thus, individual narratives tend to thematize the COVID-19 pandemic. That this may prove to be therapeutic is argued by the principal investigators of the project “Poetry and COVID”; the British scholars involved nominate poetry as a mode of response to COVID-19, which is in line with research on the therapeutic value of literature.¹⁴

The beneficial effects of a direct treatment of any crisis may be explained by the processes of cognition. As the scholars argue, the metaphorical phrases employed in contemporary COVID accounts help their authors and readers approach the current crisis, since “source domains tend to correspond to relatively simpler, more image-rich, and intersubjectively accessible experiences (such as motion, combat, people, and animals)” (Semino, 2020, p. 51). Thus, the relatively complex and abstract target domains are simplified (Demjén & Semino, 2017, pp. 385–399; Tay, 2017, pp. 371–384). Indeed, as Semino (2020) observes, metaphors

greatly expand our conceptual and communicative abilities, as we can draw from the knowledge and language associated with a rich source domain to reason and communicate about a target

¹⁴ The project is funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council, the University of Plymouth, and Nottingham Trent University. Any individual may forward their poems about COVID-19 to their website. Some of the poems submitted are selected and published online on a daily basis. Additionally, it is hoped that there will be a future anthology. For more information, see <https://poetryandcovid.com/about/>. Interestingly, war metaphors are also included in the “About” section of the site.

domain for which we may otherwise have little vocabulary and conceptual structure. (p. 52)

In other words, as a rule, metaphors translate the incomprehensible into more intelligible terms, which, in consequence, offers considerable comfort.

Replete with metaphors, the language of literature is as equally responsive to angst and anxiety as common speech: poetic language is capable of transmitting and mitigating feelings of frustration,¹⁵ while at the same time offering the potential for solace and consolation to both writers and readers. The latter point in particular raises the issue of bibliotherapy, a term which, according to Liz Brewster (2018, p. 3), was coined in 1916:¹⁶ bibliotherapy was then used in the treatment of those wounded in WWI (Brewster, 2018, pp. 4–6). Over the next 100 years, bibliotherapy as a field was investigated by psychologists and psychotherapists, who examined both reading responses and creativity. Both these literary interactions have assumed a greater importance in the recent practices of social distancing and remote working; literature initiates a dialogue,¹⁷ if not with another, then with oneself. Due to its particular role in an exploration of emotions and the nature of interpersonal relations (Szurman et al., 2015, pp. 151–161, 190–205; Brewster, 2018), literature has become ever more important as a component of therapy (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 1).

As suggested above, the outbreak of COVID-19 provoked a range of reactions, among which poetic creativity is certainly not the least significant. The outcome of the university project “Poetry and COVID” has

¹⁵ For more details, consult Hedges (2005), particularly Chapter 9, “Running Creative Writing Groups,” by Miriam Halahmy.

¹⁶ Bibliotherapy as a term was first used in *Atlantic Monthly* in the article “A Literary Clinic,” by Samuel McCord Crothers; it was applied in a medical context. Based on the medical usage, in 1919 the term was metaphorically applied in a novella by Christopher Morley, *A Haunted Bookshop*. For more information, see Brewster (2018, pp. 3–4).

¹⁷ For more on dialogue form and function, consult Kinzel and Mildorf (2011). For an interesting discussion of the diverse, philosophical notions of the dialogic form, see Guilherme and Morgan (2018).

shown that both academics and ordinary individuals have been involved in translating their experiences of social distancing and isolation into poetry. An excellent example of such poetizing is a 2021 publication, *Corona Sucks*, by Professor Till Kinzel.¹⁸ While the poem certainly deserves a more detailed discussion, in my analysis I wish to explore its explanatory function. In accordance with Gertrude Stein's observation about the explanatory function of poetry,¹⁹ the nouns by far outnumber the verbs in the poem.²⁰ The opening, tell-tale word, "Corona" – which is part of both the title and the first line of the poem – not only highlights the immediate COVID-19 context, but also predetermines the pandemic frame of reference against which all the nouns are used. Thus, the fairly familiar phrase, "waves / of melancholy / and depression" (vv. 2–4) is immediately imbued with an additional meaning – the waves of casualties during a pandemic. The tidal movement, which has shaped our reality into phases of so-called high and low tides of the disease, is also reflected by the regularity of the tertasyllabic lines, which several cases of *enjambement* breach – similarly to the unpredictable number of new cases of coronavirus. Analyzed from the perspective of an individual living under COVID-19 restrictions, the series of irregular run-on lines – with the help of which the poem is actually framed as one sentence – may connote the sudden lifting or tightening of the rules imposed by governments. The pandemic seems both never-ending, like a long, one-sentence poem, and yet divided into definite phases in which "I have gone / half mad with fear / locked-down in mind / and soul" (vv. 12–15). Furthermore, the abruptness of the lines

¹⁸ I am greatly indebted to Professor Kinzel for having shared the poem with me. It is published online at <https://poetryandcovid.com/2021/01/15/corona-sucks>.

¹⁹ In her lectures on poetry and narration, Gertrude Stein observes that poetry is mainly connected to the function of naming, whereas prose narration performs the function of registering movement. This, according to Stein, is due to the divergent word categories involved in the composition of the forms: while the former is dependent upon nouns, the latter is based upon sentences and paragraphs (Stein, as cited in Ashton, 1997, p. 318).

²⁰ Some verbs – "to speak, / to laugh, to jest, / to ponder and digest" (vv. 17–19) – are aligned in an enumeration, which appears to render them nominalized even though, formally, they are infinitives.

seems to rhythmically emphasize the literal meaning of the metaphor in which the lyrical I admits to having become used to “ra- / ther cough[ing] up thoughts” (vv. 9–10). This uncommon metaphor links the act of coughing, a major symptom of COVID-19, with a basic human activity – the thinking process – with the implication that COVID-19 has permeated into every sphere of our lives, even into our most private thoughts. The degree adverb “rather” is split into two syllables – graphically represented by a hyphen and the ensuing *enjambement* – and, thus, its forced and unusual division adds to the conceptualization of the metaphor as a literal, poetic representation of a cough: the lyrical I seems to literally “cough up” the line. Apparently, COVID-19 has utterly permeated the lives of those who either cough because they are unwell or in anticipation of falling ill. By virtue of the mundane vocabulary, basic grammar, and a certain laconicism of statement, the reader is able to reconstruct and identify with the final act, metaphorically described by the lyrical I as the act of “put[tin]g my heart / in quarantine” (vv. 22–23). To my mind, herein lies the particular strength of the lines: although apparently a monologue, the poem prompts, and indeed invites, a direct response from the readers, who may identify with the feelings of frustration at the unexpected restrictions. Consequently, the poem is received as a convincing translation of the pre-COVID-19 world into a less-than-normal COVID reality, a reality defined by the first and last words of the poem as “Corona ... quarantine.” The experience thus becomes both communicable and comprehensible through the recognition of a shared human experience. Theoretical research offers support of such an explanatory reading of the poem, because it has been established that “reading poetry can trigger greater levels of emotional focus, attentiveness and imagination” (Green, 2020, p. 125). In the poem quoted above, the attentiveness to a range of aspects related to COVID-19 may foster resilience in the readers by creating a sense of community and emotional connection. After all, one major force of imaginative literature is to mitigate the feeling of loneliness (Brewster, 2018, p. 43). This, in turn, agrees with Rita Felski’s (2015) recent claims about the uses of literature in everyday life: The scholar argues that, instead of a condescending attitude towards non-academic

responses to literature, academics “would do well to reflect on” them as, even if unprofessional, they show that literature matters to its readership (p. 191). I would add that it does so particularly during a pandemic.

As the foregoing discussion implies, greater resilience to a crisis can be also be achieved through the act of reading: in such cases the explanatory function of literature is linked with the instrumental function, as the world being depicted is conceived in terms of an analogy to reality. According to Jaén and Simon (2012), a major therapeutic role can be assigned to reading, as “stories may be viewed as a human adaptive strategy to maximize our chances for survival by allowing us to watch safely the experiences of others and extract valuable lessons” (p. 2). The strategies of survival – in other words, the means of resistance to critical events – have increasingly gained the attention of scholars of both literature and the medical humanities (Brewster, 2018; Mildorf, 2020; Hustvedt, 2010).²¹ Among the diverse approaches adopted, which include prescribed reading²² as well as the process of creative writing,²³ several therapeutic models have been developed in order to foster patients’ resilience to critical events.²⁴ Numerous examples could be adduced to support the hypothesis; yet it is sufficient to mention Virginia Woolf’s fierce contradiction to the suggestion of one of her doctors, who surmised – early in the 20th century – that during an illness any creative effort or emotional involvement

²¹ I am indebted to professor Jarmila Mildorf for directing my attention to Hustvedt’s most recent book as well as to the findings of the medical humanities. For further references, consult the forthcoming issue of *Narratives & Mental Health* (Brill), which is entitled *Narratives and Mental Health: Bridging the Cultural and the Individual* edited by Jarmila Mildorf, Elisabeth Punzi, and Christoph Singer.

²² Clinical literature has introduced the notion of Books on Prescription, where literature is literally prescribed to patients, i.e., bibliotherapy. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence recommended in its guidelines such treatment for depression, anxiety, and bulimia nervosa (Brewster, 2018, p. 12). See also the description of university experiments in Green (2020, pp. 102–125).

²³ At the beginning of the 20th century, the terms “pathography” and “autopathography” were applied in the medical context; for more information, see Mildorf (2020, p. 111).

²⁴ For the diversity of approaches, see Brewster (2018, Chapter 2).

in the world of fiction caused too much exertion and was quite detrimental to her physical and mental well-being (Honigsbaum, 2014, pp. 4–5). This was challenged by Woolf, who stated that if she were “divorced from [her] pen ... a whole current of life [would be] cut off” (Woolf, as cited in Honigsbaum, 2014, p. 10). Contrary to the doctor’s advice, Woolf has in fact been proven correct, as today the therapeutic effects of reading and writing have become an established field of investigation.²⁵

Generic considerations

Since I am a literary scholar, a special point of interest is the question of whether any genre might be particularly helpful for therapeutic purposes. As regards prose narration, autobiographical writing – or rather *life writing*²⁶ – appears to support patients afflicted with physical illnesses, since – according to Brewster (2018) – they “may find meaning and understanding in reading autobiographical accounts of others who have undergone and articulated similar experience to them” (p. 41). A case in point is Siri Hustvedt’s (2010) *A Shaking Woman, or a History of My Nerves*, in which the author endeavors to explain to both herself and her readers the mysterious disease whose symptoms she traces in the autobiographical narrative; as in *Corona Sucks*, the explanatory function of literature also becomes discernible.

Apparently, exposure to a global pandemic has increased the demand for autobiographical storytelling with which the readers may, to some extent, identify. Thus, if what Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (2010, p. 127) claim holds true, namely, that the pre-pandemic decades were

²⁵ For example, the Centre for Research into Reading, Literature and Society at the University of Liverpool – the outcomes of the studies are discussed in Green (2020, pp. 99ff).

²⁶ Since my paper is focused on bibliotherapy, I eschew a discussion about the form, i.e., autobiography as a distinct genre, mode, or a kind of discourse. A compelling discussion can be found in Buchholtz (2011, pp. 19–45). As Mirosława Buchholtz asserts, literary scholars today tend to apply the broader notion of *life writing*.

governed by autobiographical discourse,²⁷ then its representation within literature during the COVID-19 pandemic seems to have increased considerably. As Jarmila Mildorf (2020, p. 107) observes, one attraction of autobiographical accounts within a medical context might be their narrative potential, which involves, and indeed promotes, the creation of a “story logic” behind an obscure illness. To my mind, the logic ascribed to the unknown and unexpected is an integral part of the survival strategy in general, and thus also during the COVID-19 pandemic, since a storyline unfolds in time while logically heading towards its conclusion, with the expectation of a(n) (happy) ending. An apparent desire for predictability has become clear, even in imaginative literature; as argued, autobiographical storytelling may re-introduce a certain order into a chaotic reality, which is particularly the case with autobiographical narration.

Therefore, bibliotherapy has acquired a special importance in the recent crisis, as (self-)isolation has become a major medical recommendation in times of emergency, despite being questioned by some politicians and sociologists: it is necessary to stay safe, even if lonely, at home. This loneliness is likely to provoke both creative writing responses and a marked increase in the sales of books.²⁸ The consequences of this peculiar situation may be deeper than expected: I contend that, under critical conditions, individual reading preferences may change somewhat, leading to a shift in the categories or genres in demand, and possibly to a re-shaping of the literary canon. Insofar as reading preferences are concerned, as shown above, (auto)biographical narration may be favored over prose fiction with a greater interest in historical or social novels;²⁹ quite naturally, the focus is now on the individual. This might involve

²⁷ For a comprehensive discussion of the various forms of autobiography, see Smith and Watson (2010, p. 127ff). I endorse the authors’ claims about the multifariousness of the *life* narrative.

²⁸ A report by Business Research Company (2020) estimates that the 2021 global book market increased by 5.4% over 2020. The report includes e-books alongside published volumes and predicts a rapid growth in digital book versions.

²⁹ In his *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*, Harold Bloom observed a shift away from historical novels as early as the 1990s (Bloom, 1994/2019, pp. 31f).

substantial changes in the school canon. Indeed, reading lists are being revised during the COVID-19 pandemic, at least in Poland: here the educational institutions have approached the canon from the stance of ethics and have argued for the promotion of virtues in compulsory reading lists, which have been supplemented by autobiographical narration.³⁰

Conclusion

As argued above, in times of self-imposed isolation certain forms such as (auto)biographies, memoirs, or letters³¹ become particularly attractive since they invite, and indeed encourage, the processes of self-identification while also offering consolation to the reader. Whereas consolation may be a debatable issue, the preference of a given genre over another is measurable: Research proves a direct interdependence between social changes, literary taste, and the literary canon.³² As Alastair Fowler (1982, pp. 214–215) asserts, although the official canon seems more stable than the tastes of the readers, it is also liable to transform, particularly in the case of formal school curricula. The critic asserts that the official school canon leaves some space for individual choices and these, I argue, may become more focused on *life writing* and its sub-genres. Readers may prefer well-known characters and the (auto)biographical renditions of their struggles, which compensates for the lack of stability in times of crisis. In the long run, this may lead to a reevaluation of the genres represented in the current canon, both critical and institutional, since “the complete

³⁰ See the statement by the Minister for Education, Przemysław Czarnek, published on November 20, 2020, which propounded the indispensability of the philosophical legacy of John Paul II in Polish schools (Michalak. 2020). As a literary scholar, I can merely comment on literature. To my mind, the recent changes in the canon in Poland have been encouraged by two separate phenomena: While the focus on the individual is motivated by the COVID-19 crisis, the promotion of exemplary deeds and lives may be rooted in the present policy of the government.

³¹ All of which are sub-genres of autobiographical narration; see Smith and Watson (2010).

³² More in Fowler (1982, pp. 213f).

range of genres is never equally, let alone fully, available in any one period" (Fowler, 1982, p. 227) and every epoch makes deletions and additions to the repertoire of active genres (Fowler, 1982, p. 227). The increased pre-pandemic interest in the (auto)biographical generic formula noted by scholars (Smith & Watson, 2010) may be consolidated since individual preferences – induced and strengthened by the recent crisis – will be linked with the more usual processes of canon modification (Fowler, 1982, pp. 230–232).

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Visual Thinking and Logical Flexibility as Successful Key Elements in the Resilience of Roma Children and Adults

El pensamiento visual y la flexibilidad lógica como elementos claves de éxito en la resiliencia de niños/as, y adultos gitanos

Abstract

Up to 30% of the engineers in Silicon Valley in the United States are of Indian origin. And India is now one of the largest producers of technology. People of gypsy culture, because of the common Indian cultural matrix, have a greater facility for visual thinking, inductive logic and categorical flexibility. These elements, together with the consideration of the basic nucleus of socialisation that specifically constitutes the Romany families, mean that any successful pedagogical strategy must take these elements into account, always in dialogue with the school institution.

Keywords: literature, pedagogy, empathetic world, self-education, resilience

Resumen

Hasta un 30% de los ingenieros de Silicon Valley, en Estados Unidos, son de origen indio. Y la India es hoy uno de los mayores productores de tecnologías. Las personas de cultura gitana, por la común matriz cultural india, presentan una mayor facilidad para el pensamiento visual, la lógica inductiva y la flexibilidad categorial. Tales elementos, junto con la consideración del núcleo básico de socialización que específicamente constituyen las familias gitanas, hace que cualquier estrategia pedagógica de éxito deba contemplar estos elementos, en diálogo siempre con la institución escolar.

Palabras claves: literatura, pedagogía, mundo empalabrado, autoformación, resiliencia

Los gitanos constituyen la minoría cultural más antigua, numerosa y discriminada de Europa. En España, donde los gitanos son casi 750.000 ciudadanos, ninguna de las diez leyes educativas desde la Constitución de 1978 ha tenido en cuenta la identidad cultural del pueblo gitano. De matriz claramente índica, esa cultura se basa en una serie de elementos identitarios donde el pensamiento visual, la lógica inductiva, la flexibilidad categorial o la dimensión comunitaria son claves para entender la capacidad de resiliencia en las comunidades gitanas de Europa, que han sabido sublimar a través del arte y la literatura las persecuciones que han sufrido desde 1499.

Introducción

Pocas comunidades como las gitanas han oscilado en Occidente entre la admiración y el desprecio. Gitano, ¡cuántas veces habremos oído esta palabra! En algunos casos para bien: «La gracia gitana»; en otros, los más, para mal: «Ir hecho un gitano». Una y otra expresión forma parte de una visión estereotipada, basada en prejuicios transmitidos culturalmente, sobre la realidad de un colectivo humano unido por lazos culturales como son los gitanos. Tal es el doble estereotipo al que han quedado reducidos los gitanos en el imaginario colectivo: o son geniales artistas,

o son temibles delincuentes. Ni una ni otra afirmación son ciertas, entre otras porque ningún colectivo humano puede ser reducido a categorías cerradas y antagónicas.

En el pathos occidental, el conocimiento tiende a ordenar sus pensamientos en categorías diferenciadas, habitualmente ordenadas jerárquicamente. Esta tendencia tiene su origen en la concepción aristotélica de que una proposición y su negación no pueden ser verdaderas al mismo tiempo y en el mismo contexto. Ese principio de no contradicción es lógicamente distinto del principio de armonización propio del pathos oriental, según el cual dos categorías no son necesariamente opuestas mientras ambas sean verdaderas. Así, frente al hecho de que una persona posea dos automóviles, un occidental intentará ordenar ambos elementos en un eje vertical, preguntando (o preguntándose) cuál es más bonito, cuál es más rápido, cuál es más caro o cuál es más antiguo; un oriental responderá (nunca se lo preguntaría a sí mismo) conforme a un eje horizontal: ambos le gustan por igual. A una pregunta de base racional se confrontará una respuesta de base emocional. Popper, con su principio de falsación (1934), intentó en el siglo XX llegar a un punto intermedio apuntando a que dos proposiciones pueden ser verdaderas al mismo tiempo mientras una de ellas no pueda ser refutada. Y, para gustos, opiniones. Heisenberg formuló en aquella misma época el principio de indeterminación (1927), propio de la física cuántica, que parte de una formulación lógica similar: una misma proposición puede ser verdadera dependiendo de la perspectiva de análisis.

Para poder afrontar esta cuestión central de la realidad gitana era necesario un nuevo paradigma. Hacía falta una metodología científica que permitiera superar las limitaciones del estructuralismo. Y eso sólo era posible si el enfoque se realizaba desde otra disciplina académica. En ese contexto, solamente la filosofía parecía aportar el horizonte cognitivo para realizar tal misión.

Ya en 1890 Wilhem Dilthey contraponía las ciencias que permitían «explicar» (*Erklèren*) a las que favorecían «comprender» (*Verstehen*), proponiendo para las «ciencias culturales» un método más interpretativo que descriptivo. Los paradigmas académicos, basados en el idealismo

y el estructuralismo, han dominado esa misma producción (básicamente, la antropología social y cultural) desde mediados del siglo XX.

La aplicación de la filosofía a la reflexión sobre la identidad de los pueblos es reciente. Desde mediados del siglo XX diversas las investigaciones han intentado demostrar la importancia que las cosmovisiones colectivas tienen en los procesos de formación de la identidad personal. Tal es el presupuesto teórico que permite superar críticamente la problematización en que se basa esta investigación.

Baste este breve excurso para evidenciar cómo la mentalidad occidental tiende a percibir la diferencia como contraria al orden, por lo que debe ser menospreciada, ignorada o perseguida, con sus obvias consecuencias a nivel ético, expresadas bien legal (durante siglos) o moralmente (aun en la actualidad). De ahí que la persistencia en Occidente de un colectivo humano de Oriente, como es el pueblo gitano, haya sido percibida históricamente como una disidencia o una amenaza, lo que ha provocado enfrentamientos, persecuciones, segregaciones o asimilaciones, a veces legales, a veces morales, a veces en términos de socialización forzada o incentivada. Pero vayamos paso a paso.

De Oriente a Occidente

Los gitanos tuvieron que abandonar su territorio hacia el siglo X, a causa de la invasión musulmana del norte de la India (Punjab) y Pakistán (Sindh) a manos del sultán Mahmud de Ghazni (971–1030), desde la actual Afganistán, hacia el 1021–1025. Así lo testimonia un pasaje del *Libro de Jamín* (Kitab al-Yamini, publicado en Occidente en 1999), del cronista Abu Nasr Al-Utbi (961–1040). Su llegada a Kannauj se habría producido el 20 de diciembre de 1018, según apunta el historiador y lingüista gitano Vania de Gila-Kochanowski (1992). La presión demográfica y el nuevo orden socio-cultural les obligó a emprender el camino migratorio hacia Occidente.

Según autores como Kenrick (1995), aquellas caravanas –agrupadas por clanes y familias– se asentaron primero en Jorasán (Persia, actual Irán),

donde los grupos se mezclaron hasta formar otro mayor y homogéneo: los *rom*. Hacia 1035, las invasiones selúcidas les empujaron emigrar a Capadocia, cruzando Armenia y Kurdistán por la ribera del mar Caspio.

En aquella zona de influencia helénica, actualmente dentro de Turquía, se establecieron durante casi dos siglos. Autores como Marcel Courthiade (2001) sitúan en Methone (hoy Nea Agathoupoli, en el Peloponeso), como lugar de asentamiento. De hecho, la primera constancia de su presencia en Occidente la hizo el franciscano irlandés Simon FitzSimon o Simón Semeonis, quien durante a su peregrinación a Jerusalén dejó escrito en su crónica que en 1322 había un grupo de Atsiganos (Ατσιγγανοί, lit. «intocables») en los alrededores de Heraklion, en Creta. Hacia 1360 se estableció en Corfú un feudo gitano independiente, denominado *Feudum Acinganorum*.

Hacia la segunda mitad del siglo XIV accedieron al este de Europa gracias al salvoconducto que en 1417 les concedió el rey Segismundo II de Bohemia. Un año más tarde, durante el Concilio de Constanza, el papa Sixto V les concedió otro que les abrió las puertas del centro y el oeste del continente. Un grupo de 3.000 gitanos llegó en 1425 a la Corona de Aragón, donde el rey Alfonso V de Aragón expidió su propio salvoconducto al «conde Juan de Egipto Menor y su séquito», de unas 300 personas, como peregrinos a Santiago de Compostela.

De la fascinación a la persecución

Al principio, su relación con los pueblos que encontraban se basaba en el intercambio provechoso y la fascinación por la novedad: algunos se convirtieron en artesanos, gracias a su conocimiento de los animales y al trabajo con la herrería y la forja; otros, en pequeños grupos, participaron como mercenarios en las tropas de los diferentes soberanos europeos; y unos pocos ofrecieron sus conocimientos de medicina natural, aprovechando el sustrato europeo de superstición y la fascinación por lo exótico. La mayoría optó por servir a la realeza y la nobleza, atendiendo sus caballos y divirtiéndola con el canto o el baile.

Algunos autores (Rodríguez, 2011, p. 60) afirman que la práctica de la medicina oriental acabó por despertar suspicacias en algunos obispos. La Iglesia, que tras las herejías del siglo XII y en los albores de la reforma del XV intentaba contener la heterodoxia mediante una nueva institución: la Inquisición. De hecho, son muchos los procesos inquisitoriales contra gitanos que se conservan en el Archivo Histórico Nacional. Otros autores (Rodríguez, 2011, p.60) afirman que los gitanos fueron el instrumento con que la Corona quiso castigar a la nobleza en el proceso de absolutización y centralización del poder posterior a la Reconquista.

Pasada esa primera etapa idílica inicial, los gitanos se vieron afectados entre los siglos XV y XVIII por un proceso represivo destinado a favorecer su asentamiento y asimilación en el nuevo contexto socio-político. Poco a poco fueron expulsados de la mayoría de países donde acababan de acceder: la actual Alemania (1500), Inglaterra (1514) o la actual Bélgica (1540), por poner varios ejemplos. En 1563, el Concilio de Trento les excluyó del sacerdocio y les requirió una autorización episcopal para casarse. Por lo que respecta a España, iniciado el proceso de unificación (1492–1517), los Reyes Católicos tendieron a uniformizar sus reinos, proceso que afectó también a judíos, musulmanes y gitanos. La ley o «pragmática» de 1499 exigió a los gitanos que abandonaran la vida itinerante, se asentaran en las tierras del señor al que servían y asumieron un oficio conocido. El castigo por incumplimiento fue gradual: 100 azotes, destierros (algunos acabaron en América), 60 días de reclusión, amputación de orejas y, finalmente, esclavización en galeras. Este último fue un destino habitual de los gitanos entre los siglos XIV (Moldavia y Valaquia) y XIX (Rumanía).

La suerte de los gitanos no fue distinta con la Casa de Austria en el poder. En España, pese a continuar con los asentamientos forzosos, la estrategia fue su asimilación cultural. El emperador Carlos promulgó seis pragmáticas contra ellos entre 1534 y 1559. El rey Felipe II les catalogó como vagabundos en 1566. Hubo que esperar hasta el rey Felipe IV, en 1633, para que quedara abolida la amenaza de expulsión, aunque a costa de forzar aún más su asentamiento.

La llegada al trono de la Casa de Borbón intensificó el proceso asimilatorio. El rey Felipe V ordenó en 1717 la realización de un censo de

familias, insistiendo en el abandono de la lengua y la indumentaria. Aquel proceso tuvo su punto álgido en 1749, cuando el rey Fernando VI dictó una orden de búsqueda y captura de todos los gitanos, que llevó a los hombres a trabajar a los arsenales y a las mujeres y niños, a la prisión. En aquella operación, que Gómez Alfaro (1993) denomina «la gran redada de gitanos», fueron confinados unas 12.000 personas. No fueron indultados hasta 1783, cuando el rey Carlos III les concedió la libertad de oficio y de domicilio, aunque prohibiéndoles ejercer la vida nómada, hablar en su lengua y vestir de distinta manera a la de su región. Se inició así el declive del romanó, que sería sustituido progresivamente por el caló. A los que no obedecieron se les marcó la espalda con hierro candente y, a los reincidentes, se les castigó con la muerte. Las 459 leyes promulgadas entre 1499 y 1812 contra ellos llevaron a Borrow (1837) a afirmar: «Dudo que haya un país como España donde se hayan promulgado más medidas para suprimir el nombre, la raza y la forma de vivir de los gitanos».

La coexistencia de los gitanos en la sociedad española continuó en un clima de desconfianza recíproca entre gitanos y no gitanos, con episodios de discriminación manifiesta, hasta el último tercio del siglo XX, con la restauración de la democracia en 1978.

Bases de la resiliencia entre los gitanos

Un gitano afincado en los Estados Unidos, donde trabajó en uno de los programas aeroespaciales de la NASA, sostenía que la efectividad gitana está más que demostrada, porque «pocos grupos sobreviven con tan pocos recursos y con tantos obstáculos» (Mendiola, 1997, p. 16). La obligación de vivir en una caravana acostumbró a los gitanos a privilegiar los sentidos como medio de supervivencia; para sobrevivir tuvieron también que encerrarse en la propia comunidad, que asumió un papel referencial: vivir sería, sobre todo, vivir en comunidad. De ahí que los gitanos hayan desarrollado una forma de pensar propia a partir de su sustrato cognitivo oriental.

El nomadismo, que hasta el siglo XX aún pervivió residualmente, acostumbró a los gitanos a tener una cultura ágrafa y fomentar una cultura oral de base comunitaria. Como ya demostré en una monografía (Rodríguez, 2011), los mecanismos cognitivos de la cultura gitana se basan en la apertura sistemática a la realidad, la valoración del silencio, la preponderancia de los estímulos persistentes, la fijación en los particulares, la percepción subjetiva de la realidad, la lógica de carácter inductivo, un mismo despliegue categorial, la ordenación en categorías opuestas, la conceptualización aditiva, la afirmación negativa, la valoración del conocimiento interpretativo y la tendencia a la metáfora y la hipérbole, así como la importancia del lenguaje no verbal y su carácter presentativo. La metáfora es quizá el recurso más eficaz del que dispone el hablante gitano. Permite construir ideas abstractas sin recurrir a los conceptos, asociándolas a través de la similitud que existe entre dos experiencias.

La mayoría de maestros y profesores que han trabajado con niños y jóvenes gitanos coinciden en decir que su dificultad para el razonamiento abstracto es paralela a su facilidad para las cuestiones concretas. Como afirma la maestra Elisa Soler, que ha trabajado con ellos durante casi 40 años, «les cuesta entender los conceptos que no tienen una aplicación práctica para ellos y, sobre todo, para su mundo» (Rodríguez, 2011, p. 93). En este mismo sentido se manifiesta Teresa Codina, maestra e impulsora de las escuelas *Avillar chavorrós* y *Chavó-Chaví* del barrio de Can Tunis: «Tenían una enorme dificultad para la abstracción. En cambio, lo concreto se les daba muy bien. Por eso pusimos en marcha un taller de manualidades que funcionó perfectamente. Eran mucho más hábiles que los niños no gitanos» (Codina, 2000). Feli Lozano, maestra durante más de 20 años en el barrio de La Mina, también corrobora esta impresión: «He tenido multitud de niñas y niños gitanos como alumnos. Jamás olvidaré su frescura, viveza e ingenio». Botey constata finalmente «la aversión a la rigidez lógica y las ideas abstractas» (Botey, 1970, p. 180).

De esa facilidad por lo concreto se deriva una lógica inductiva. En su proceso cognitivo, cuyo origen está en la educación familiar, el alumnado gitano tiende a pasar de particular a particular sin hacerlo por los universales. Un documento de la Santa Sede afirma que las reacciones

de los gitanos «son sobretodo inmediatas, guiadas más por un criterio intuitivo que por un pensamiento teórico» (PCPMG, 2006, p. 22). Como reconoce la cantante gitana Lolita, «me viene de casta ser intuitiva» (Rodríguez, 2011, p. 119). Mendiola sitúa la intuición como segundo de los seis elementos que configuran la *gitanidad* y la define como La capacidad de compilar experiencias pasadas y relacionarlas a circunstancias donde los factores pueden ser diferentes (...) El gitano observa y enseguida intuye. Esto le permite *leer* cualquier circunstancia y sacar el mayor provecho de ella o, si es nociva, evitarla» (Mendiola, 2000, en internet).

La intuición está formada por dos partes (*asimilación y comparación*) de las que se extrae o induce una *conclusión, vivencia o noción*, que sería una especie de concepto práctico, destinado a permitir un conocimiento de tipo operativo (no especulativo, vinculado al concepto). La intuición es una operación relacional, en la que se infieren inmediatamente las relaciones entre particulares extrapolando la tendencia observada en *algunos* casos a *todos* los casos. Es lo que Mendiola, gitanamente, definía como «capacidad de compilar experiencias pasadas y relacionarlas a circunstancias donde los factores pueden ser diferentes» (Mendiola, 2000, en internet).

No es menos importante la flexibilidad categorial. Si la realidad es percibida a través de la intuición, los razonamientos utilizan un despliegue categorial más débil, es decir, menos compartimentado. Eso tiene su origen también en la facilidad de los gitanos para el pensamiento visual. Como lo intuitivo es asimilador o comparativo, hace falta centrar la atención en las similitudes o las diferencias para extraer las conclusiones que articularán las vivencias. Esta tendencia al pensamiento visual la constató el jesuita Pere Closa, que se inculturó en el mundo gitano de Andalucía: «El gitano es oriental. Piensa en imágenes, sensiblemente, y se expresa con metáforas preciosas. (...) Ven la vida desde otro aspecto, (...) más artísticamente» (Closa, 1967, pp. 335–342). Fonseca afirma que «sin palabras generales, el lenguaje fluye como un buen poema, rico en el detalle y lleno de imágenes concretas» (Fonseca, 1997, p. 81). A ello contribuye la limitación fonológica de la lengua gitana, formada por un total de 37 fonemas, de los que 23 son consonantes simples y otros

9 lo son compuestos (Ch, ch, kh, ph, rr, sh, th, ź y dž), de origen claramente oriental (*-nd*), a los que hay que añadir las 5 vocales habituales. Como sostiene Adiego (2002), los gitanos flexibilizan la pronunciación de lo instrumental para facilitar el contacto con los hablantes de otras lenguas.

Gracias a esta «resistencia hecha de flexibilidad» (Liégeois, 1987, p. 98), similar al mimbre de los ríos con que han construido tradicionalmente sus cestos, los gitanos han podido dar respuesta a las necesidades de su conciencia histórica en cada período histórico y en cada contexto geográfico. Han adaptado «sus condiciones cambiantes para quedar siempre iguales» (Acton/Mundy, 1999, p. 84), haciendo así que su identidad sea «una percepción basada en tiempo y en historia (...) que requiere de la continua interacción entre las personas a través del tiempo» (Acton & Mundy, 1999, p. 41). Es la *jagara sthana* india: sólo si se es flexible puede haber adaptación al contexto.

Esto genera obviamente una «tensión histórica» (Gevaert, 1974/1993, p. 234). ¿Cómo la resuelven? Se comportan *sin* libertad pero *con* responsabilidad en el ámbito comunitario y *con* libertad pero *sin* responsabilidad fuera de él. Por ejemplo, los gitanos eligen libremente en lo concreto y cotidiano (*cómo* ir a trabajar), pero el interés comunitario prima en lo genérico e importante (en *qué* trabajar). Borrow constataba, en pleno siglo XIX, como los gitanos del Reino Unido tenían dos nombres: uno para vivir en su comunidad y otro para hacerlo fuera de ella (Borrow, 1979, p. 113). Es lo que algunos autores denominan *liberación comunitaria* (Gevaert, 1974/1993, p. 231), porque vinculan la libertad al compromiso más que a la elección (García, 2003, p. 151).

Efectivamente, al actuar como gitanos, están sujetos a una cosmovisión donde la libertad se concibe más comunitaria que individualmente y el criterio del interés comunitario prevalece sobre el personal. No resulta extraño que Ramírez Heredia afirme que la propia conducta se debe evaluar según «se cumpla con la obligación de buen padre, hijo o marido» (Ramírez Heredia, 1971, p. 33). No en vano, «la dura ley de los gitanos (...) prohíbe la emancipación de los individuos en aras de la preservación del grupo» (Fonseca, 1997, p. 25), mientras que «la libertad del gitano y la crí-

tica se ejercen siempre dentro del ámbito de la ley y la tradición» (Botey, 1970, p. 132). Por contra, al actuar como ciudadanos, los gitanos pasan a disponer del amplio abanico de derechos que las sociedades occidentales otorgan a sus integrantes, de los que carecen en el seno de su comunidad. A cambio, esas mismas sociedades mayoritarias les piden unos deberes, derivados de la asunción responsable de derechos.

Es aquí donde comienza el dilema moral, a causa del dualismo comunitario en que viven muchos gitanos (Molina, 1967, p. 151; Hancock, 2002, pp. 74–75). Algunos, a causa de las persecuciones que han padecido, desconfían del sistemáticamente de los no gitanos; otros, por su cosmovisión, consideran que las cosas del mundo de los no gitanos no van con ellos (Botey, 1970, p. 67 y 172). Las sanciones gitanas remiten a la necesidad de reparar el daño causado y, según la gravedad de la ofensa, la expulsión temporal o definitiva de la comunidad. En una cultura comunitaria, la separación del grupo es la mayor de las condenas: «es peor que la muerte», según el escritor gitano Matéo Maximoff (Clébert, 1965, p. 159).

El elemento clave es la coherencia. ¿Dónde estaría el límite de cambio? ¿Hasta dónde se puede cambiar sin dejar de ser gitano? Mendiola nos da la respuesta: hasta que se «deteriore o amenace la unión y el amor» comunitarios (Mendiola, 2000). En definitiva, hasta que la introducción del egoísmo rompa el sentimiento comunitario entre los gitanos: en la medida en que uno mire por su propio bien en lugar del bien comunitario.

El arte y la literatura como sublimación del sufrimiento

Hemos señalado ya que la imagen que la sociedad mayoritaria tiene de los gitanos gira en torno a dos estereotipos, asumidos con tan poca capacidad crítica que han acabado por convertirse en dos prejuicios. Ambos son falsos, aunque con un importante matiz: mientras que pedir o robar no forman parte de la cultura gitana, sí que lo son el arte y la literatura. Es su cultura, asumida desde la infancia, la que les capacita para ellos.

El arte y la literatura impregnan la existencia gitana. Cantan y bailan «de forma natural», como reconocía el gitano madrileño Carlos Muñoz en una ponencia (Rodríguez, 2011, p. 281). Los gitanos otorgan siempre una dimensión poética a su vida, que les hace estar siempre abiertos a leerla de una forma simbólica. Esa disposición cultural para el arte –que no predisposición natural– les lleva incluso a convertir la propia existencia en una obra de arte (URE, 1998, p. 188). Si la ética se define «como el arte de saber vivir» (Savater, 1992, p. 34), como señalábamos antes, su capacidad para superar con dignidad las carencias materiales no puede sino ser interpretado como capacidad de hacer arte incluso en las condiciones más difíciles. La cultura gitana contiene una poética de la cotidianidad, que combina el valor de la sinceridad y el uso simbólico del lenguaje. Es una especie de poesía (*poiesis*) vital. Es el carácter «naturalmente artificial» del arte (Choza, 1988, p. 500).

Hay que matizar esta disposición gitana para el arte. Cualquier persona que haya asistido a una celebración gitana se habrá dado cuenta de lo distinta que es de una interpretación comercial. Aunque los artistas hayan sido los mismos, la vistosidad del gesto habrá dado paso a la contención y el aislamiento del artista se habrá convertido en una interpelación con los espectadores; la espontaneidad habrá aumentado y la expresividad será mucho más profunda. Es sólo entonces cuando el intérprete se *presenta* a sí mismo tal y como es, no *representa* ni *actúa* (es decir, *hace ver que expresa*). Como afirma el escritor gitano Joaquín Albaicín, «al torero gitano no le preocupa la belleza (...): simplemente la siente. No está ávido de buen estilo, sin duda porque lo lleva dentro» (Albaicín, 1997, p. 169). El artista lo es porque vive el arte o *en* el arte, no porque viva *con* arte o *del* arte.

Buena parte de la creatividad gitana se basa en partir de experiencias vividas, no conceptos aprendidos. «Cantaba flamenco porque vivía en el flamenco» (Albaicín, 1993, p. 372). Salinas explica que el *cantaor* Manuel Agujetas «decía orgulloso que nunca había ido a la escuela y que los que sabían leer y escribir no podían cantar flamenco» (Salinas, 2002, p. 6). Esta afirmación es compartida por dos musicólogos, quienes afirman que «El *cantaor* no inventa: recuerda» (Caballero Bonald) y que

«el flamenco es una forma de intimidad en el tiempo. La memoria (...) es lo que en el cante agrupa al ser y al tiempo histórico» (Grande, 1999, p. 82). Esta idea es coherente con la de Gombrich (1960), según la cual estamos sometidos a un conjunto de recuerdos que, para bien o para mal, influyen sobre nuestros gustos.

En la transformación que decíamos antes, cuando una interpretación pasa al ámbito comunitario, ya no estaremos ante un *espectáculo* concebido a cambio de dinero para unos *espectadores*, sino de una *celebración* hecha gratuitamente para *participantes*. Nada más artificial y falso que la música que se vende (URE, 1998, p. 193), fenómeno con el que tristemente se ha asociado a los gitanos durante siglos. Como constatan algunos autores, «el flamenco sólo se siente a gusto en las reuniones familiares» (Fernández López, 1999–2008, en internet; Molina, 1967, p. 121), extremo que reconocen ellos mismos al decir que el arte gitano «es diferente cuando se ejecuta por trabajo de cuando se hace en alguna celebración» (Muñoz, 2007) o que los gitanos «diferencian sus exhibiciones para los turistas de las que son sus propias fiestas» (URE, 1998, p. 193).

La música, el baile, la poesía y las narraciones son manifestaciones del arte gitano que, concebidos y expresados en el seno de la comunidad, se convierten en elementos de catarsis, de transformación, de sublimación o de somatización, incluso de purificación, de la experiencia vivida. Hay palos de flamenco para sublimar la tristeza, como la soleá, o palos para celebrar la alegría, como la alboreá. Solamente se puede interpretar tras la verificación de la virginidad de la novia, como si fuera un cántico sagrado, que por cierto utiliza la misma escala tonal *bairah* de la música carnática de la India (Molina, 1967, p. 44; Rodríguez López-Ros, 2011, p. 51).

Los gitanos cantan canciones y narran historias como forma de expresarse y como medio de transmitir su cultura. No resulta extraño, así, que el *cante* y la *música* hayan sido las manifestaciones tradicionales del arte gitano. Es «una forma de rechazar categorías ajenas a la propia cultura» (Nedich, 2007, en internet).

La narración ha tenido un papel central en la cultura gitana, sobre todo en el contexto comunitario (un grupo reunido alrededor del fuego),

como forma de entretener a los asistentes y transmitir la propia cultura. Como consecuencia de la sonoridad de la cultura gitana, la literatura se ha circunscrito durante siglos a la narración oral de *historias* y *cuentos*, aprovechando los muchos recursos sonoros de la voz. Junto con las narraciones, por influencia exógena, han adoptado la *poesía*, que han desarrollado con mucho éxito por su potencial expresivo; de hecho, la formación espontánea de rimas constituye una tradición en el mundo gitano. Muy reciente es el interés por la *novela*, que recoge la larga tradición de narraciones orales, aunque básicamente con la voluntad de ser vendida a no gitanos.

La mayoría de obras artísticas gitanas se han transmitido oralmente, empezando a ser transcritas sólo desde mediados del siglo XIX por expertos y estudiosos no gitanos. A causa del carácter expresivo del arte gitano, sujeto siempre a la voluntad del artista, la creación está ligada *pro tempore* al creador y, por tanto, trasladar una creación al papel supondría fijarla, haciendo repetitivo un acto singular. Como sostiene pintor gitano Bruno Morelli, hay que «aceptar la obra como una porción de vida (...) lejana, en cualquier caso, de la vida real de su autor, quien vive ya otra vida y tiene otro estado de ánimo» (URE, 1998, 190). Igualmente, la transcripción suponía desligar el proceso creativo en dos personajes, el creador y el intérprete, introduciendo así un concepto nuevo en la cultura gitana; intérprete, todo hay que decirlo, al que se limita la creatividad de la recreación, porque la creación fijada en un papel limita la espontaneidad. De ahí las reticencias de los cantantes gitanos a las primeras grabaciones sonoras. Sin embargo, gracias a la influencia de la cultura mayoritaria, los gitanos han empezado a trasladar sus obras a un soporte escrito desde mediados del siglo XX, lo que ha permitido conservar algunos de los elementos de la cultura tradicional antes de la irrupción de los medios de comunicación.

Si la literatura y el arte son medios para transformar resilientemente las experiencias no es sólo por su dimensión comunitaria sino también por la asertividad del autor. El arte gitano está fundamentalmente concebido como medio de expresión espontáneo en el contexto de una celebración comunitaria, casi siempre improvisado, sin más normas que las

de la propia sensibilidad del creador. El cante es un tipo de grito elemental (Molina, 1967, p. 42), de narración cantada, de quien comparte su intimidad, feliz o triste, con los suyos. No en vano, artistas gitanos como el torero Rafael de Paula (Lucas, 2004) y el histórico *cantaor* Manuel Torre (Starkie, 1956, p. 95; Fernández López, 1999–2008, en Internet) consideran que los intérpretes que no expresan, pese a la perfección de su interpretación, no tienen *duende*. La espontaneidad es más íntima que la improvisación, porque esta última supone una mínima planificación; también es más amplia que la pura búsqueda de novedad (Muñoz, 2007), porque no se pretende nunca olvidar lo que se está sintiendo; supone, más bien, una voluntad de expresar lo que se siente más allá de los planes o las formas, que tanto fascinan a los no gitanos porque «sus vidas están despiadadamente sujetas a un plan» (Starkie, 1956, p. 131). La sabiduría popular ha acuñado algunas frases lo que constatan, como «pájaro que no canta, algo tiene en la garganta». La aceptación de algo es la mejor forma de integrarlo vitalmente.

De hecho, esa espontaneidad, aplicada a la música, se convierte en creatividad. Como afirmaba Listz, «en el arte, como en la vida, los gitanos no reconocen ni dogma, ni ley, ni regla, ni disciplina. (...) No se detienen ante ninguna audacia, siempre que corresponda a su propio instinto audaz y que refleje una verdadera imagen de su ser interior» (Starkie, 1956, p. 266). De ahí la acogida que el jazz está teniendo en la cultura gitana desde la década de 1930, siendo percibido como «verdadera válvula de escape, porque la improvisación se acepta *a priori*» (URE, 1998, p. 188). Sin improvisación tampoco puede haber corridas de toros, según Rafael de Paula (El Mundo, 16/05/2004). La improvisación, que Baudelaire (1863) asociaba al origen de la poesía, no está relacionada con no tener estudios artísticos sino con la voluntad de expresarse artísticamente. Esto resulta coherente con la importancia de la sinceridad como valor dentro de la moral gitana. Otro recurso para mostrar esta sinceridad sería «el pellizco», con el que el creador muestra de forma desgarradora sus sentimientos (alegría o dolor) a través de gemidos de voz (*quejíos*) o golpes de pié (*zapateo*); Jung (1951) relacionaba este último a la capacidad expresiva del gesto homónimo que hacen los niños (Molina, 1967, p. 81).

No en vano Morelli, uno de los más importantes pintores gitanos de la historia, afirma que «la estética gitana se nutre del instinto natural, sentido e intuición» (URE, 1998, p. 188).

Junto a la espontaneidad oral es importante la corporal: el movimiento. Es bien sabido que, tras expresar lo que se siente, el arte ha tenido históricamente la función de describir lo percibido. Lo importante es presentar la realidad, más que representarla, conscientes de que ningún concepto puede sustituirla. Recordemos que la lengua gitana supera su concreción terminológica con una enorme capacidad expresiva, sobre todo a través de recursos como la metáfora o la hipérbole. Trasladada al campo estético, eso se concretaría en el uso de recursos como el ritmo, el braceo o las aliteraciones. El primero, en sus diferentes intensidades, es una metáfora para mostrar tanto el paso del tiempo como los latidos del corazón, sobre el eje *rápido-lento*, extremo casi intuitivo por algunos autores (Molina, 1967, pp. 67–68). Finalmente, las aliteraciones son un mecanismo para reflejar la intensidad o inmensidad de aquello descrito, al repetir fonemas sin sentido, con variantes y matices, como «aiiiiiiii» (Starkie, 1956, p. 90). Este recurso del flamenco, también oriental, se denomina melisma, porque «el artista bucea en su interior y busca, en lo más profundo de su estado de ánimo, el matiz, la prolongación o la inflexión» (Rodríguez Maldonado, 2005, p. 8). De ahí el nombre de profundo o *jondo* para determinado tipo de cante.

Por ese motivo, su lenguaje no ahorra en recursos para construir las imágenes visuales que caracterizan a los relatos y cuentos gitanos. Estos mecanismos fueron ya estudiados por Croce en 1902 y la psicología de la forma en 1924. Los diferentes elementos sensoriales se relacionan para transmitir al espectador las sensaciones del creador en el momento creativo. Se trata de comunicar una experiencia, de conmover, de que el espectador sienta lo mismo que el creador. El arte gitano presenta emotivamente percepciones personales. Igualmente, tanto si es expresivo como descriptivo, el arte gitano siempre se caracterizará por no obviar detalles en el relato ni eludir tiempo en la expresión o la descripción. De ahí que los cuadros gitanos sean siempre figurativos, nunca abstractos, pero de una figuración que recuerda al impresionismo. La naturalidad

va así más allá del realismo, porque añade emoción a la descripción. El artista no actúa sino que se presenta el mismo como es, tendencia muy oriental (Nakamura, 1991, p. 373).

Los elementos temáticos son el contenido explícito al que refiere una obra artística, es decir, la materia con la que construirá su mensaje y adquirirá su significado completo, que el artista formulará a través de elementos sensoriales y formales. Habitualmente, entre otros, hace referencia a temas, personajes u objetos; incluso, al papel del propio artista. Constituyen el aspecto más opuesto a los elementos sensoriales, porque no apelan a los sentidos sino al intelecto.

Los temas más habituales en las obras gitanas serían la naturaleza, las costumbres y la comunidad, abordados desde la óptica del amor, la nostalgia o la tragedia, que lo constituye el propio *pathos* y muestra su estado interior. En el fondo, se trata de una «manifestación de la conciencia romaní» (Muñoz, 2007) sobre los elementos que conforman su cosmovisión, a partir de la óptica de sus valores. Esto se refleja tanto en temas (Molina, 1967, p. 115) y lugares (Molina, 1967, p. 121), como en los personajes (Molina, 1967, p. 134) que aparecen. Así, por ejemplo, las obras suelen girar en torno al respeto a las costumbres, la desaparición de la vida, la nostalgia de la naturaleza, el amor hacia otra persona, la opresión ante la falta de libertad... Lo gitano suele presentarse como centro de la narración, mientras que lo no gitano suele aparecer como extraño, a menudo amenazante.

Y, una vez más, es un arte que no arranca de la abstracción sino de la concreción, es decir, un arte que parte de la cotidianidad (Liégeois, 1987, pp. 90–91). De forma coherente con la dificultad de los gitanos para la abstracción, las obras gitanas no se refieren a ideas sino a situaciones, es decir, a ideas aplicadas en un contexto concreto y expresadas mediante alegría o tristeza, las dos actitudes básicas de la persona. Como arte expresivo, sitúa al gitano siempre como sujeto de la enunciación, de forma explícita.

Para ver hasta qué punto el arte gitano es coherente con su cosmovisión y sus valores basta con ver el curioso análisis comparativo que Molina hace con el arte de los negros afroamericanos, en el que el canto

es más un lamento que una protesta (Molina, 1967, p. 8), que invita a la aceptación no violenta del tiempo presente: «Desde el primer momento el negro (...) ha reaccionado con agresividad ante la opresión y el menosprecio, tratando de integrarse en la sociedad norteamericana, luchando por sus derechos con afán (...) En el gitano, en cambio, parece ser su no integración en la sociedad española [mayoritaria]; convivir sí, pero con límites. Ante la desgracia parece plegarse y aceptarla; este hecho aparece en la copla flamenca, donde nunca se habla de rebelión» (Herrero, 1991, pp. 117–120).

Pero el contenido no se agota con los significados explícitos y denotados, porque el lenguaje gitano también utiliza recursos implícitos y connotados que ayudan a garantizar la eficacia semántica de la narración. Nos referimos a las formas culturales, básicamente personas y objetos, que aparecen en las obras artísticas como arquetipos, para garantizar que el espectador siente lo que quiere el autor. Se trata de asimilar determinados colores a ciertos estados de ánimo y algunos objetos a ideas concretas. Esto es coherente con el lenguaje verbal gitano, que potencia la dimensión simbólica para crear imágenes visuales y superar así su dificultad para lo abstracto. Esta densidad semántica también la constata Morelli: «El árbol es siempre el sujeto principal de la representación, y está asociado a la idea de genealogía. (...) El rojo es como la sangre y, por tanto, es vida, tierra. El toro sugiere el sentido de espacio: cielo, libertad (...) Y aún otra contraposición: el frío y el calor. Aparecen el fuego y el agua como elementos dualistas (...) según la tradición filosófica zíngara» (URE, 1998, p. 190).

El análisis podría ir todavía más lejos, con la interpretación semiótica de otros de los elementos comunes en las obras artísticas gitanas: los caballos, sinónimo de libertad; las rosas, la pureza; el demonio, la culpa... Estos símbolos los asimila Ernst Cassirer «a la idea de concepto» (Gubern, 1992, p. 87). Las formas que utilizan los creadores gitanos son más parecidas a los *símbolos convencionales* (Fromm, 1951), porque son significantes en su cultura concreta, que a los *símbolos universales* (Jung, 1951), inherentes a la naturaleza humana.

En todas las manifestaciones, pues, se prima la naturalidad, combinada de manera barroca para dar apariencia de naturalidad. Tal es el canon

gitano, que valora la imitación de la realidad natural y, sobretodo, la descripción de los estados de ánimo interiores. No es tanto lo que se expresa (que también) sino cómo se expresa (Liégeois, 1987, p. 92). Lo que se valora, más que el realismo de la obra, es la expresión del creador: las cosas son en la medida que significan algo para alguien (Merleau-Ponty, 1985, p. 11). Este criterio, asimilable al del barroco, es tachado de «mal gusto» por los no gitanos porque se encuentra en las antípodas de su criterio estético. En Occidente, desde el Renacimiento, el canon occidental ha tendido a alejarse de la naturaleza, a diferencia del canon Oriental.

Esta tendencia barroca, de enaltecimiento de los sentidos, la reconoce Ramírez Heredia, al decir que «los gitanos somos portadores de una mentalidad típicamente oriental y, hasta cierto punto, barroca» (Ramírez Heredia, 1971, p. 175). Este barroquismo lo constata Morelli al describir la emoción del artista gitano: «Los gestos, en realidad, son láminas cortantes, espadas lanzadas más allá de la escena con voces estridentes, con lamentos y gritos» (URE, 1998, p. 192). Los gitanos, por ejemplo, valoraban el toreo de Rafael Guerra «por su intuición de las formas» (Alameda, 1989, p. 122). Como reconoce Morelli, «el arte es un mensaje espiritual antes que una elaboración formal» (URE, 1998, p. 192), extremo que otro gitano, Nedich, constata como «un especial sentido de la estética» (Actualidad Étnica, 11/08/2006). Como reconoce la pintora gitana Judea Heredia, «en más de una ocasión me han comentado que no podría pintar así si no fuese gitana» (VV.AA., 2003, p. 50). No en vano, como sostiene el torero gitano Rafael de Paula, «ser gitano es entender el arte de otra forma. Toreando me siento gitano» (El Mundo, 16/05/2004).

Hay que decir, finalmente, que los gitanos siguen sin saberlo a Benjamin (1936) cuando afirma que sólo es arte el producido para un momento y un lugar concretos. Es un arte contextual, que depende de la circunstancia del artista. Es un arte necesariamente original e irrepetible; cuando no es así, porque el artista interpreta la obra de otro, la interpretación alcanza características de recreación. Una obra es bella cuando, al margen de sus elementos estéticos, es auténtica, es decir, «vivir con verdad el momento de la verdad, lo que en el toreo se llama *cargar la suerte* o que en el cante o el baile se denomina *rematar*» (Albaicín, 1997, p. 365).

En el caso de la estética gitana, arte verdadero (no aquel pensado como espectáculo, a cambio de dinero) está pensado para ser interpretado y disfrutado en el seno de la comunidad. Efectivamente, se cocina, se baila, se viste o se torea para otras personas, porque todas esas manifestaciones son expresión de alguien que se expresa ante los demás.

De hecho, la primera función del arte gitano es reunir a la familia o a la comunidad, sobre todo en un contexto celebrativo. Sus celebraciones son lo más opuesto a los espectáculos, no sólo por su carácter auténtico sino también por la participación de los asistentes, que son *participantes* y no *espectadores*: no se limitan a mirar la ejecución del intérprete sino que se sienten interpelados por él y movidos a participar en la interpretación. Es lo que algunos autores denominan contemplación activa o *Einführung* (Molina, 1967, p. 96). Nada más alejado de la estética gitana que la concepción del arte como algo aislado de su contexto: el arte por el arte.

El arte tiene, en la cultura gitana, una función claramente socializadora. Las canciones y las narraciones son los medios tradicionales que han permitido transmitir la cultura gitana. Las obras artísticas constituyen una forma *amable* de transmitir, de una generación a otra, los rasgos fundamentales de la cultura gitana, básicamente en un entorno familiar y festivo. Como constata el *cantaor* Tomás de Perrate, al referirse al papel del artista, «los gitanos, cuando cantamos flamenco, estamos haciendo algo más que música: transmitimos de forma oral nuestra cultura. (...) En vez de convertirnos en protagonistas, hacemos que esta sabiduría nos traspase y llegue a los demás» (El País, 01/10/2006). La temática y sus elementos, así como el papel del propio intérprete, remiten siempre a la cultura gitana. De ahí que, como afirma el Manfredi, los recuerdos de los gitanos se encuentren en las letras de sus canciones (Manfredi, 1957, p. 19), porque su función «es expresar sociabilidad más que intercambiar ideas» (Fonseca, 1997, p. 81). El arte se constituye, así, en una alternativa a la escuela. Hay muchos niños no escolarizados, pero pocos sin alfabetizar artísticamente. De ahí la importancia de la afirmación, ya citada, del *cantaor* Manuel Agujetas, quien se enorgullecía de no haber ido nunca a la escuela y afirmaba que los gitanos alfabetizados no podían cantar

flamenco (Salinas, 2002, p. 6), porque quienes que se han socializado a la manera no gitana no pueden ya expresarse como gitanos.

Este carácter socializador supera incluso su función pedagógica para convertirse en un elemento purificador. Si la vida en plenitud es la que se vive en el contexto comunitario, hasta el punto que el tiempo que se pasa entre no gitanos es fuente de impureza, el hecho de participar en una actividad artística ayuda a purificarse. Permite reconstruirse como persona a la manera gitana, volviendo a cargar baterías de la fuente la *gitanidad*. Es una participación netamente catártica, en la que tanto el artista como los participantes sentirán que han salido renovados. De ahí la expresión «la gozamos», entre los gitanos españoles, que significa algo más de «lo hemos pasado bien». Es un goce estético, no una diversión. Pero no cabe duda de que el artista siente esta purificación de una forma más especial, porque el arte le permite compartir sus sentimientos más íntimos con los suyos, para destilar la tristeza o sublimar el sufrimiento, a la manera del dicho que asegura que «quien canta, su mal espanta». La emoción estética, cuando es plena, puede purificar.

Basten como ejemplo de todo lo expuesto la forma en que dos gitanos, la poetisa polaca Bronisława Wajs (1908–1987, «Papusza») y el cantaor español Juan Peña (1941–2016, «El Lebrijano»), sublimaron a través de la literatura y el arte, respectivamente, la persecución a la que fue sometida su pueblo en la segunda Guerra Mundial (1939–1945), la primera, y la Real Pragmática (1499) y la Gran Redada (1749), el segundo. En ambas las metáforas transforman el dolor en belleza y el sentimiento personal en una vivencia comunitaria. No se habla de un dolor abstracto sino concreto; al mismo tiempo, no se habla de un daño a uno mismo sino a la comunidad. Tampoco se entra en las causas sino en las consecuencias; la explicación no es objetiva sino subjetiva: es más una vivencia que un concepto. En definitiva, el análisis no es racional sino emocional, la vivencia no es individual sino grupal y, lo más importante: no hay una recreación en el dolor sino un canto a la esperanza. Ética y estética son las dimensiones predominantes, siendo la dimensión epistemológica más emocional que racional. De ahí el lenguaje que construye su narración sobre una descripción llena de metáforas y de hipérbolos en lo que lo importante no es tanto el hecho

narrado como compartirlo en la comunidad. En definitiva, se trata de una forma de sublimar el dolor compartiéndolo en comunidad, fin último de la narración en la cultura gitana.

Lágrimas de sangre (1952)	No le temblaron las manos (1980)
<p>En los bosques. Sin agua, sin fuego – mucha hambre. ¿Dónde podían dormir los niños? Sin tiendas. No podíamos encender fuego por la noche. Durante el día, el humo podía alertar a los alemanes. ¿Cómo vivir con los niños en el frío invierno? Todos están descalzos . . . Cuando nos querían asesinar, primero nos obligaron a trabajos forzados. Un alemán vino a vernos. -- Tengo malas noticias para vosotros. Quieren mataros esta noche. No se lo digáis a nadie. Yo también soy un Gitano moreno, de vuestra sangre – es verdad. Dios os ayude en el negro bosque . . . Habiendo dicho estas palabras, él nos abrazó . . .</p> <p>Durante dos o tres días sin comida. Todos yendo a dormir hambrientos. Incapaces de dormir, mirando a las estrellas . . . ¡Dios, qué bonita es la vida! Los alemanes no nos dejarán . . .</p> <p>¡Ah, tú, mi pequeña estrella! ¡al amanecer que grande eres! ¡Ciega a los alemanes! Confúndelos, llévalos por mal camino, ¡para que los niños Judíos y Gitanos puedan vivir!</p> <p>Cuando el gran invierno venga, ¿qué hará una mujer gitana con su niño pequeño? ¿Dónde encontrará ropa? Toda se ha convertido en harapos. Se quieren morir. Nadie lo sabe, sólo el cielo, solo el río escucha nuestro lamento. ¿Cuyos ojos nos veían como enemigos? ¿Cuya boca nos maldijo? No los escuches, Dios.</p>	<p>[Tientos] No fueron los judíos ni los moros fueron los reyes cristianos: ella se llamó Isabel y él se llamaba Fernando: cuando firmaron la ley no le temblaron la mano.</p> <p>Finales del siglo quince noventa y nueve años; una ley sin compasión nace en Medina del Campo.</p> <p>[Tientos, Estribillo] Cuando firmo firmó la ley no le tembló, tembló la mano.</p> <p>[Recitado] Se convierte en miedo amargo y la vieja libertad cierra el siglo tiritando.</p> <p>[Romance] Mando que en sesenta días a partir de hoy contados abandonen los caminos y el ser gitanos</p> <p>[Bulería por Soleá] Abandonen su carreta y dejen de ser gitanos. Abandonen sus costumbres, se conviertan en sirvientes, renieguen de su libertad.</p> <p>[Alboreá] Majestades, majestades, Doña Isabel, Don Fernando: ante de poner la firma ¡Pensadlo, por Dios, pensadlo!</p>

<p>¡Escúchanos! Una fría noche vino, La vieja mujer Gitana cantó Un cuento de hadas gitano: El invierno dorado vendrá, nieve, pequeña como las estrellas, cubrirá la tierra, las manos. Los ojos negros se congelarán, los corazones morirán.</p> <p>Tanta nieve caerá, cubrirá el camino. Solo se podía ver la Vía Láctea en el cielo.</p> <p>En esa noche de helada una hija pequeña se muere, y en cuatro días su madre la entierra en la nieve cuatro pequeñas canciones. Sol, sin ti, ver como una pequeña gitana se muere de frío en el gran bosque.</p> <p>Una vez, en casa, la luna se detuvo en la ventana, no me dejaba dormir. Alguien miraba hacia el interior. Yo pregunté -- ¡Quién está ahí? -- Abre la puerta, mi negra Gitana. Vi a una hermosa joven judía, temblando de frío, buscando comida. Pobrecita, mi pequeña. Le di pan, todo lo que tenía, una camisa. Nos olvidamos de que no muy lejos estaba la policía. Pero no vendrían esa noche. Todos los pájaros rezan por nuestros hijos, por eso la gente malvada, víboras, no los matarán. ¡Ah, destino! ¡Mi desafortunada suerte!</p> <p>La nieve caía tan espesa como hojas, nos cerraba el camino, tal era la nieve, que enterró las ruedas de los carros. Había que pisar una huella, empujar los carros detrás de los caballos.</p> <p>¡Cuánta miseria y hambre! ¡Cuánto dolor y camino! ¡Cuántas afiladas piedras se clavaron en los pies! ¡Cuántas balas silbaron cerca de nuestros oídos!</p>	<p>[Bulería por Soleá] Mando que si no obedeciese se le den cien latigazos y con sangre la espalda del reino sean desterraos y por la segunda vez con cuchillo afilado que le corten la oreja y vuelvan otra vez a ser desterrado</p> <p>Y por la tercera vez, si no cumplen lo mandado, que le apresen y que sea por toda la vía ya esclavo.</p> <p>[Tientos] Finales del siglo quince, noventa y nueve era el año. Toda España nos persigue, desde Medina del Campo</p> <p>najaremos muchos siglos, siglos de sangre y de espanto, najaremos muchos siglos para seguir siendo gitanos.</p> <p>La memoria era una casa, cerradita de calicanto, por dentro está el siglo quince, por fuera Medina del Campo.</p> <p>Cuando firmó, firmó la ley no le tembló, tembló la mano.</p>
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Conclusiones

El arte y la literatura impregnan la existencia gitana. Como el modelo antropológico gitano es de raíz comunitaria, se trata de expresiones culturales pensadas para ser compartidas en el seno de la comunidad, cuya identidad ayuda a vertebrar en un proceso de doble dinámica que enriquece tanto al individuo como a la comunidad. Los géneros por excelencia son los cuentos y el cante, que están concebidos como elementos de expresión, de descripción efectista y barroca de la reacción emocional frente a los estímulos externos. Como la técnica compositiva se basa en la espontaneidad y el movimiento, la interpretación artística y literaria sirve de instrumento para compartir las emociones, a la manera de terapia de grupo, integrando o rechazando de forma logoterápica las vivencias. Eso hace que las personas de identidad gitana puedan superar la tensión existencial que supone el contraste entre el mundo gitano y el no gitano.

A todo ello se añade la forma de pensar fuertemente realista de los gitanos se ha superpuesto a los rasgos de origen oriental (voluntad de conocimiento y lógica de carácter inductivo) que han perdurado en su inconsciente cognitivo. Esa falta de rigidez lógica ha creado en ellos una flexibilidad basada en la búsqueda de equivalentes homeomórficos o funcionales, que hace que se resitúen fácilmente. Al mismo tiempo, la lógica inductiva crea en ellos una facilidad para el desarrollo de la intuición, que se alimenta de imágenes, metáforas, reiteraciones e hipérbolos.

Estas constataciones van más allá de los estudios realizados en este campo, que se basan exclusivamente en la capacidad de aprendizaje de los niños y jóvenes gitanos con independencia de los contextos noéticos en los que se desarrolla su actividad vital. En cambio, lo gitano es una forma de pensar y de sentir propia, lo que configura el pathos de las personas gitanas. De ahí que las investigaciones dedicadas a aplicar entre el alumnado gitano las mismas estrategias y recursos que con el resto de alumnado en general hayan tenido una incidencia limitada en la superación del absentismo, el fracaso o el abandono escolar de los niños y jóvenes gitanos. Únicamente cabe destacar, si bien tangencialmente, las aproximaciones realizadas por el sacerdote Andrés Manjón, quien en 1889 creó sus

«escuelas del Ave María», en Sevilla, Córdoba y Granada, para atender específicamente a niños gitanos, así como la experiencia de Teresa Codina, maestra e impulsora de las escuelas Avillar chavorrós y Chavó-Chaví del barrio de Can Tunis, en Barcelona, así como la Asociación de Enseñantes con Gitanos, todas aun por analizar a través de monografías.

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Mathematical Resilience as a Conceptual Framework for School Practice

Abstract

The aim of the study is to analyze mathematical resilience from theoretical and practical perspectives. The paper is based on a review of the literature. Research on mathematics education has revealed a large proportion of students with math anxiety whose achievements in math are worsening. Such results encourage a discussion on preventing math anxiety. Research on the resilience of children and adolescents has accelerated in recent decades, resulting in the formulation of the concepts of school and mathematical resilience. The article presents the ecological model of mathematical resilience. The role of parents and teachers in promoting mathematical resilience is also described. The paper presents areas where students can self-foster mathematical resilience. The conclusions are related to the importance of strengthening mathematical resilience in education.

Keywords: mathematical resilience, math education, growth mindset, self-determination, self-efficacy

Introduction

As a result of research on math anxiety in the fields of education and psychology, studies on the phenomenon of school and mathematical resilience have been increasingly common in the international arena (Johnston-Wilder & Lee, 2010; Lee & Johnston-Wilder, 2017). The term resilience in psychology has been used to describe a set of abilities that allow a person to avoid the consequences of a difficult situation or even achieve success and experience personal growth despite failures. In the social sciences, this phenomenon was first described in the 1970s (Luthar et al., 2000; Masten, 2001). With regard to mathematics education, the term used in the past was the student's *emotional hardiness* in mathematics (Ariyanto et al., 2017), understood as permanent features and adaptive abilities that allow an individual to develop positively despite struggles and stress.

In the context of immune resources, resilience refers to the dynamic process of the interplay of biological, psychological, social, and environmental factors which constantly interact. They enable the individual to regain mental well-being despite experiencing adversities, even very challenging ones (Luthar & Brown, 2007; O'Leary, 1998). It is visible when experiencing serious difficulties while striving for development, despite objectively unfavorable circumstances (Oszwa et al., 2017).

In research on the resilience of children and adolescents, the following main trends emerge: a) identification of developmental risk and protective factors of resilience, b) analysis of the dynamics and mechanisms of resilience, c) strategies of strengthening resilience in people at risk, and d) multi-directional interdisciplinary research on resilience with strong input from neuroscience (see Sikorska, 2016).

Mathematical Resilience in Math Education

In the field of education, Clare Lee and Sue Johnston-Wilder (2017) suggested that mathematical resilience should become the term used to describe a student maintaining positive emotions toward mathematics

despite difficulties that they may experience and associate with the subject. Such an approach, which assigns a specific attribute of resilience, associating it with a given field (for example, mathematical resilience or sports resilience) is consistent with the partial approach to wellbeing. On the one hand, wellbeing can be discussed as a general assessment of one's own life, but on the other hand, it could be perceived as physical, spiritual, or creative well-being. Thus, mathematical resilience is a special type of resilience, an emotional and mental phenomenon related to the ability to return to a state of equilibrium despite periodic difficulties in learning mathematics.

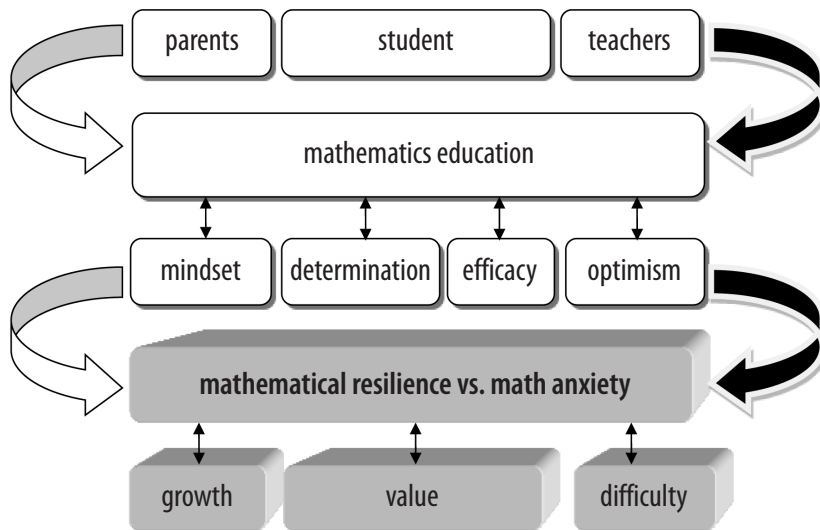
Focusing on the positive aspects of mathematics education can prove to be beneficial, not only in the context of preventing math anxiety, but also in making mathematics a field of knowledge accessible to many, and not reserved only for the mathematically gifted students. This is especially important in view of the research on gender stereotypes in mathematics (Bieg et al., 2015) and the threat that this stereotype poses among girls (Finnigan & Corker, 2016).

Analyses of students who manifest resilience in life situations consistently reveal the presence of three factors: a) individual immune resources, b) emotional support from parents, and c) a supportive psychosocial environment that encourages interaction, a creative approach to tasks, cooperation, and the development of problem-solving skills (Johnston-Wilder & Lee, 2010). Researchers have pointed out that students' mathematical resilience can be developed by emphasizing the value of effort in the education process and encouraging the student to make further attempts despite failures (Pieronkiewicz & Szczygieł, 2019). It is important for the teacher to have a flexible approach to the student, focusing on their development and encouraging them to take up challenges with attention on effort being the driving force of success (Dweck, 2017).

Ecological Model of Mathematical Resilience

In the comprehensive model of mathematical resilience designed by Clare Lee and Sue Johnston-Wilder (2017), the authors take into account its psychosocial background, as well as the consequences of acting in the process of learning/teaching mathematics. Its ecological dimension is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Ecological model of mathematics education focused on the development of math resilience rather than math anxiety



Note. For the full description of the concept, see Johnston-Wilder & Lee (2010); Lee & Johnston-Wilder (2017).

There is no doubt that not only the students, but also their teachers and parents, participate in the process of mathematics education. The mathematics education system is multi-track, also in terms of the content being taught. It is accompanied by the construction of knowledge, while the acquisition of soft skills and competences – such as resilience, perseverance, and determination – are in high demand in this process.

Resilience, as the ability to activate resources of growth and development in problematic situations, may turn out to be a useful, universal life skill for dealing with difficulty and adversity; therefore, it could be useful in solving all types of problems, not only mathematical ones (Dweck, 2017). In this process, the student's mindset could be considered one of the keys of the math resilience model. Another key factor in math resilience is the student's motivation, especially their self-determination in forming intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000a; 2000b). In developing math resilience, the emphasis has also been on perseverance and steadfastness, not giving up despite difficulties, and not breaking under the pressure of adversity. It is an opportunity to strengthen the sense of self-efficacy once a goal has been achieved (Bandura, 1982; 2000; 2006). Thus, another key element in the ecological model of math resilience, indicated by Lee and Johnston-Wilder (2017) is developing students' optimistic self-confidence in mathematics. This could be accomplished by encouraging them to persistently seek solutions to mathematical problems, to approach problems from different perspectives, and to exceed their own limitations. In line with Martin Seligman's (1995) concept of pedagogical optimism, a child with an optimistic explanatory style perceives obstacles as temporary and related to the situation, not as arising from their immutable personality traits.

Growth Mindset and Self-Determination in Math Resilience

Carol Dweck (2017) distinguished two types of mindset. The term is used to describe how an individual perceives the causes of their successes and failures. It could be focused on growth and development (growth mindset) or on the student's innate abilities (fixed mindset). A person with a growth mindset believes that intelligence, special abilities, and skills can be developed and that they can be improved through effort, which gives unlimited development opportunities in any field. The research by Dweck (2017) looked at the overall learning process. In adapting Dweck's theory to mathematics education, it seems that activities aimed at changing

beliefs and focusing the mentality on student growth and development should be long-term and on a larger scale. Some researchers (e.g., Ramirez et al., 2018) suggest designing studies that indicate strategies for systemic influences that can change students' mindsets toward more constructive interpretations of mistakes and failures in mathematics learning.

Another element of the dynamic model of math resilience is self-determination. It originates from self-determination theory, which assumes that it is inherent in human nature to be curious about one's environment and interested in learning and development (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Satisfying children's basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are crucial to their personal development. In education, it facilitates students' autonomous self-regulation of learning and self-satisfaction. The most autonomous type of motivation is intrinsic motivation, which refers to behaviors that are interesting and enjoyable to the individual (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). Intrinsically motivated behavior is sustained by an internal sense of interest and satisfaction. On the contrary, external motivation results from incentives beyond the behavior itself, such as rewards and external reinforcement. A self-determined student will be characterized by more autonomous motivation, consistent with their intrinsic goals. This type of motivation is opposite to controlled motivation, which is related to extrinsic goals (Ryan & Deci, 2017). In the math resilience model, the key would be also to meet the universal needs of the student in terms of developing autonomous motivation. As indicated in a recent study (Knopik & Oszwa, 2019), constructing educational situations aimed at meeting the needs of students' relatedness, competence, and autonomy creates ample opportunity to take responsibility for the learning process.

Both the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), and the theory of mindsets (Dweck, 2017) seem to gain special recommendation in mathematics education, ensuring an increase in students' intrinsic motivation and an attitude of making more of an effort along with faith that difficulties can be overcome. Against this background, it is particularly important for parents and teachers to develop such an attitude in students, which would be an investment not only in their success

in mathematics, but also in many other areas of life and activity (Johnston-Wilder & Lee, 2010).

Self-Efficacy and Optimism in Math Resilience

For success in mathematics, it is important to develop students' confidence in the subject. One way to do so is to encourage students to persistently look for solutions and approach problems from multiple perspectives and to encourage them to exceed the limits of their skills. Math education for the development of pedagogical optimism (Seligman, 1995) in the process of learning and teaching is a particularly important element in acquiring mathematical knowledge. The difficulty lies in the inherent nature of math problems. This means that students who do not give up too easily in the process of overcoming difficulties will also be less prone to experience math anxiety. Thus, developing pedagogical optimism has a clear correlation to reducing the level of negative emotions in learning math. Moreover, perseverance recruits support when it is needed (Beilock & Willingham, 2014; Oszwa et al., 2017). Researchers point to differences between persistence and perseverance, although both are important for resilience. Perseverance is related to knowing when to continue without giving up too soon, how to apply alternative strategies, and when to ask for support (Lee & Johnston-Wilder, 2017).

Mathematics education can be seen as opportunity to develop students' self-efficacy, both in a general sense and specifically in relation to mathematical activities. The concept of self-efficacy was introduced into psychology by Albert Bandura (2000) and it refers to the subjective feeling about our expectation of how well we will cope with a task. Expectations may include a) self-efficacy (Can I do this task?), b) performance (How well will I do this task?), and c) utility (What benefit will completing this task bring?). The stronger the students' sense of self-efficacy, the greater their perseverance and determination will be in pursuing their goals. Self-efficacy affects the degree of commitment to action. The more

the students are convinced of their ability to achieve a goal, the more effort they will be able to put into achieving it (Bandura, 2006).

The ecological model of math resilience is a theoretical construct that will need empirical verification, which is usually a multi-stage process. It requires the construction of tools to measure its components as well as to determine their role in the model. Teaching practice can also provide some data to expand the theoretical concept of the model.

Math Resilience in School Practice

Both parents and teachers have a modelling influence on the attitudes connected with ability and effort in learning mathematics. Parents, as the first educators of their children, have many opportunities to interest them in mathematics, to show its many dimensions, and to encourage persistence in overcoming difficulties. Early education teachers can communicate positive attitudes toward mathematics and its value and can arouse curiosity and interest in numbers and mathematics in the surrounding world. Teachers also play a role in the early identification of students at risk of mathematics anxiety, which may prove useful in understanding its determinants and mechanisms. Knowing how to promote and foster math resilience at school is important for teachers and parents, as well as for the students themselves. The repertoire of such strategies may be different for each group. Math resilience is associated with placing value on mathematics, having a growth mindset, and the ability to recognize that math problem-solving usually involves effort and challenges. This is why the availability of support is so important in math resilience. The specific support mechanism has been presented in the growth zone model (Lee & Johnston-Wilder, 2017), based on Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development.

The Role of the Teacher in Fostering Students' Math Resilience

Students experiencing failure in mathematics may be one of the potential causes of math anxiety. The teacher plays a role in fostering both math resilience and math anxiety. Math anxiety can arise because of math itself, as knowledge becomes complicated in a spiral way and tasks become more difficult. However, it has often been a consequence of the way the subject was presented and taught by the teacher. Moreover, math anxiety may be transmitted by teachers through their negative experiences from their time as students (Beilock et al., 2010). This transfer seems particularly strong from pre-service female teachers to their female students (Szczygieł & Cipora, 2016). Furthermore, this modelling influence may be reinforced by teachers' false belief that mathematics is the domain of men (Turska & Oszwa, 2017; 2018). Raising awareness among math teachers about the math gender stereotype and its impact on girls' mathematical achievements may require long-term efforts to change attitudes and the methods of communication and assessment.

In order to promote math resilience, math teachers should give students the opportunity to discover new rules and formulas and should encourage them to struggle. According to the psychological principle, the most constructive thinking occurs when we struggle with a problem of moderate difficulty (Dowker et al., 2016).

As evidenced by students' reports, teachers often send them verbal messages that intensify their math-related frustrations instead of reducing them. According to Dweck (2017), a message that emphasizes the student's effort and communicates the teacher's belief in their potential has the greatest motivating value. Stimulating a growth mindset in students from the early stages of education is far more motivating than developing a fixed mindset, which in the future may manifest as explaining one's lack of success in mathematics with a lack of mathematical skills ("I don't have math skills; therefore I can't do it"). The teacher's belief in their students' abilities and appreciation of their commitment to solving problems are more likely to provide a positive experience and to develop math resilience rather than math anxiety.

Modifications in teacher education also include a promising direction in promoting math resilience. Both math teachers and early education teachers should participate in programs which enhance their knowledge of math resilience and strategies that can foster it (Beilock & Willingham, 2014). Their contact with children in early education has an effect on the long-term attitudes and emotions toward school subjects and difficulties (Beilock, 2008).

Parents' Role in Promoting Their Children's Math Resilience

When parents communicate positive attitudes toward mathematics, paying attention to personal statements about mathematics as a school subject and their experiences with it in the presence of children, they can promote math resilience by avoiding negative modelling ("I never knew math, math was always difficult for me"). Studies on parents helping children with their math homework (Herts et al., 2019; Vukovic et al., 2013) indicate the controversial nature of this practice. On the one hand, support from parents and adequate expectations toward the child may be strong factors in developing math resilience and it may have a positive impact on their achievement in math (Vukovic et al., 2013). On the other hand, mothers who are anxious about mathematics may aggravate this anxiety in their children, so it seems better if they do not engage in their children's math homework (Maloney et al., 2015) until they have addressed their own anxiety.

Students as the Authors of Their Own Math Resilience

The student is an active subject of mathematics education, and them correctly interpreting situations and giving meaning to experiences with mathematics can be considered a key factor for the development of math resilience. In forming math resilience, it is important to understand that difficulties, barriers, and obstacles are an integral part of the learning

process, which can give the struggle in mathematics a new meaning (Lee & Johnston-Wilder, 2017). An attempt to reformulate the assessment of a mathematical situation and one's own reactions to it may help one become convinced that learning can be useful even when it is not carried out with ease (Dweck, 2017; Johnston-Wilder & Lee, 2010; Pieronkiewicz & Szczygieł, 2019).

It may also be of particular importance to assign meaning to signals of physiological arousal. Most people see them as a general response to a stressful situation, a threat that should be avoided. However, some people assess such physiological indicators as stimulation, the announcement of a challenge that needs to be faced and overcome. Such interpretative differentiation leads to different strategies for coping with stress (Ramirez et al., 2018). Physiological markers of anxiety may be assessed by some as a threat and by others as a challenge (Oszwa, 2020). The arguments for the effectiveness of such an approach have been provided by Jameson (2014) in a study on two groups of students at higher vocational schools: 1) an experimental group, in which students with math anxiety were informed before a test that increased emotional arousal is optimal for solving mathematical tasks, and 2) a control group, in which students were advised to ignore any signs of stress when taking a test and to carry on regardless. After the test, significantly more correct answers were observed in the experimental group than in the control group (Jameson, 2014). This indicates that an awareness of emotional arousal and a positive assessment of its symptoms may have an impact on students' math performance.

Research (Lin-Siegler et al., 2016) has positively verified the assumption that students who hear about the difficulties of famous scientists may feel more connected to the field of knowledge they are learning (Bedyńska & Dreszer, 2006). A particularly noticeable improvement in performance was seen in students with lower achievement. In science – including math – failure is especially important, as it carries a lot of information and allows one to learn from errors. Therefore, the realistic images of scientists who made errors yet achieved a lot may encourage perseverance, even in spite of obstacles (Lin-Siegler et al., 2016).

Conclusion

Math resilience seems to be a promising construct that can lead to good practice in mathematics education. In the contemporary world, there has been noticeable increase in importance of mathematics as a field of knowledge. On the other hand, a rise in difficulties studying mathematics has also been reported in many countries. This situation has urged researchers to explore the field multidirectionally. One trend is to analyze the causes and mechanisms of math difficulties. Another direction of research is based on a discussion of what differentiates mathematics from other school subjects, leading to the discovery and empirical exploration of the math anxiety that accompanies math education and is related to lower math achievement. In this context, the interest in math resilience seems to lead to the prevention of math anxiety, as well as higher achievements in mathematics. The road may turn out to be long and fraught with challenges, but it brings hope for the improvement in the educational situation of many students. Math resilience being represented in the pedagogical literature is an important step in forming the concept, planning related research, constructing models, doing empirical research, and eventually implementing the results into educational practice for individual and social benefits.

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The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini. A Model of Resilient Vocation

La autobiografía de Benvenuto Cellini. Un modelo de vocación resiliente

Abstract

Benvenuto Cellini is one of the great sculptors of the 16th century. Already in his time, his works were admired in Rome, Paris and his native Florence. Beyond his works, his popularity has remained unchanged over the last four centuries thanks to his autobiography.

This autobiography is an essential work for gaining first-hand knowledge of the sculptor's work, but also, and especially, of the anthropological vision of culture at the time.

This article attempts to show this vision and at the same time to highlight how the reading of this autobiography is an example of how following one's vocation is a fundamental help in overcoming difficulties.

Keywords: Benvenuto Cellini, Renaissance, Autobiography, Resilience

Resumen

Benvenuto Cellini es uno de los grandes escultores del siglo XVI. Ya en su tiempo sus obras son admiradas en Roma, París o su ciudad natal, Florencia. Más allá de sus obras, su popularidad se ha mantenido inalterable a lo largo de los cuatro últimos siglos gracias a su autobiografía.

Esta autobiografía supone una obra imprescindible para conocer de primera mano la obra del escultor, pero también y de una manera destacada, la visión antropológica de la cultura en la época.

Este artículo trata de mostrar esta visión y a la vez destacar cómo la lectura de esta autobiografía supone una muestra ejemplarizante de cómo el seguimiento de la vocación es una ayuda fundamental para la superación de las dificultades.

Palabras claves: Benvenuto Cellini, Renacimiento, Autobiografía, Resiliencia

Introducción

Benvenuto Cellini (1500–1571) es uno de los escultores más importantes del Renacimiento italiano. Su Perseo de la Plaza de la Señoría en Florencia o su salero para Francisco I de Francia¹ -ahora en el Museo de Historia del Arte de Viena- son una referencia indiscutible del Manierismo italiano y aparecen en cualquier manual básico de Historia del Arte.

Pero Cellini además de deber su fama a su obra escultórica -y de orfebrería- la debe también en buena medida a “su extraordinaria autobiografía [que lo] ha convertido en una de las personalidades más conocidas del Renacimiento, y el libro mismo es una de las fuentes más importantes y polémicas para estudiar esa época” (Wittkower, 2020, p. 180).

La autobiografía² de Benvenuto -conocida habitualmente como *La Vita*- es un relato de una viveza extraordinaria que no deja indiferente

¹ Otras obras fundamentales son la Ninfa de Fontainebleau (Louvre), el Crucifijo de El Escorial o el desaparecido y colosal Júpiter que realiza para Francisco I.

² Escribe también dos tratados fundamentales sobre los procesos técnicos aprendidos a lo largo de su vida. Son el Tratado de la Orfebrería y Tratado de la Escultura.

a nadie. A lo largo de más de 600 páginas, el autor cuenta su historia de “una gran energía y una vitalidad excepcional” (Gómez Oliver en Cellini, 2018, p. 28). Una vida donde el escultor trata cercanamente a los papas Clemente VII y Pablo III, al rey Francisco I de Francia³, al gran Duque de Toscana Cósimo I⁴, o donde se describe amistades y riñas con grandes artistas como Miguel Ángel, Giulio Romano o Tiziano⁵.

El relato es entretenido e ingenioso. A lo largo de capítulos breves (dos, tres páginas), el autor muestra, con “su legendario carácter prepotente, irascible, imprevisible” (Gómez Oliver en Cellini, 2018, p. 21) toda una visión de primera mano inmediata y sencilla de la vida de la época, especialmente de Roma, Florencia y París. El lector es transportado con entusiasmo a hechos reales cargados de escenas donde puede *oír* discusiones en el Palacio del Rey de Francia o en audiencia privada con el Papa.

Esta sencillez que el lector capta ya desde las primeras páginas se debe a que Benvenuto no escribe estas memorias, sino que las dicta. Y ello convierte a la obra en una narración amena y directa. El mismo nos lo cuenta al empezar:

Empecé a escribir de mi propia mano esta vida mía, como puede verse en ciertos papeles ligados; pero considerando que perdía demasiado tiempo y pareciéndome una vanidad desmesurada, se presentó ante mí un hijo de Michele di Goro dalla Pieve a Groppine, niño de unos catorce años que era enfermizo. Empecé a hacerle escribir, y mientras yo trabajaba le iba dictando mi vida; y como ello me proporcionaba cierto placer, trabajaba mucho más asiduamente y realizaba muchas más obras. (Cellini, 1984, p. 11)

³ Especialmente tormentosa es su relación con la amante del Rey, madame d'Étampes.

⁴ Y con su esposa Eleonora de Toledo.

⁵ La lista es muy extensa. Destacan los nombres de Piero Torrigiani, Gianfrancesco, Rosso Fiorentino, Iacopo Sansovino, Francesco Primaticcio, Baccio Bandinelli, Bartolomeo Ammannati, Pontorno y Bronzino.

Unido a este estilo directo del relato está lo excepcional de lo narrado. Véase, de modo sucinto, alguna de las aventuras que narra Cellini. A los 16 años es desterrado de Florencia durante seis meses, a causa de una riña; a los 19 años, es condenado por otra riña callejera en la que hiere a varias personas. Consigue huir a Roma disfrazado de fraile. A los 27, lucha en el saqueo de Roma defendiendo al Papa -sobrecogedores son los capítulos que está como bombardero del Castello de Sant'Angelo en defensa del Papa y mata con su arcabuz a Carlos III de Borbón⁶ o hiere al príncipe Orange-. A los 30 años, consigue vengar el crimen de su hermano y mata al asesino (cinco años más tarde el papa Clemente VII le perdonará ese homicidio). Cuando tiene 38 años, es arrestado injustamente acusado de robo. Las calumnias de Pier Luigi, hijo del papa Pablo III, le mantienen más de un año en prisión, de donde, como si se tratara de un personaje de una novela de aventuras, logra escapar bajando con unas sábanas de una torre -y a consecuencia de la caída se rompe una pierna- pero en seguida es atrapado y encarcelado de nuevo. Cuando obtiene finalmente la libertad⁷, huye a Francia, pero incluso en este viaje tiene incidentes que contar, como su riña con un encargado de postas al que mata.

Esta autobiografía no se publicó hasta más 150 años después de la muerte de Cellini. Fue un médico⁸ de Nápoles que queda capturado por la personalidad del escultor y buscaba “una explicación en términos de complejo de humores, de causas físicas, orgánicas” (Miguel Barceló en Cellini, 1984, p. 5).

Esta personalidad astuta, impetuosa, fogosa que *La Vita* refleja en sus páginas ha cautivado a grandes artistas, especialmente a los de la época romántica. Así, Goethe, el primer traductor de Cellini al alemán, vio “en [él] la encarnación del espíritu renacentista italiano” (Wittkower, p.180). Héctor Berlioz compuso la ópera Benvenuto Cellini basada -muy lejanamente- en los hechos narrados en *La Vita*. También Alejandro

⁶ “Advertí una gran confusión en el campo de los asaltantes. La razón era que uno de nuestros tiros había tumbado al Borbón, que a juzgar por lo que oímos después era aquel mismo que yo veía sobresalir por encima del grupo” (Cellini, 1984, p. 77).

⁷ Gracias a la intervención del Cardenal de Ferrara.

⁸ Antonio Cocchi.

Dumas quedó seducido por el personaje; buena muestra de ello es su novela *Ascanio*⁹, donde Cellini es el personaje principal. Un ejemplo más cercano es el de Salvador Dalí que, fascinado por el personaje, ilustra una las ediciones de *La Vita*.

La vocación de Cellini

Muchos aspectos se pueden destacar de la personalidad de Cellini. Pero uno de ellos influye sobre todo el resto de su vida: su vocación como orfebre y escultor.

Su padre quería que fuera músico, pero a Cellini no le gustaba en absoluto: "A mí no me gustaba nada tocar la flauta o cantar, y me prestaba a ello únicamente por obedecer a mi padre" (Cellini, 1984, p. 25).

Benvenuto, desde bien joven, entiende, que está llamado a dedicar su vida al arte. Pero no a cualquier arte, sino el que percibe como el más sublime.

Quando mi padre insistía en que yo fuera músico, le suplicaba que me dejara dibujar unas horas al día y que el resto lo dedicaría a tocar para complacerle. A lo cual él me decía:

-¿De modo que no te gusta tocar?

Yo le contestaba que no, porque me parecía un arte muy inferior al que yo llevaba dentro. Desesperado, el bueno de mi padre me puso de aprendiz en el taller del padre del caballero Bandinello. (Cellini, 1984, p. 28)

A pesar de estar de aprendiz en un taller, su padre insiste en que no deje la música. Se presenta aquí una tensión frecuente en aquellos con una fuerte vocación: la lucha entre su inclinación natural y los deseos de sus padres marcados, a menudo, por tradiciones familiares o buscando el mejor futuro económico para sus hijos. Así mientras Benvenuto contenta

⁹ Ascanio es uno de los ayudantes fieles de Cellini durante muchos años.

a su padre, se va formando en la orfebrería: “Al mismo tiempo iba todos los días a dar mi lección de música, y en pocas semanas adelanté mucho en eso del maldito tocar la flauta. Pero mucho más adelanté en el arte de la orfebrería” (Cellini, 1984, p. 30).

Finalmente, Cellini a los 19 años abandona la casa paterna para ir Roma en busca de mayor formación¹⁰. Su padre, no obstante, no se daba por vencido:

Entretanto mi padre me escribía unas cartas lastimosas rogándome que volviera a casa; en cada una de ellas me recomendaba que no olvidase la música aquella que con tanto esfuerzo me enseñó. Al leer esto se me quitaban las ganas de regresar, tanta era la aversión que le tenía a aquel maldito tocar la flauta. (Cellini, 1984, p. 34)

Cellini al llegar a Roma es feliz. Vive para su arte y en seguida obtiene sus frutos: “Y era tanto mi deseo de aprender, o mi talento, o ambas cosas, que en pocos meses me puse a la altura no sólo de los buenos, sino de los mejores artistas jóvenes; y empecé a obtener el fruto de mis esfuerzos” (Cellini, 1984, p. 28).

Cellini, así, al seguir esa vocación supera las dificultades que van apareciendo con alegría y con mucha mayor facilidad que el resto: “aunque estaba plagado de dificultades, me gustaba tanto que todas ellas parecían servirme de descanso” (Cellini, 1984, p. 59).

En pocos años se convierte en uno de los orfebres y escultores más admirados en su época. El propio Miguel Ángel, al que Cellini estima con devoción¹¹, queda sorprendido ante las obras del joven Cellini. Miguel Ángel le dice en una ocasión a propósito de una obra que Cellini le enseña:

¹⁰ Típico de la época. Cfr. Wittkower, 2020, p. 53 y s. “Ni pintores ni escultores pueden producir obras significativas si no hacen el viaje a Roma” (Francisco de Hollanda cit. en Wittkower, 2020, p.53).

¹¹ En un momento determinado de su juventud Cellini se encuentra con Pietro Torrigiano que le pide que viaje con él a Inglaterra. En un principio, a Cellini no le parece mala idea; pero esta es su reacción cuando se entera de que Torrigiano había sido el responsable de desfigurar la cara a Miguel Ángel: “Esta historia despertó tanto

Si esta obra fuese de mayor tamaño y en mármol o en bronce, maravillosamente dibujada como está, sería el asombro del mundo; y aun así, pequeña como es, me parece tan hermosa, que dudo que los antiguos pudieran hacer cosa igual. (Cellini, 1989, p. 77)

Subyugados a la belleza creadora de su arte quedan también los papas Clemente VII -“Es el artista más grande que ha habido en el mundo entre todos los de su profesión” (Cellini, 1984, p. 118)- y Pablo III -“Sabed que los hombres como Benvenuto, únicos en su profesión, no están obligados a respetar las leyes” (Cellini, 1984, p. 148)-.

Todo ello va animando a Cellini a seguir trabajando y lo reafirma en su vocación en la escultura. Reveladora es, en este sentido, la anécdota que Benvenuto cuenta de un broche que el Papa Clemente VII manda hacer. Muchos orfebres además de Cellini presentan sus dibujos. El Papa no queda satisfecho de ninguno hasta que llega al modelo de Cellini:

Al papa, que no dejaba de tener buen gusto, aquello no acababa de gustarle. Al acabar de ver el décimo dibujo tiró al suelo los que le faltaban por ver y me dijo a mí, que estaba un poco apartado:

—¡A ver, Benvenuto, enséñanos tu modelo que quiero ver si has incurrido en el mismo error que esta gente!

Yo di unos pasos, me situé delante de él y abrí la cajita redonda que contenía mi modelo. Súbitamente salió un destello de los ojos del papa, que dijo a grandes voces:

—¡Ni aunque hubieras estado dentro de mí lo hubieras hecho mejor ni tan a mi gusto. Tus rivales han elegido el mejor medio para cubrirse de vergüenza!

Acercáronse muchos señores de los que había por allí, a los cuales el papa hizo ver la diferencia que había entre mi modelo y los

odio en mí, que diariamente veía nuevas obras maestras del divino Michelagnoli, que no sólo se me pasaron las ganas de irme con él a Inglaterra, sino que tampoco podía soportar el tenerlo ante mi vista. Seguí en Florencia tratando de aprender el maravilloso estilo de Michelagnoli, y de él nunca me he apartado” (Cellini, 1984, p. 36).

dibujos. Me alabó tanto que dejó a mis rivales aterrados, hechos polvo, y después se volvió hacia mí y me dijo:

—Creo, Benvenuto, que tu modelo tiene, un gran inconveniente.

La cera es fácil de trabajar: la cuestión es hacerlo en oro...

Altivamente le respondí:

—Santo Padre, si no me sale diez veces mejor que el modelo, me comprometo a no cobrarlo. (Cellini, 1984, p. 95)¹²

Elogios similares le dedica el gran mecenas y esperanza de los humanistas, Francisco I, rey de Francia. Sirva de ejemplo, la reacción del monarca al ver el coloso Júpiter: “—¡Ésta es la cosa más bella que haya visto hombre alguno en la tierra! Y yo, que me deleito y entiendo de obras de arte, jamás hubiera imaginado algo que fuera solamente la centésima parte de bello que este Júpiter”¹³ (Cellini, 1984, p. 324)¹⁴.

¹² Muchas son las anécdotas que Cellini cuenta de Clemente VII. He aquí otra significativa del carácter de ambos:

“Por encargo del papa tenía que hacer otro troquel para una moneda de dos carlinos con el busto de su santidad en el anverso, y en el reverso un Cristo sobre las aguas del mar tendiendo la mano a San Pedro, y con la siguiente leyenda alrededor: *Quare dubitasti?* La moneda gustó muchísimo. Tanto que Sanga, secretario del papa, hombre de talento, le dijo:

—Su santidad puede envanecerse de tener una clase de moneda como no ha habido otra, ni aun entre los antiguos, con toda su pompa.

A lo que el papa respondió:

—Quien debe envanecerse es Benvenuto de haber encontrado un emperador de mi categoría, que no duda en reconocerle sus méritos.

Seguía trabajando sin parar en el gran broche de oro. A menudo iba a enseñárselo al papa, que quería ver cómo progresaba, y cada día se quedaba más admirado” (p. 100).

¹³ Muy divertido es la lucha velada que mantienen Cellini y madame d’Étampes, amante del Rey, en el momento de descubrir la estatua de mármol. El triunfo apoteósico de Cellini enfurecerá más, si cabe, a madame contra Cellini.

¹⁴ He aquí algunos ejemplos más de las alabanzas del Rey de Francia:

“Verdaderamente no creo que los antiguos vieran nada semejante a esto, de tanta calidad ... Recuerdo haber visto las mejores obras de los mejores maestros italianos pero nunca vi ninguna que me hiciera tanta impresión como ésta” (p. 271).

“Esto es cien veces más divino de lo que pensé. ¡Este hombre es maravilloso! ¡No debe dejar nunca de trabajar!” (p. 282).

El culmen de la aclamación al arte de Cellini llega cuando su obra maestra, Perseo con la cabeza de Medusa, es descubierta en la Plaza de la Señoría de Florencia:

Quiso Dios que en cuanto lo vieron se levantase un vocerío enorme de entusiasmo y empezaran a llover alabanzas, lo cual me consoló un poquito. La gente, el pueblo, continuamente colgaba sonetos en la puerta que yo había dejado entornada mientras iba ultimando mi estatua. Juro que aquel mismo día -mi Perseo estuvo unas horas solamente a la vista del público- encontré en mi puerta más de veinte sonetos llenos de los más grandes elogios [...]

[L]os artistas, o sea escultores y pintores, también ellos competían en alabarme. En especial, apreciaba los elogios y opinión del excelente pintor Jacopo da Pontormo, y más aún apreciaba lo que decía Bronzino, su ilustre discípulo. (Cellini, 1984, p. 405 y s.)

La resiliencia de Cellini

Esta exorbitante vocación de Cellini como escultor estructura toda la narración que “se desarrolla en un mundo de mecenas, de intensa y desleal competencia¹⁵; un mundo regido por la violencia de las relaciones de dependencia que se fraguan y se deshacen con facilidad” (Barceló, p. 7).

“Nunca tuve a mi lado un hombre de su profesión que me agrade tanto como éste, ni que merezca, como éste, ser premiado. Hay que hacer algo para retenerlo junto a nosotros para siempre” (p. 290).

“Se impone, pues, tener a Benvenuto en la más alta estima y consideración, pues sus obras no sólo resisten la comparación con las antiguas, sino que las superan” (p. 324).

¹⁵ Sirva esta anécdota entre Cellini y Clemente VII, a modo de ejemplo:

—El puesto ese en el Piombo produce más de ochocientos escudos al año. Es decir, que si yo te lo diera te pasarías el tiempo rascándote la barriga. Irías olvidándote de tu arte maravilloso y yo, después, no me lo perdonaría [...]

—Hará bien su santidad en conceder ese puesto, en vista de que no ha de ser para mí, a un hombre de talento que lo merezca y no a un ignorante que se pase la vida

Benvenuto, desde el inicio, se encuentra cómodo en la competencia con grandes artistas de la época en Roma. Recuérdese el episodio del broche del papa Clemente VII. Sin embargo, nada puede hacer contra las traiciones, las envidias y las calumnias que rodean el entorno artístico del momento.

Tanto le afecta a él este ambiente que llega a pasar más de un año en la cárcel papal por haber sido acusado de robo durante el saqueo de Roma¹⁶, sometido a toda clase de privaciones -pasa meses enteros en un calabozo sin luz alguna-.

Los obstáculos están presentes a lo largo de su carrera. Ni siquiera está ausente de ellos durante los cinco años que está en París, que son para él los más felices de su profesión. Allí tiene que hacer frente a robos, pleitos, infidelidades, ataques de otros artistas presentes en París -destaca entre todos, la figura de Francesco Primaticcio- y sobre todo los ataques constantes de la amante del rey, la duquesa d'Étampes. También son significativas las dificultades que encuentra en Florencia, donde encuentra en Baccio Bandinelli, a un gran enemigo¹⁷, en la relación con

rascándose la barriga, como dice su santidad. Y no se olvide de que el papa Julio concedió un puesto así a Bramante, el maravilloso escultor.

Dicho esto, hice una reverencia y me marché, furioso. Entonces Bastiano Veneziano, pintor, se acercó al papa con esta súplica:

—Santísimo padre, dígnese su santidad conceder ese puesto a alguien dedicado completamente a su arte... Como bien sabe su santidad yo no vivo para otra cosa. Le suplico que me lo conceda.

El papa respondió:

—Ese demonio de Benvenuto no soporta que nadie le diga nada. Yo estaba dispuesto a concedérselo... pero no está bien ser tan soberbio con un papa. No sé, no sé qué hacer...

En seguida el obispo de Vasona metió la nariz hablando en favor de Bastiano" (p. 114)

¹⁶ Nadie duda de la inocencia de Cellini en este asunto.

¹⁷ Muy conocida es la crítica que hace Benvenuto ante el grande Duque de Toscana de la obra de Bandinelli, Hércules y Caco: "si le cortaran el pelo a tu Hércules no le quedaría calabaza suficiente para contener el cerebro; y que no se sabe si la cara que tiene es la de un hombre o la de un monstruo mezcla de buey y de león; que no mira hacia donde debería, que la cabeza está pegada al cuello con tan poca gracia que no se ha visto nunca algo peor; que los hombros parecen albardas de burro; que los músculos alrededor de sus tetillas no tienen nada que ver con los de un hombre,

Eleonora de Toledo, esposa de Cósimo I o su enfermedad de un año entero a raíz del envenenamiento que le provocan.

Pero, la llamada que siente en su interior a ser escultor empequeñece todas estas dificultades. Es más, le ayudan a retomar su pasión con mayor entusiasmo. Así, por ejemplo, cuando sale de la cárcel y se encuentra a su fiel ayudante Ascanio, Benvenuto comenta: “Por el camino empezamos a hablar de arte y me asaltaron las ganas de trabajar; me moría por [ello]” (Cellini, 1984, p. 257).

El mismo es consciente del elemento purificador del sufrimiento. Así lo explica al empezar a narrar sus experiencias en prisión: “Dios quiso evitarme el pecado de orgullo y por mi bien me sometió a una prueba mucho más dura que la pasada” (Cellini, 1984, p. 221). O al salir de esa cárcel comenta que: “todos se maravillaban de que hubiera podido superar y resistir tan desmesuradas dificultades” (Cellini, 2018, p. 377).

La vita de Cellini como testimonio de resiliencia

Se ha visto hasta ahora como el relato de Cellini está marcado por una vocación impetuosa por la escultura. Esta pasión por un lado ayudó a dignificar este Arte. Los pintores habían sido los primeros en lograr mostrar que su Arte no era algo manual, de meros artesanos, sino un trabajo principalmente intelectual. A los escultores, les estaba costando más. Pensaba todavía sobre ellos la losa de ser meros artesanos (Vasari, 2002). Cellini, con su obra, sus tratados y su *Vita* dignificó la escultura ante el resto de las Artes. De hecho, quiso mostrar en el infinito debate entre pintores

sino que parecen ser la copia de un saco de melones apoyado contra una pared; la espalda, a su vez, parece copia de un saco de calabacines; no hay manera de poder adivinar cómo están unidas sus piernas al tronco; ni se sabe tampoco sobre cuál de ellas descansa o hace la fuerza, y resultaría más que imposible decir si descansa sobre las dos piernas al mismo tiempo, como a veces han hecho algunos maestros que de veras entendían de escultura. Cualquiera vería que tu Hércules está caído hacia adelante más de un tercio de brazo; error, éste, imperdonable, grotesco, que cometen solamente los maestrillos esos que andan por ahí a docenas” (p. 371).

y escultores que la escultura tenía un rango superior antes las demás. Cellini pretendía evidenciar que “la escultura reproduce mejor la naturaleza [ya que] Dios, cuando creó el universo, lo creó como una gran escultura. Hizo tridimensional los montes, los árboles y todas las cosas. Y para mayor belleza la dotó de color, de tal manera que el universo es una escultura coloreada” (Belda, 2018).

Pero, por otro lado, esta vocación presente entre las páginas de la *Vita* también muestra la importancia de ser fiel a esa llamada. Ya que, al ser fiel a esa vocación, resulta más sencillo hacer frente a las adversidades e incluso convertirlas en oportunidades de crecer en fortaleza.

Tener esto presente y alentar a los alumnos a seguir su vocación es fundamental para una educación en la resiliencia.

La educación es el acompañamiento del educando hacia la virtud y la virtud es la perfección de la naturaleza. Se entiende que hay una naturaleza humana compartida por todos, pero también otra particular que hace que cada uno sea único. Educar en la virtud también debe ser acompañar al alumno en la perfección de los talentos particulares que pueda tener. Y, como queda patente en el testimonio de la autobiografía de Cellini, responder a esa llamada fomenta a su vez el crecimiento en resiliencia.

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Miscellaneous Articles



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Biography as a Spatial Frame of Meanings: A Proxemic Analysis in Pedagogical Narrative Analysis

Abstract

This article presents a method for qualitative data analysis, which is called proxemic analysis. This method was based on a didactic method of structural analysis of narratives (Knecht & Knecht, 1992; Zirker, 1991). A proxemic analysis consists in working with data and indicating five categories in the text – actors, places, time, values, and expectations – and building them using elements, called entities. During the next stage, the researcher discovers the understanding of these categories by defining the relationships between entities. This analysis can be used on narrative texts regardless of the way in which they were obtained (unstructured interviews, diaries, memoirs, autobiographies, etc.). Interpreting the relationships between entities allows the researcher to formulate pedagogical implications, which they may use as a premise for constructing theories and/or activities. The example of the technique presented in this paper, from andragogical research, refers to the study of a life story obtained from a narrative interview.

Keywords: proxemic analysis, qualitative research, categorization, entity, educational implications, synergy

The social sciences are characterized by an increasing diversity of approaches to narrative analysis, which is indicative of its immense research and educational potential. Collecting, analyzing, and interpreting narratives are inherent elements of a qualitative research strategy and they designate a specific role for the researcher and the respondent (Ciechowska, 2020). In building a story in which the respondent plays a major role, they become a significant source of knowledge about themselves and the world they live in. When reinterpreting a narrative, the researcher has a chance not only to describe but also, most importantly, to understand the phenomenon in question. What happens between the researcher and the respondent creates a space in which learning occurs. There are numerous paths leading to this goal, only limited by the researcher's imagination (Trochim, 2020). The proxemic analysis described in this article is one such path. The experience gained during years of teaching and research practice – in which we have used narrative analysis, which involves discovering the meanings of categories (actors, places, time, values, and expectations), in order to understand phenomena – proves its effectiveness in both cognitive and therapeutic spheres.

In the first part of the paper, the procedures of analyzing narratives through proxemic analysis are presented. This is followed by an excerpt from an analysis of the life story of Helen, a Polish woman who lives in Australia. The methodological status of a proxemic analysis in relation to other research methods is described next, while the final section discusses its advantages and disadvantages in analyzing narratives and its links with proxemic systems.

Methodological Status of Proxemic Analysis

Contemporary qualitative research methodology is seeing continuous development. As Yvonna S. Lincoln and Norman K. Denzin predict, this will also be a feature of a *breakthrough future* for research. Moreover, the novelty of methodological approaches to the study of new social phenomena will contribute to such a future (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 1125).

Looking at the qualitative research process, proxemic analysis is the stage of working with the collected data. At this stage, the author (bearing in mind the non-linear nature of the qualitative approach) has available many traditional methods of analyzing qualitative data, each of which is necessary and justified, and the main features of which we will briefly present in order to indicate the possibilities offered by proxemic analysis in this context. Here, we understand data analysis as “an activity that permeates the entire duration of a research project. The analysis is not limited to being one of the later stages of research, preceding the next, separate stage” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, pp. 10–11). Qualitative data that are under analysis, regardless of the method with which they were collected (observation, interview, etc.), take the form of a text. Analyzing them is nothing more than searching for meanings that arise in the process of semiosis (communication and interpretation) and depend on the context and participants. Proxemic analysis is one of the ways of designating the category to the codes – while working with transcription.

In the grounded theory methodology (GTM), codes and categories are designated from the bottom: they flow from the text. As a coherent system of research, data collection, and analysis, grounded theory points to what is most important in qualitative research for such designating meanings and what coincides with the way that this phenomenon is perceived by the respondents. The researcher does not use the theory concerning the phenomenon nor the set of categories resulting from a particular method of analysis. Designating the codes (labels) – including *in vivo* codes (in the language of the respondents and categories [code families]) – thus forms the basis for developing medium-range theories that are grounded in the field. Theories developed in this way provide insight into the world of the respondents and their way of understanding and perceiving their surroundings.

However, not all research is conducted on the basis of GTM; therefore, the researcher may also be guided by top-down categories (which already exist in the literature on the subject). The author works many times with a text, resulting in a hermeneutic spiral where each subsequent return to the text enables a better understanding of the content

and may also entail changes to the codes and categories. Among the categories, it is worth focusing on various elements (e.g., feelings, people, or objects) that will guarantee an understanding of the whole phenomenon under study. The literature on qualitative pedagogical research indicates different families of codes, for example, codes of place/context, codes of situations, ways of thinking, processes, activities, events, strategies, relationships and social structures, narration, or codes of methods (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, pp. 162–168). All categories should reflect the purpose of the research and be comprehensive, mutually exclusive, sensitizing to the proper sense, and conceptually congruent (Merriam, 1998).

Relating proxemic analysis to the indicated assumptions to the characteristics of the category, it is coherent with them. Going further, the researcher assigns the entities (code equivalents) to successive pieces of text. Entities refer to individual categories: on the one hand, the author is free in what to name and how to designate the entities (as far as the size of the excerpt is concerned); on the other hand, it is oriented towards the meaning entity – they strictly refer to the indicated categories. However, this is not a limitation (as in a priori coding, in which the researcher refers to the assumptions of the theory), but an indication of the direction that is determined by the comprehensive, spatial understanding of the narrative. The innovation of proxemic analysis relies on treating the qualitative data in the field of social research as data located in and dependent on space-time; hence the categories of actors, place, time, values, and expectations. Here we refer to examining biographies, which requires a holistic, spatial understanding of a life story.

Principles of Proxemic Analysis

Storytelling, which has a long tradition and has been present at all times, in all places and societies (Barthes, 1966), takes an unlimited number of forms and is constantly being revived in new versions, in both philosophy and the social sciences. In the social sciences, storytelling is combined with *narratives* and refers to any intentional utterance which

is a story about something. It may be created in various ways: by writing, by prompting from a researcher during an interview or ordinary conversation, or by gathering data during field work. Norman K. Denzin links a narrative with biography, as in his opinion it presents the experiences and definitions of a particular person, group, or organization in the way in which they interpret it. The basic assumption is to conduct a study so as to maintain the respondents' perspectives and understanding and to demonstrate their dynamics (Denzin, 2009). The fundamental idea behind narrative analysis using this technique is to identify the five categories – actors, places, time, values, and expectations – through entities and through the relationships between them within individual categories. *Entity* refers to an individual, being, agent, or existence. The concept was introduced in 1976 by Peter Pin-Shan Chen to model data in IT analysis. It refers to a real or imagined object which may be distinctly identifiable or distinguishable and related to others (Chen, 1976). These characteristics perfectly render the essence of the elements in individual categories (Barker, 2005). When naming them, the researcher should aim to preserve the language used by the respondents (as with in vivo coding), as it allows for a better understanding of the meaning assigned to them by the narrator. For many researchers, it may also be helpful to present the entities and the relationships between them in a visual form. It is also important to indicate those excerpts of narratives which prompt the researcher to identify entities in a particular way. By finding entities in narratives and identifying the relationships between them, the researcher describes them and, as a result, discovers the narrator's understanding of the phenomenon. This allows them to notice the connections between individual entities and the narrator's intentions.

In the category of *actors*, the researcher indicates both people and non-person entities in the text to which the narrator attributes action. They may be individuals participating in the events, agents/objects which affect the interpretation of the event (such as books, individuals, institutions, offices, or organizations), or agents or abstract objects (anthropomorphized or not). When indicating entities that refer to actors, it is advisable to distinguish the lead actors and the supporting actors, who

are less important in the narrator's life, and to group them if necessary. This will facilitate the identification and interpretation of the relationships between entities.

The category of *place* refers to all places where our life takes place, where we are present, including all the ontological aspects of the meaning of being. After all, place is not only a space in the physical world, but also a mental and cultural community, or – as postulated by Foucault – “of other space,” that is, heterotopic spaces which are beyond any places, even if it is possible to specify their actual location (Ahmed, 2020). The analysis of the category of place that is taking place in social science discourse changes this discourse considerably, opening it up to new interpretative potential and revealing relationships which would otherwise remain hidden (Mendel & Męczkowska, 2006). Entities in this category can be identified through geographic (e.g., continent, country, province, city, town, district, street, etc.), institutional (e.g., school, workplace, official institution, etc.), and emotional (e.g., house, yard, meadow, road, street, etc.) means.

By distinguishing the category of place, one can indicate every place where the narrators locate their experiences. It is important to discover the meaning for the actors taking part in the events and the dynamics of their understanding of the experience. By identifying places through proxemic analysis, mutual spatial relationships between the actors as well as relationships between people and their material surroundings can also be identified, taking into consideration different cultures and different contexts of experience.

In the identification of the category of *time*, we suggest making a distinction used by the ancient Greeks, who had three words to denote time: *χρόνος* (*chronos*), *καιρός* (*kairos*), and *αἰών* (*aion*). *Chronos* refers to a time whose duration can be measured and placed on a timeline by specifying its length, whereas *kairos* emphasizes the events happening during a measured period rather than its length, although it also refers to a specific period. Time understood this way is more an opportunity to win, achieve, or reveal something than a duration. It is also the timing of an event or the right time for something (Smith, 1969). These two concepts of time used

in Greek help us notice more clearly that which refers to one's experience of time. Therefore, the following elements may be taken into account in the identification of the category of time in a proxemic analysis: objectively measured time, as in the calendar (e.g., a year, month, or day), time as shown by a clock (e.g., the time of day), a subjective time range (e.g., while I was a student, after I got married, after I graduated, or when I was ill), or situational time (e.g., during work or when abroad). This distinction is based on the phenomenological time perspectives in which subjective time is experienced and objective time is perceived. Moreover, the time of people's experience is considered to be more primary than the ordinary time of the world, and it is understood as the source time: the time of life, memory, expectation, imagination, and consciousness (Murchadha, 2013).

The word *aion* situates the understanding of time between *chronos* and *kairos*. On the one hand, it is sometimes used to describe the duration of life; on the other hand, it describes an age, epoch, or long period, which is characterized by individual features. With *chronos*, it connects *aion* with the extension of duration; with *kairos*, it connects it with finiteness, even if the beginning and the end are very separate from each other. In some cosmologies, the term was used to periodize eternity, becoming the only one of finiteness and infinity. This means that it absorbs some features of *chronos* while exceeding them, becoming synonymous with eternity (Bielawski, 2014, p. 64). The last meaning is used in Christianity. When used to describe the eternal survival of God, the word *zoe* can be found along with the term *aionios*, which means life that lasts through *aion*, or eternal life. The differences in the understanding of time expressed in individual words are reflected even better in Latin. The equivalent of *chronos* is *tempus*; *kairos* is no longer so unambiguous and is translated as *occasio*, *opportunitas*, or *tempus opportunum*. At the same time, all of them are associated with the meaning of events happening at a convenient time, at the right time, on an occasion or opportunity. *Aion* is translated as *aeternitas* (eternity, eternal being, or infinity) or *vita* (life), which gives this concept a teleological character.

The category of *values* is identified by the role values play, which is to permeate, stir, and shape human consciousness, evoke emotions, and

stimulate activity. The hierarchy of values determines the objectives of actions and consolidates their outcomes (Scheler, 2009). Values affect the lives of individuals and communities alike (Scheler, 1992). The researcher determines and identifies values referring to actors, places, and time. In biographic narratives it is usually possible to identify the values demonstrated by the actors: ethical and moral, pragmatic (useful/not useful), utilitarian (worthless, cheap, expensive, or priceless), aesthetic (ugly/pretty), emotional (horrible/neutral/touching), existential (pointless/reasonable or pessimistic/optimistic), and symbolic.

In narratives, the category of value is often associated with *expectations*. Following their dictionary definitions, they are treated as a feeling that good things will happen in the future, as a hope for something to happen, or as a conviction that something will or should happen. Revealing expectations allows the researcher to discover what narrators find likely, possible, worthy of attention, necessary, and random; what their goals, motives, or intentions are; and what they will find disappointing, surprising or intriguing. Expectations and values identified by a proxemic analysis are made *objective* by the mere fact that they refer to actors, places, and time.

The identification of entities in individual categories helps prepare a diverse space for the interpretation of seemingly contradictory perspectives: internal and external, objective and subjective, that of the respondent and of the researcher. These activities are significant for understanding the experience, because both the narrator and the researcher favor specific values or patterns and have their own expectations.

Analysis and interpretation conducted in accordance with the principles described above lead to the formulation of pedagogical implications in which the researcher points at what is unique in the respondents' experience. The deeper the researcher penetrates the structures and levels of individual entities and categories co-existing, the better they will understand the phenomenon and the more accurate their interpretation will be. The factors that are conducive to the emergence and interpretation of experience invariably create a network of mutual connections, the interactions of which strengthen or weaken the effects of an experience

for an individual. This may affect the adjustment of previous attitudes and behaviors and may bring new quality into the person's life (Ciechowska & Walulik, 2018).

An Example of a Proxemic Analysis of a Text

The assumptions behind the selected method of working with narrative material can be illustrated with reflections on an excerpt from Helen's autobiography. In 1949, when she was two years old, her parents left Poland and emigrated to Australia, settling in Saint Marys. We will analyze the educational experience she described during an unstructured biographic interview in November 2017. The interview was conducted in her house in Marayong (the suburbs of Sydney), where she lives with her husband. This is not a complete analysis and interpretation of her narrative, because this paper is methodological in nature and is meant to demonstrate the method used in the study – not its outcome in the form of a theory, which is something we did before on the basis of different material (Marek, 2017; Marek & Walulik, 2019).

The study was conducted within a participatory and personalistic paradigm. In the interpretation of relationships between categories and entities, we referred to the principles developed by personalism (Musaio, 2021), which allows us to emphasize the autonomous value of the person and to assume supporting his development through acquiring an ability to subordinate economic and technical values to personal and spiritual values (Barber, 2002). Although these values do not refer directly to the relationships between those actors that are non-persons, they were used in the identification process, since they allow us to identify the space which builds human existence. Both the researcher and the respondent identify themselves with the personalistic and Christian concept of a human being (Szymańska & Zelek, 2018).

Helen placed her educational experience in two meaningful contexts (school and religion), which – according to the principles of the selected research methodology – refer to the categories of *place*, *values*,

and *expectations*. The narrator spent more than 60 years in a Catholic school: first as a pupil, then as a teacher. Her story began with her open declaration that she was a Roman Catholic, which may indicate her need to be aware of the foundations of her identity. It may have been intensified by the experience of living in a country which declared total assimilation of various nationalities with the society in the 1970s; this assimilation took the form of multiculturalism and focused on the right to preserve migrants' own culture and native language and on enabling their full participation in the life of the country (Achmatowicz-Otok & Otok, 1985).

For clarity, below we present a linear record; however, during a study a researcher can do so on the transcript. The category of *place* is formed by the following entities:

- *Family home*: "At first, a shelter for refugees in which Poles lived alongside people from Ukraine, Russia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Germany, and others. There was no option to learn English, so children talked using words from various languages."
- *Public schools*: "Public schools were free-of-charge, financed by the government from taxes."
- *Catholic schools*: "They enjoyed immense popularity, also among immigrants from Poland."
- *Convent schools*: "Initially, all the teachers in these schools were nuns. Later, with growing needs and an insufficient number of nuns, lay teachers were employed, but their earnings were three times lower than in state schools. In the 1970s, when Catholic schools were overcrowded and the government provided no financial support for them, even though the parents paid taxes, the Bishop of Canberra decided that pupils from these schools should enroll in public schools; however, they were not prepared to take in such a large number of students. The situation forced the government to change its policy and since then, teachers employed by Catholic schools have earned the same salary as teachers from state schools."
- *St. Marys*: "The School of Our Lady of the Rosary in St. Marys was run by the Josephites (the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart).

I spent a total of 62 years in this school: 12 years as a student and 50 years as a teacher. In the school run by the Sisters, I was the first full-time lay teacher. There were more than 80 students in each class, mostly migrant children. Thanks to my personal experiences, I had a better understanding of the situation of these kids, and I spent long hours conducting extra classes. After some time, other lay teachers were employed."

- *Parramatty*: "I took a bus and a train, and walked for 20 minutes to get to the school in Parramatty, 25 kilometers from my place of residence. The Josephites ran a school for girls. Only eight girls (including five Poles) from my class decided to continue their education for the next two years."

The following entities represent the *values* the narrator assigns to these places:

- *Roof over one's head* – a sense of security: "We went to the school from the shelter by bus. We were very happy when it came to take us back to the shelter."
- *Polish*: "Thanks to my parents' efforts (we always spoke Polish at home) and my husband, who is also from Poland (he came to Australia in 1967), I speak Polish very well, but I am not that good at reading and writing, as I did not have many opportunities to practice it."
- *Good education*: "Many Polish migrants sent their children to these [Catholic] schools in spite of financial problems. They attached great importance to good education, which they missed themselves because of the war. I continued my education with a specialization in religion and by working with children with special educational needs."
- *Catholicism*: "The parents wanted their children to be raised with Catholic values. The children were able to prepare for holy sacraments during lessons at school."
- *English*: "The Department of Education established a special curriculum with English as a Second Language to prepare teachers to work with migrant students. When I was a deputy head, I had these

teachers help students in class. Earlier, these students had separate lessons and – as a result of working outside the group – they felt rejected and inferior. This change had a positive influence on the educational process [...] English was taught through repetition, imitation of gestures, looking at pictures, etc. We were soon able to act as interpreters for our parents, who did not have opportunities to learn English and who mostly worked with other Poles. Writing or reading skills were unknown back then.”

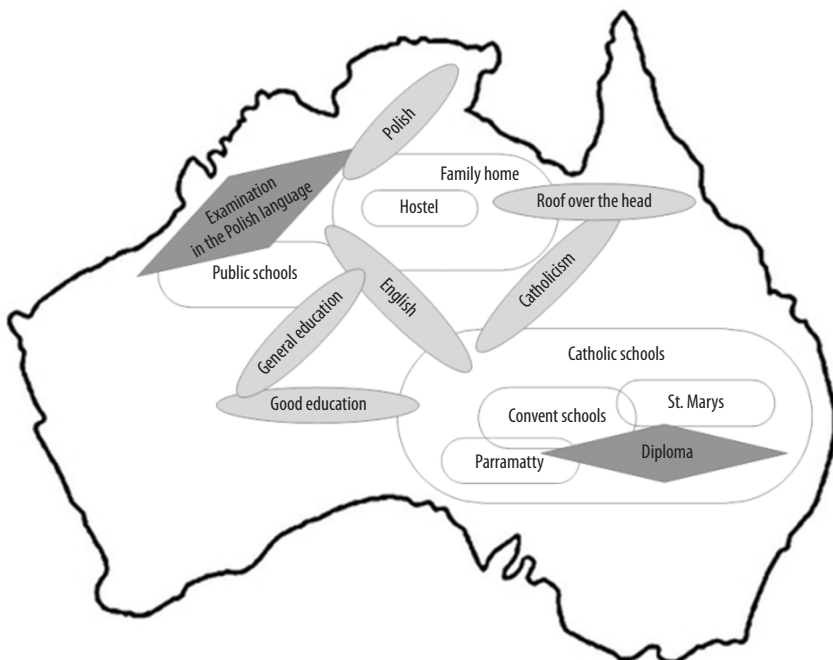
- *General education*: “After I had finished school and passed my exams, I started studying at a teacher training college.”

Expectations are defined using the following entities:

- *Secondary school-leaving examination in the Polish language*: “Thanks to the efforts of Polish communities, teachers, and parents, the government introduced an option to take a secondary school-leaving exam in Polish. Three schools in Sydney conducted preparatory courses for this exam: Randwick, Ashfield, and Chatswood. With this, not only did young people have opportunities to study at local universities, but they could also study and gain qualifications at Polish universities.”
- *Diploma*: “After I had received my diploma, I returned to my ‘old’ school in St. Marys, where I worked as a teacher for the next 50 years.”

A graphic representation of the narrator’s way of thinking about places, values, and expectations is shown in Fig. 1.

Figure 1. Places, values, and expectations in Helen's autobiography



The analysis of the categories listed above and the entities connected with them was based on the theories regarding schools and adult education. As a result of our analysis and interpretations, the following pedagogical implications were formulated:

- The analysis of experiencing education in the context of the places, values, and expectations related to them points to the importance of knowledge for daily life.
- Experience is a significant source of knowledge in education, especially in intercultural education.
- When ancient myths were created, people believed that their life was in the hands of gods who made decisions regarding their lives. Even though nowadays we laugh at such beliefs, we have created modern myths, including “scientifically proven” forms of determinism. They appear mostly in situations when researchers question experience as a source of valuable knowledge.

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- Helen's story sensitizes us to the need to introduce educational processes which will help us notice the value of education outcomes and which will form an attitude of responsibility for information and an ability to transform it into appropriate competences.
 - In order to learn competences, an educational climate needs to be created in which students not only gain knowledge and acquire skills, but also use them to solve problems creatively.
 - People's ignorance causes various problems in life. If someone understands the world and its complexity, they will also be able to make better decisions and build a better world, both as an individual and as a member of community. What we learn from Helen's story is that human development is closely related to knowledge.
 - The discovery of the importance of knowledge for the development of an individual and society leads to the conclusion that each of us contributes to something important. The life and achievements of people like Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi, or Mary MacKillop (who established the network of schools our narrator talked about), as well as the lives of Poles living in Australia, prove that our life does not need to be determined by race, religion, or nationality. Helen also recalled that "a lot of my 'Polish' students obtained a high level of education; they are lawyers, doctors, teachers, and executives."
 - Knowledge is an important factor in the achievement of success, understood as a happy life, only if it comes with a mature personality and properly understood freedom.
 - Family, culture, and religion are some of the important factors that shape maturity. The powerful effects of their interaction – discovered in the biography based on relationships between places, values, and expectations – indicates the emergence of an adaptive synergy (Walulik, 2011) in the understanding of education. This synergy can reduce the gap between maintaining an individual's "status quo" and the need to create a new lifestyle. Noticing this synergy may play a significant role in the development of a person

in a diverse environment, such as a multicultural community or a religiously diverse community.

The principle of the technique presented herein that entities which form particular categories in a narrative (actors, place, time, values, and expectations) can be identified and interpreted from various perspectives argues in favor of its universality. Moreover, not all categories need be discovered in each narrative; on the one hand, this fact indicates similarities to other, classical methods of qualitative data analyses – for instance, content analysis or data analysis using the methodology of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 2017) or the constant comparative method (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003) – but on the other hand, it reveals differences connected with the search for a priori categories but *in vivo* entities.

The understanding of the role of the researcher and the respondent is also an element of the proxemic nature of the proposed analysis. Due to the omnipresent diversity of methodologies and worldviews, in order to formulate pedagogical implications which will serve as the premises for new theories, a researcher needs to specify the concept of a person that they will adopt in order to prevent syncretism from obscuring the real understanding of the phenomenon they are studying. This principle also results from the specific characteristics of social qualitative research.

It should also be emphasized that the universal nature of a proxemic analysis is visible in its suitability for dealing with material obtained in various ways, such as notes made during observations, various documents – including visual ones, journals, diaries, transcripts of non-standardized interviews, group discussions, (auto)biographies, etc. The possibility to approach a narrative from the proxemic perspective and to base pedagogical implications on it stem from the belief that the life of an individual and of society happen in a specific space, which is formed in the individual and collective consciousness of a given place and time. It is open to various forms and manifestations of people's activity but also imposes certain limitations. Both features may be conducive to the emergence and identification of synergy, which – due to its potential to bring new quality – is vital in developing pedagogical theories. If proxemic relationships are

analyzed from a cultural perspective, their symbolic dimension – or as Edward T. Hall (1988) calls it, the “hidden dimension” – plays a considerable role. Pedagogical implications discovered through the proposed analysis result from permeating the hidden structure of the narrator’s world. The changeability – so typical of the world around us – requires life-long involvement in the discovery of the meaning of life and in defining its understanding. This means that theories built on individuals’ experiences, the goal of which is not making generalizations, but drawing attention to *hidden* problems of both students and educators, will play an important role in contemporary education.

Analyzing a text with the use of a proxemic analysis may pose some difficulties, the most serious of which – in our opinion – are that it is time-consuming and subjective. However, these difficulties are typical of qualitative research, as the majority of the material collected for analysis is heterogeneous and multifaceted, which requires it to be read many times in order to get a deeper understanding of the respondents’ experiences. Not all researchers are keen on work which involves collecting and analyzing material, but our research practice shows that a proxemic analysis at least partially addresses these concerns. Reading a text several times in search of entities belonging to given categories and presenting them in a visual form can reveal even deeply hidden understandings of various aspects of the experience.

Conclusion

This article presents the principles of a proxemic analysis as a research method and illustrates them with an excerpt from such an analysis. Considering the theoretical nature of the paper, we did not present the complete analysis, interpretations, and their implications. This paper is the outcome of the maturation of the adaptation process of the didactic method for research purposes. Its humble attempts have been reported in several previous papers (Kryzstofik et al., 2016; Mółka, 2018; Marek, 2017; Marek & Walulik, 2019).

The technique was discussed and improved at all stages of its adaptation and implementation into research practice. We realize that this process has not been completed yet, but we also believe that at this stage the above description may be treated as a holistic presentation of the proposed technique and, as such, may be worth sharing with other researchers. The fragment of the narrative analysis conducted with the use of a proxemic analysis presented above demonstrates that the multi-layer identification of biographical elements and the relationships between them allows a researcher to identify those processes which create a new life quality, that is, synergic processes (Walulik, 2011). Thanks to this, the experiences under analysis become a source of information and knowledge on how individuals solve their life problems and how they support others in taking responsibility for their lives. We believe that pedagogical implications based on the analysis presented herein may serve as premises for developing a theory of creative learning in a multicultural environment and curricula which will strengthen the students' creative potential. In our opinion, the innovative nature of our analysis lies in the possibility of identifying synergy on the basis of individuals' experience and in using this synergy to develop new pedagogical theories.

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The Subject-Participatory Paradigm in Correlation with the Constitutive Features of Pedagogical Qualitative Research: A Personalistic Perspective

Abstract:

The aim of the article is to show the correlation between the subject-participatory paradigm and the basic features of qualitative pedagogical research in practical terms. The choice of this research topic can be justified by the insufficient range of literature in the field. Therefore, the subject-participatory paradigm will be explored from the personalistic perspective, with reference to the constitutive features of pedagogical qualitative research in order to address the research problem while taking into account the above-mentioned correlation. The starting point is the concept of the subject-participatory paradigm grounded in the thought of Karol Wojtyła. Then, in conducting a hermeneutic analysis, the author refers to the concepts of scientists such as Dariusz Kubinowski, Krzysztof Szmidt, Marcella Kelly, Maura Dowling, Michelle Millar, Matthew de Carlo, and others. Also, references are made to the research stages, mainly embedded in the creative methodology, which can facilitate the emergence of the correlation between the aforementioned paradigm and the constitutive features of pedagogical qualitative research.

Keywords: paradigm, subject-participatory paradigm, qualitative research, the constitutive features, personalistic perspective

Introduction

The issues related to the application of paradigms in research raise many questions, discussions from various points of view, and approaches to research, whether quantitative, qualitative, or mixed (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Mertens, 2015; Rubacha, 2011). The role and importance of paradigms is emerging as an important aspect in areas such as pedagogy, education, methodology, philosophy, psychology, and culture. Thus, the author's intention to concentrate on the subject-participatory paradigm for empirical purposes can be justified, as can the use of the following research questions: What is the role and significance of research paradigms in general? What might the dimensions of the subject-participatory paradigm look like? What is the correlation between the constitutive features of qualitative pedagogical research and the subject-participatory paradigm used in pedagogy? To answer these questions, it is necessary to consider a few points of view regarding the implementation of paradigms in research practice, then to present the subject-participatory paradigm in relation to the constitutive features of qualitative pedagogical research and extract the benefits of implementing this paradigm in a practical pedagogical context. The author hopes that the discussion of the topic presented herein may be worth considering for researchers, especially beginners, pedagogues, and teachers who are deeply involved in the field of pedagogy and education.

The Role and Significance of Scientific Research Paradigms in the View of Selected Authors

There are often discussions about paradigms in the social sciences, especially in pedagogy. Many scientists consider the application of paradigms to research practice to be a fundamental factor in shaping the research process. Kelly, Dowling, and Millar state that research has given nurse researchers

the opportunity for methodological openness with regards to the myriad of research approaches, methods and designs that they may choose to answer their research question. However, in guiding the search for understanding, it is imperative that the researcher consider their ontological stance and the nature of the research question. (Kelly et al., 2018, p. 9)

These researchers analyzed different perspectives of the concept of paradigms, referring to the definitions provided by Khun (2012) and Morgan (2007). According to them, a paradigm may be seen as a worldview that includes values, morals, beliefs, and attitudes influencing and examining the way in which research questions are posed. Moreover, they understand a paradigm as a community-reflecting practice that covers the adjustment and agreement that takes place in methodological procedures and a research discipline. Also, they see a pragmatic side of paradigms that can help researchers solve research problems (Kelly et al., 2018).

Another researcher, Matthew de Carlo (2018), states that “paradigms are a way of framing what we know, what we can know, and how we can know it” (p. 145). He underscores the fact that each paradigm possesses its own specific ontological and epistemological perspective. John W. Creswell understands a paradigm as one of three components of a research project. He claims that it impacts and gives direction to research design. In his concept, a paradigm is seen as a researcher’s general worldview and type of scientific research (Creswell, 2014). Burke R. Johnson, Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie, and Lisa Turner define a paradigm as “a set of beliefs, values, and assumptions that a community of researchers has in common regarding the nature and conduct of research” (Johnson et al., 2007, pp. 129–130).

According to the above points of view, we can imply that a paradigm can shape and frame the perspective for one’s understanding of the world (research reality); influence the process of obtaining and exploring the knowledge of reality; affect the trajectory of the research process; and deepen and form the researcher’s everyday view of the world (de Carlo, 2018). A researcher’s choice of paradigms is specific and shows their

approaches (deductive/inductive, qualitative/quantitative, etc.) not only to life, but also to the research they conduct (de Carlo, 2018). Moreover, it appears to correspond with the researchers' personal needs and their attitudes toward life. Such deduction can justify the fact that the wide diversity of paradigms seen in the different paradigmatic perspectives can reflect the researchers' psychologically, socially, culturally, and philosophically determined orientation to the research area. These perspectives do not have to completely exclude each other, but they can evoke further incentives for reflection on using paradigms in various areas of life. They can also foster the use of divergent styles of searching for answers to research problems, which corresponds with another statement by Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner:

Today's research world is becoming increasingly interdisciplinary, complex, and dynamic; therefore, many researchers need to complement one method with another, and all researchers need a solid understanding of multiple methods used by other scholars to facilitate communication, to promote collaboration, and to provide superior research. (Johnson, et al., 2004, p. 15)

This point of view corresponds to Bogusław Śliwerski's claim that the variety of paradigms does not necessarily mean that there is no way to find something in common with each of them (Śliwerski, 2017). In this context, it can be worth recalling the meaning of plurality in the use of paradigms provided by Dawn Freshwater and Jane Cahill (2013), which may help explain their functions in the formation of both a human being and a community in the sense of unity. Considering the above, the need to examine the paradigmatic perspectives that influence daily activities while focusing on the meaning of paradigms for scientific inquiry as being the most important in research (Kelly et al., 2018) poses a challenge. It also turns out to be crucial for shaping the identity of a scientific discipline (Klus-Stańska, 2018), which might induce many discussions, particularly because paradigms raise many doubts concerning their accuracy and reliability in the course of research (Rolfe, 2006) that is embedded

in a concrete philosophical perspective. Nevertheless, debates on paradigm divisions, shifts, etc. do not ignore the meaning of paradigms (Creswell, 2014; Kuhn, 2012; Morgan, 2007; Tashakkori & Teddie, 2010); they rather pose questions about its application in an exploration of a particular discipline. Moreover, there are doubts concerning the aspect of narrowing down or broadening the researcher's perspective to the research goal. Answers to these questions may lie in the researchers' point of view, beliefs, approach to methodology, methodological awareness, and competences that develop over time (Szwabowski, 2014).

The Subject-Participatory Paradigm as One of Many Paradigms Functioning in Pedagogy

The subject-participatory paradigm, rooted in personalism – especially Karol Wojtyła's personalism (Bartnik, 2000; Szymańska, 2018) – will be explained in two dimensions: subjective and participatory.

The first dimension of the paradigm, called the subjective one, should be perceived as the internal, homogeneous quality of a person participating in the co-existence and co-creation of a community, particularly the pedagogical research community. This community enables its members to exist and act with a sense of integrity toward themselves and others, which can allow them to reach the state of mature self-realization. This activity is also a part of the formation of a postconventional identity (Witkowski, 1988; Wojtyła, 2000), determined by the sense of personal dignity and confirmed in correlation with the sense of dignity affirmed by the whole community. This can take place in a space that creates conditions for building relationships based on a pedagogical/educational dialogue, requiring respect for freedom and different points of view on the issues discussed by the community. Each member should feel that they are an important, unique subject, not an object. This approach imposes the need to conduct research in accordance with the principles of the subject-participatory paradigm: humility, equity, equality, solidarity, responsibility, freedom, truth, subsidiarity, sublimation, prevention, integration, practice,

safe space, responsibility, creativity, and a sense of non-interference in the trajectory of any elements of the pedagogical research process (Szymańska, 2018). These principles should be respected not only by the researcher, who is personally obliged to ensure the optimal circumstances for other members of the scientific community, but also by all participants. Here, the researcher performs the role of a leader, due to the assumptions of this paradigm, that should be reflected in their pedagogical and axiological/ethical approach to the research space, creatively shaped by the personalistic perspective (Szymańska, 2018). This is aligned with leadership, understood as a “responsibility of the many, not a privilege of the few ... [and] collective pursuit of delivering on purpose ... guided by internal goods” (By, 2021, pp. 34–35) and perceived through the lenses of dignity, which is assumed to be a fundamental value shaping the subject approach to oneself and other members of a research community.

The second dimension of the subject-participatory paradigm can be seen from an individual and social perspective, described in brief above, in the subject-personalistic view. As for the former, it could be a trait of a person who not only exists and works with others, but also a unique trait that indicates their ability to build relationships with others. The latter shows the ability of the community to enable a person to act with others in such a way that they reveal themselves in their actions (Wojtyła, 2000). This type of participation faces many challenges, and its quality requires high personal and social reflective competences from the research practitioners (Raelin, 2002) respecting the principles of the paradigm, as mentioned in the Introduction. Following these principles while grounded in a personalistic-participatory activity matches with the principles of pedagogical participatory research, such as the democratic ones, safe space comprising the inclusion, control, and intimacy phase, and defining the level of participation of the research community members (Bergold & Thomas, 2012). This dimension of the subject-participatory paradigm indicates the meaning of the research community for appropriately conducting the research process. It leads to the conclusion that preparing this community for participatory research is necessary. Finally, it can be stated that the subject-participatory paradigm in the

personalistic perspective supports the integral development and up-bringing of the whole research community.

All in all, the subject-participatory paradigm fits with the concept of building professional learning communities, with features that are strongly connected with qualitative research (Wołodźko, 2013): shared values and vision amid the members of community, collective responsibility, reflective professional inquiry, and collaboration concerning the individual and group attendance in the education process (Stoll et al., 2006).

The Subject-Participatory Paradigm in Relation to the Basic Constitutive Features of Pedagogical Qualitative Research

Referring the subject-participatory paradigm to the constitutive features of qualitative research entails a brief presentation of them in connection with certain aspects of this paradigm's application in research practice.

The constitutive features of qualitative research include the personalitivity connected with the holistic approach, interactivity, discursiveness, idiomaticity, emergency, synergy, the researcher following participants in the research, and contextuality (Ciechowska, 2018; Kubinowski, 2013; Szmidt, 2018). It is worth noting that co-existence and co-creation stimulate and strengthen the motivation and curiosity of the researcher and participants of the research (Ciechowska, 2020; Clark, 2010). Thus, curiosity should be present at every stage of research, as emphasized by Szmidt (2018), who treats methodological creativity as a component of scientific creativity. This feature is also supposed to integrate both the research community and the empirical process. Integration seems to be conditioned by the personalistic approach of the participants toward the research (Ciechowska, 2018). Therefore, it is essential to focus on personality as the first constitutive feature of qualitative research conducted in the subject-participatory paradigm.

Personality, pointing to an ontological/personalistic basis, is visible in two dimensions of the perception of personalism. One of them

brings out the Christian perspective of perceiving the world. The second relates to the anthropocentric view of the world. As a consequence of these dimensions, a wide range of personalistic approaches to education emerges, explained by many authors, such as Czesław Bartnik (2000), Katarzyna Olbrycht (2018), Wojciech Chudy (2006), Zbigniew Marek (2017), Marian Nowak (2008), Dorota Thiel-Bieleńska (2011). This variety cannot be seen as an obstacle for a researcher representing one of the personalist trends, but as a benefit enriching one's own point of view, which can foster one's sense of identity. In any case, this approach must not influence the beliefs, attitudes, etc. of other members of the research community. Different views on research topics expressed by other research participants may positively influence the trajectory of the entire research process, which is creatively shaped and sometimes requires a reformulation of the research problems (Szmidt, 2018), which in turn requires the pedagogical/creative openness to self and others. In order to understand the relationship between personalitivity and the subject-participatory paradigm, it is necessary to respect personal dignity and its indicators – such as responsible freedom, reason, and truth – that are revealed by a person in their activities as determined by the personalistic norm: love (Wojtyła, 2001).

Thus, *personalitivity* can be perceived as an a priori feature in qualitative research. It seems to correlate closely with the use of the subjective-participatory paradigm at all stages of accurate and reliable research (Silverman, 2007). In the first stage, the researcher tries to focus on finding, formulating, and identifying the problem, as well as asking questions and setting goals, which should be accompanied by a challenge factor (Szmidt, 2018). This stage can enlighten the pre-projected solutions. Open observation, analysis, and diagnosis of the theoretical, practical, and methodological area of one's interest make it possible to find, define, explain, and describe an initial problem that can be discussed with others, respecting the ethical approach that determines the personalistic attitude. Assuming at this stage the subjective/objective paradigm, the researcher should always be aware of the whole, complex being of the person who, in action, reveals themselves as an integral self. It helps

to look at participants' attitudes to life from a reflective, holistic perspective in later stages of research. This requires meeting with them, recognizing their interests and needs, etc. in order to constructively discuss the research goal and learn about their point of view and willingness to participate in the research. This may later help the researcher choose the right criteria for selecting a research sample, which is part of the second stage of the creative methodology, in which the research procedures and concept are designed (Szmids, 2018). This requires the involvement of axiological/pedagogical awareness, in line with the principles of the subject-participatory paradigm, even determining the choice of research methods or techniques that can be creatively constructed in order to collect and analyze data from different sources and perspectives.

Among the ways of gathering information as a part of a qualitative strategy, narrative ones may satisfy research needs (Czarniawska, 1998). It is worth noting that "in a dynamically changing, inconsistent, demanding reality, wisely used narrative – both as a metaphor and a carrier of concepts – offers educators a number of interesting possibilities" (Rostek, 2019, p. 47). It is assumed that a well-crafted narrative can provide the researcher with data that is also important for the study, although at first glance it does not seem in line with the purpose of the study. In fact, narratives can build a new reflective space for all research participants. Therefore, there is a need to apply various narrative methods or data collection techniques in empirical practice, especially those which enhance the reflective skills. They can comprise narrative interview, various types of essays (reflective, reflective–digressive, counter-argument with reflection, etc.), reflective journal, or metaphor story building (Szymańska, 2017). In accordance with the principles of qualitative research, information obtained from the participants must be coded with their first names only (not surnames or numbers), changing them if they wish. The next stage entails the need to analyze and interpret the data and to transfer the results (Szmids, 2018) – to the participants as well, in accordance with the principles of the subject-participant. The selection of the analysis should be appropriate for the methods of data collection and adjusted to the relevant pedagogical qualitative or mixed strategy. For narrative

methods of collecting information, the choice of narrative analysis emerges as a consequence of the design and implementation of the research project. Various types of narrative analysis, such as kerygmatic (Walulik & Marek, 2019) hermeneutic (Vieira & de Queiroz, 2017), or layered analysis (Szymańska, 2019) allow for better data interpretation and a more complex picture of the research phenomenon. It can lead to new perspectives for further research and theory, fostering the development of disciplines such as pedagogy.

Another feature of qualitative research – *interactivity* – enables research participants to deepen their understanding of the world and to explore the research space by building closer and more open relationships with one another. This should be done through the interaction of various analyses and interpretations shared during the research process (Kubinowski, 2010). This feature of qualitative pedagogical research is also related to the subject-participatory paradigm. It reveals an intractable and transactive, personalistic relationship that may result in building a more mature community who are aware of the research goals. It also indicates the need for the valuable coexistence and co-creation of the participants (Ciechowska, 2020) in a friendly, safe atmosphere. Here, the researcher takes up the challenge of becoming a reflective leader, expert, consultant, or manager who accompanies and helps them, encourages them to share opinions throughout the process, explains the principles of the research method or data collection techniques, etc. Therefore, collaboration and learning through experience take place. The quality of interactivity requires, first of all, the respect of personal dignity and an open, safe space for sharing ideas and reflections coming from a changing reality. The mature interactivity can be perceived not only as a qualitative feature, but also as one of the conditions that enable the subject-participatory paradigm to work in the process of research. It reveals that the relationships between the research participants go properly according to the personalistic assumptions shaped by the personalistic norm. All participants should feel comfortable in their activities, regardless of the trajectory of the research process and its results, which requires an objective, unbiased approach to it.

Discursiveness, as another feature of qualitative research, coincides with the interactivity presented above. Its dialogical and dialectical nature allows members of the scientific community to learn about various interpretations and points of view, including the attitudes of the researcher. It should be added that the researcher does not have to give up their own views on the specific issues that are the subject of research (Jagięła, 2015). In order to understand the term discursivity, we must refer to the concept of pedagogical/educational dialogue, which builds a space for better understanding something new, explaining something incomprehensible, checking something uncertain, assessing something that raises doubts, discovering something hidden, or creating something new and useful – in a mutual atmosphere full of kindness, respect, and love (Kujawiński, 2010). Conducting pedagogical/educational dialogue in the field of qualitative research demands a wise selection of participants. The selection criterion seems to be fundamental, according to Patton (1990), for instance. This should correlate with the nature of paradigm, also shaping the method for data analysis and interpretation, in a concrete philosophical perspective. Thus, discursiveness requires high interpersonal and intrapersonal competences, as well as methodological ones, from the participants of the research process. It demands that a safe space be built for the beneficial pedagogical existence of each person participating in the research. The principles of the subject-participatory paradigm can prove useful in this area, as they can help form the personalistic approach to a constructive discourse in the area of research, strategies, data collection methods, and methods of analysis and interpretation that should be geared toward discovering the truth about the research reality, even if it can appear completely different from one's expectations. The subject-participatory paradigm imposes the need to be honest, objective, just, reflective, critically thoughtful, and respectful.

Idiomatycity is critical to obtaining results. It means appropriately adjusting the research strategies, methods, and techniques for learning about the research subjects. It also refers to the proper formulation of research goals, questions, etc. It should be tailored with gathering data and their analysis (Ciechowska, 2018; Jagięła, 2015; Kubinowski, 2010). This

feature also combines with the qualities of research briefly described above – particularly with discursiveness, which fosters a personalistic approach to the results, regardless of one's own preferences. Respecting the principles of the subject-participatory paradigm can positively affect the deployment of idiomaticity in the research process at all stages connected with its qualitative dimension, which sometimes requires certain changes that may prove more appropriate for the trajectory of the research process. The flexibility of this qualitative feature of research, rooted in the objective mindset of the research participants, may appear very crucial for all of them, provided that the whole process follows its own path with no tendency to adjust the results to one's expectations. Observing the principles of the subject-participatory paradigm in this case can prevent its overuse.

Therefore, a personalistic, qualitative approach to research seems to be extremely important here, especially for a researcher of pedagogy who intends to act in accordance with the principles of the subject-participatory paradigm. A properly built connection between individual elements of the research process at each stage requires the continual awareness of the researcher, who should creatively and responsibly continue their work, taking into account a specific research perspective. This correlation indicates the need for the respondents to build a fruitful synergy.

Synergy, often understood as an epistemological premise, enables the interaction and consolidation of many elements, including cognitive forms, into one integral entity in order to obtain a true, complete picture of the research reality (Ciechowska, 2018; Jagieła, 2015; Kubinowski, 2013), where the research participants constructively open up to each other, share their thoughts, beliefs, experiences, knowledge, etc., and consciously improve their personal and professional abilities and skills. In this way, they collectively work out a synergy effect that emerges from a research process that begins with inductive assumptions. They share their reflections and the outcomes of their work, not only with the researcher, but also with society. They become witnesses of their own participatory approaches, what can broaden their thinking horizons and initiate positive environmental changes concerning both pedagogy and education.

Synergy can become more fruitful if the principles of the subject-participatory paradigm are respected by the research participants – particularly by the researchers, who are mainly responsible for the trajectory of the research process. Here, it can be claimed that this feature of qualitative research properly takes place when the research team’s work goes smoothly in a deep understanding of the purposes of the research and its meaning for the individual and society. The participants build a research community in which democracy, solidarity, justice, equality, and love influence the quality of their efforts through the synergetic process that can unite them in a specific way. In this context, the meaning of the subject-participatory paradigm for the quality of the research seems important and shows the tight connection with the constitutive feature of qualitative research: synergy.

Another feature of qualitative research is *the researcher following the research participants* (Ciechowska, 2018) in order to understand them better. Here, their sense of comfort and wellbeing is key to the research trajectory. Therefore, the researcher is obliged to build a trusting upbringing atmosphere. It can be helpful to explain the principles and rules for participating in the research. In such an atmosphere, the participants provide beneficial and genuine reflection on the issues under study, being aware of their freedom from any judgment and having the right to learn the results. Nevertheless, the researcher should maintain boundaries between themselves and the participants, as this can help them maintain a “healthy” distance between themselves and remain objective about both the matters they are dealing with and the results, which may be unpredictable to all the members of the research community. The researcher also builds a safe space for other participants who have the right to be who they are (Patton, 1990), thus fostering the development of a sense of personal and social identity. Such activity correlates with the subject-participatory paradigm, which requires a safe, democratic space for all the research participants. The principles of this paradigm clearly demonstrate the need to create a personalistic, mature approach, not only to the research team, but also to the subjects. The personalistic norm becomes significant for eliciting the meaning of the key feature of qualitative

research: *the researcher following the research participants*. It emphasizes the fact that a researcher can never treat their subjects as a means for achieving a goal, as they are the subject participating in the research, and they should be treated by a researcher as important, equal partners taking part in the research. Therefore, this feature of qualitative research appears to correlate strongly with the principles of the subject-participatory paradigm, applied particularly in the field of pedagogy.

Contextuality is another feature of qualitative research, in which the researcher should consider two aspects of understanding the context. The first aspect indicates facts in their natural context which influence the research participants' feelings, behavior, etc. The second is related to the wider context of the research situation (Ciechowska, 2018; Kubinowski, 2013). It is worth noting that contextuality refers to both subjective and objective issues that acquire a particular perspective of the concept of quality of life, including the space of culture, institutions, etc. (Hincks, 2014). The application of the subject-participatory paradigm requires that all aspects of this context be taken into account, in particular the participants' approach to the research and their courage and openness toward change or even transformation. *Contextuality* should be tied with *perspectivity*, one of the main principles in education. This feature also requires that the research participants be treated as unique individuals characterized by their dignity, which allows them to acknowledge their identity. Following the principles of the subject-participatory paradigm can help them shape their views on the research process, which they attend as subjects, never objects.

In light of the analysis presented above, one can conclude that there is a strong relationship between the use of the subject-participatory paradigm and the constitutive qualitative features of qualitative research. The use of this paradigm in the research process may help to maintain proper order in the research process and strengthen the sense of one's own identity built within the community identity, which seems vital in building the educational community according to the mission appointed by schools, regardless of the stage of education.

Conclusion

The diverse discussion on the use of paradigms in research makes it necessary to consider their importance for the quality of research conducted according to various strategies. The constitutive features of qualitative research in particular require an explanation of their boundaries or limitations. Building a good atmosphere is crucial for opening a safe space for the research participants, who take responsibility for the trajectory of the research process, which is conducive to forming a mature approach to life. Such an approach to research also seems to correspond to the subject-participatory paradigm. Further empirical research on the practical use of paradigms seems important, especially since it may help build a sense of personal, social, and cultural identity for the researcher, and – in the context of the content of the article – help build a narrative identity, methodological awareness, and competences that foster mature, autonomous professional learning communities.

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Social Barriers of Pupils and Students with Specific Learning Disabilities

Abstract

This literature review analyzes nine specialized papers which focus on issues of the social barriers of pupils and students with specific learning disabilities. In identifying the most important features and characteristics of pupils and students with specific learning disabilities, we need to recognize which areas have a significant impact on the learning process. At the forefront come the level of motor skills, the level of memory and intellectual abilities, laterality, perception, spatial orientation, learning strategies showing the competence of self-learning, communication, and social relations. The aim of the literature review was to analyze the research of foreign authors who primarily dealt with the issue of social relations and the abilities of pupils and students with specific learning disabilities. Based on the review, it was determined that the social barriers of pupils and students with specific learning disabilities extend throughout their entire education, from the beginning until the transition to higher education. Pupils and students with specific learning disabilities are most influenced by relationships to their immediate surroundings and to themselves.

Keywords: literature review, social barriers, specific learning disabilities, pupils, teachers, family

Introduction

Specific learning disabilities cover a very heterogeneous group of traits which present certain difficulties for their bearers in several areas, including the ability to acquire and apply speech as a means of communication and other difficulties in reading, writing, or mathematics. The nature of these problems is very individual, so they cannot be generalized for all individuals, but common ground remains the dysfunction of the central nervous system. However, this statement does not deny the possibility of other disabilities, such as various sensory disabilities, intellectual disabilities, etc. However, it is important to separate the causes of learning disabilities from other disabilities because the former do not arise from the latter and are not their result, even in the case of external influences, for example, cultural differences. The impact of learning disabilities needs to be considered beyond the educational process, as they affect the daily life of these individuals (Aro et al., 2019; Kormos & Smith, 2012). Knight and Scott (2004) point to the need to perceive learning disabilities in the context of their specific manifestations and to distinguish them from non-specific ones, which they describe as false learning disabilities. They find the causes of false learning disabilities to be a delay in the development of intellectual abilities, a lack of incentives from the social environment, or neglect of school attendance, etc. Hollar (2012) defines specific learning disabilities as a group of neurodevelopmental disorders that manifest in childhood as difficulties acquiring and using reading skills (dyslexia), writing ability (dysgraphia), or performing mathematical operations (dyscalculia) in situations with normal intellect, normal educational conditions, intact sensory functions, adequate motivation, and sociocultural conditions ensured and maintained. A Canadian study for learning disabilities defines them as several disorders that can affect the organization, acquisition, or understanding of nonverbal or verbal information. These disorders affect the learning process of pupils who otherwise have at least the appropriate skills necessary to acquire skills and knowledge (Grigorenko et al., 2020; Kendall & Samways, 2008).

The pitfall leading to school performance deficits in these pupils is the fixation of inappropriate work habits, which are often linked to behavior.

School failure, negative evaluations from the teachers, parental dissatisfaction, and many other negative factors contribute to the pupil's declining motivation and self-evaluation, in particular. This situation often results in inappropriate behavior, which is only a deviating maneuver, masking the pupil's real difficulties. Gradually, a negative attitude towards school and education develops, and psychosomatic problems can also appear, even phobias or a changed self-perception of the pupil can emerge (Hardman et al., 2016; Snowling et al., 2020). Henley, Ramsey, and Algozzine (2008) report an increased incidence of frustration and social immaturity leading to inappropriate behavior or anxiety attacks in pupils with specific learning disabilities. Depressive states can sometimes occur. It is therefore necessary to provide sufficient support and encouragement from the school and family. It is very traumatic for these pupils when they are unable to meet their parents' expectations, especially in the early school years. At a young age, the pupil easily adopts the attitudes and opinions of their social environment, which can have a negative impact on their self-confidence, self-esteem, and overall personal development. The pupil then logically responds to the situation with an attack or escape. Escape is accompanied by feelings of resignation, inferiority, and closure. On the contrary, conspicuous behavior and aggression are means of defense and attack (Agrawal et al., 2019; Fletcher et al., 2018). The first indications appear in the family, which may indicate an increased risk of learning difficulties in the pupil. The situation is greatly helped if the teacher can help not only the pupil, but also their family to overcome the initial shock of failure in education and to accept the fact that their child has difficulty learning and that even though they often make a considerable effort, it does not lead to the desired result. Educators' approaches to pupils with learning disabilities are addressed in Vaughn, Bos, and Say Schumm (2018), who also focus on the emotional and cognitive aspects of language learning and the use of appropriate methods. Because learning disabilities are so heterogeneous, it is certainly not possible to use only one approach or technique for all pupils with learning disabilities. It is important that the teacher perceives and works with each pupil individually. In addition to the above-mentioned actors in the education of pupils with

specific learning disabilities, it is necessary to also perceive the influence of classmates, who may engage in bullying due to misunderstanding. Pupils with specific learning disabilities can often be less popular in the classroom, which can create conflicts and worsen relationships (Sainio et al., 2019; Swanson et al., 2013).

Methodology

The literature review is a basic means or tool of research in the field of special education. It is described as a method that is essential for the further development of science in special and inclusive education. Another benefit of the literature review is the fact that no current research can be left without a detailed mapping and analysis of what has ever been found and how researchers proceeded in the past. Through overview studies, it is possible to become familiar with the research areas which have been noted for follow-up studies (Ridley, 2012). This literature review takes the form of a traditional (narrative) review, which summarizes a wider range of studies on a selected topic over a limited period. The established aspects or selected research questions are carefully followed during the design of the review. The literature review provides a description and summary of the findings of previous research and identifies differences in the views of previous researchers and published results. Literature reviews may thus contain recommendations and conclusions of a more general nature (Bearman et al., 2012).

This literature review addresses the issue of the social skills and relationships of pupils and students with specific learning disabilities. To select studies suitable for analysis, we established two basic thematic criteria: social skills/relationships and specific learning disabilities. We tried to approach the topic for the literature review comprehensively. By analyzing and then synthesizing the information, we tried to determine which areas of social skills and problems are addressed in the available research, which groups of individuals are mutually evaluated in this context, and what tools researchers use to collect data.

For this purpose, according to the selected parameters, we selected and subsequently analyzed nine professional articles that deal with our chosen topic. The collection and study of professional literature of foreign origin was carried out at the end of 2020. We searched for titles for the overview study in the Scopus, ERIH+, and Web of Science databases. The selection was limited to full-text resources available online. We chose thematically focused articles in the period from 2004 to 2019. Based on the analysis and according to the established criteria for the selection of suitable texts, we synthesized the findings from relevant studies into a literature review, while in a systematic review we tried to analyze individual selected articles, then briefly present their characteristics, distinguish and highlight their differences, evaluate their contribution to theory and practice, and generally integrate knowledge on the topic into the literature review. An overview of the studies which were analyzed is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Social barriers in pupils and students with specific learning disabilities

Title	Authors, year	Research strategy	Research sample	Research results
Psychosocial functioning of young children with learning problems	Gadeyne, E., Ghesquière, P., Onghena, P., 2004	quantitative	276 pupils (43 with specific learning disabilities, 233 intact pupils)	Pupils have a lower level of social well-being and self-confidence; parents perceive social relations in the family less well.
Sociometric status and self-image of children with specific and general learning disabilities in Dutch general and special education classes	Bakker, J. T. A., Denessen, E., Bosman, A. M. T., Krijger, E., Bouts, L., 2007	quantitative	1,300 pupils (439 from special schools, 861 from mainstream schools)	Pupils with specific learning disabilities in the team felt unpopular, rejected, and ignored in both types of schools. Girls felt much more rejected than boys.
Adaptive behaviour in children and adolescents with foetal alcohol spectrum disorders: A comparison with specific learning disability and typical development	Fagerlund, Å., Autti-Rämö, I., Kalland, M., Santtila, P., Hoyme, H., Mattson, S. N., Korkman, M., 2012	quantitative	143 pupils (30 with specific learning disabilities, 73 with reduced IQ-fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, 40 intact pupils)	Adaptive behavior was significantly different in each group. Pupils with specific learning disabilities showed worse results than intact pupils (socialization, communication), but even worse results were found in pupils with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders.

Self-perceived health-related quality of life of Indian children with specific learning disability	Karande, S., Venkataraman, R., 2012	quantitative	150 pupils with average intelligence	These pupils felt socially excluded, lonely, and separated from their classmates. They felt psychological limits stemming from lower health status and stigmatization from teachers.
Quality of life in newly diagnosed children with specific learning disabilities (SpLD) and differences from typically developing children: A study of child and parent reports	Ginieri-Coccosis, M., Rotsika, V., Skevington, S., Papaevangelou, S., Malliori, M., Tomaras, V., Kokkevi, A., 2013	quantitative	139 pupils (70 with newly diagnosed specific learning disabilities, 69 intact pupils)	Significant differences in the perception of defined areas of quality of life between pupils with specific learning disabilities and intact pupils. Parents of intact pupils had a much higher score on social relationships. However, there were no major differences in the perception of mental and physical health.
Bullying and middle school students with and without specific learning disabilities: An examination of social-ecological predictors	Rose, C. A., Espelage, D. L., Monda-Amaya, L. E., Shogren, K. A., Aragon, S. R., 2013	quantitative	443 pupils (83 with specific learning disabilities, 360 intact pupils)	Boys with specific learning disabilities were more prone to lower levels of social support and, conversely, more prone to aggression and bullying. Pupils involved in extracurricular activities had a higher degree of social support and a lower risk of aggression, violence, or bullying. Pupils with specific learning disabilities using special support had a much higher ability to acquire social acceptance.
Extracurricular activities and the development of social skills in children with intellectual and specific learning disabilities	Brooks, B. A., Floyd, F., Robins, D. L., Chan, W. Y., 2015	quantitative	117 pupils (53 with specific learning disabilities, 40 with intellectual disabilities, 24 intact pupils)	Equal quality of structured and unorganized activities. The positive impact of participating in activities due to better social competencies and greater success among peers was confirmed. Unstructured activities improved pupil's cooperation and social competence. However, the same was not confirmed for structured activities.

Postsecondary education persistence of adolescents with specific learning disabilities or emotional/behavioral disorders	Lee, I. H., Rojewski, J. W., Gregg, N., Jeong, S.-O., 2015	quantitative	10,760 students (770 with specific learning disabilities or emotional and behavioral disorders, 9,900 intact students)	Work aspirations and mutual communication about school with parents and their expectations as well as the number of friends excluded and studying had the greatest influence. Two thirds of students with specific learning disabilities were nstable in education. No clear differences were found between groups with specific learning disabilities and emotional and behavioral disorders.
Family-peer linkages for children with intellectual disability and children with learning disabilities	Floyd, F. J., Olsen, D. L., 2017	qualitative	107 families of children (48 with specific learning disabilities, 37 with intellectual disabilities, 22 families of intact children)	For children, greater engagement, easier behavior, and less negativity with their families were associated with greater acceptance of their peers, which encouraged family ties in children at risk of peer rejection.

Results of the Review

Gadeyne et al. (2004) addressed the psychosocial functioning of first-grade pupils with specific learning disabilities compared to intact pupils. They selected 276 pupils aged 6 to 7 years for the research, of whom 233 had no specific learning disabilities and 43 had specific learning disabilities. Several areas were examined: school evaluation, behavioral problems, self-perception, cognitive ability, sociometry, and the concept of motivation. Several tests were used for this purpose and administered to pupils or their mothers. The tests taken by the pupils were administered by the teacher in order to evaluate, for example, classroom relationships or self-perception. The mothers answered questions about their children's behavior. The findings of the research were that the pupils with specific learning disabilities had more problems with socialization and behavior towards their teachers than the intact pupils. These pupils

also had greater difficulties with social preferences and a significantly higher risk of problems in social integration. Pupils had a lower degree of social well-being and self-confidence; the parents perceived social relationships in the family less well.

In their research, Bakker et al. (2007) focused on the social status of pupils with specific learning disabilities and pupils with general learning disabilities. A total of 1,300 pupils took part in their survey. Part of the research took place in mainstream schools (861 pupils) and part in schools set up for pupils with special educational needs (439 pupils). The age limits were set at 9 to 12 years in the mainstream schools and 9 to 16 years in the special schools. The pupils' IQ scores were not given. During the research, two questionnaires were administered to pupils and two to teachers. The questionnaires for the pupils focused on sociometric status and ideas about themselves. Six questions regarding the preference of classmates comprised the sociometric status. The second questionnaire contained 23 questions focused on the emotions of regarding their abilities, the perception of their values, relationships in the classroom, etc. The questionnaires distributed to the teachers were aimed at the overall evaluation of the pupils and distributing them according to their diagnosis. Based on the research, it was concluded that the pupils with specific learning disabilities in both types of schools in the research group felt unpopular, rejected, and ignored. More obvious differences were seen between boys and girls. Girls felt much more rejected than boys. In their conclusion, the authors proposed a discussion in which they find out that pupils with specific learning disabilities feel equally rejected in mainstream schools and special schools.

Fagerlund et al. (2012) examined the adaptive abilities of pupils with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, which affect intellectual abilities. The research compared three groups of pupils, the first group consisting of 30 children with specific learning disabilities, the second group of 73 pupils with reduced IQ (fetal alcohol spectrum disorders), and the third group comprised of 40 intact pupils. Thus, 143 pupils took part in the study. The researchers used Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales (VABS) in a semi-structured interview with the children's parents and, where appropriate,

caregivers. Three domains – everyday skills, socialization, and communication – were included in the evaluation. Adaptive behavior was significantly different in each group. The pupils with specific learning disabilities performed worse than the intact pupils, but even worse were those with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders. The social skills of the pupils with specific learning disabilities improved with age.

In their research, Karande and Venkataraman (2012) analyzed their own perception of quality of life in newly diagnosed pupils with specific learning disabilities. The hypothesis of this research was that the perception of these pupils would be significantly affected at the psychological and psychosocial levels. The research sample consisted of 150 pupils with average intelligence between the ages of 8 and 16 years. They were selected based on visits to the clinic where the research was conducted and where specific learning disabilities were diagnosed in these pupils. The English Self-report Long-version DISABKIDS test (DCGM-37-S) was used to determine the perception of quality of life by these pupils; it contains subtests focused on independence, emotions, social inclusion and exclusion, limitations, and the impact of set measures (treatments). The test contained 37 questions answered with five-point scales. The results of the study show that these pupils feel socially excluded, lonely, and separated from their classmates. They perceived stigmatization from the school and their peers. They felt psychological limits stemming from their lower health status. In the research sample, the feeling of stigmatization from teachers was significant.

Ginieri-Coccosis et al. (2013) also focused on pupils' self-assessment. For their research, they created a control group of completely healthy pupils. Questionnaires were also directed at the pupils' parents. The secondary goal was then to explain the relationships and perceptions of quality of life by pupils and their parents. The 70 pupils in whom specific learning disabilities were newly diagnosed had an average age of 10.1 years; the control group of 69 pupils had an average age of 10.6 years. Pupils were examined using the German standardized KINDL questionnaire, which assesses quality of life using 24 scaling questions with a scale of 1 to 5. The questionnaire included areas such as mental and emotional well-being, self-confidence,

family, friends, and daily functioning in the school environment. From a comparison of the two groups, the researchers concluded that there were significant differences in the perception of the areas of the questionnaire. The Quality-of-Life Brief Questionnaire was administered to the parents, revealing that the parents of intact pupils had a much higher score on social relationships. However, there were no major differences in the perception of mental and physical health.

Rose et al. (2013) examined bullying in secondary schools in terms of predictors that were identified as demographic variables (gender and race) and socio-environmental predictors (family support, need for belonging, school support, etc.). Two groups of pupils were created: those with specific learning disabilities and intact pupils. The final research sample consisted of 360 intact pupils and 83 pupils with specific learning disabilities, aged 11–15 years. The schools that the pupils attended did not have bullying prevention programs. Standardized scales from the University of Illinois were used to obtain demographic information. Questionnaires were distributed to the pupils. The structural equation modelling which was used to identify socio-environmental predictors covered eight areas: anger, militancy, bullying, discrimination, peer social support, the need for belonging, family social support, and school social support. It was found that the boys were more prone to lower levels of social support and, conversely, more prone to aggression and bullying. Furthermore, it was revealed that the pupils who were involved in extracurricular activities had a higher degree of social support and a lower risk of aggression, violence, or bullying. It was also revealed that the pupils with specific learning disabilities who benefited from special support had a much higher ability to acquire social acceptance.

Brooks et al. (2015) investigated the impact of extracurricular activities on pupils' social skills. The study group included 53 pupils with specific learning disabilities, 40 pupils with intellectual disabilities, and 24 intact pupils. The aim of the research was to determine the relationship between the frequency and type of social activity towards social competences. The research was based on the hypothesis that social activities outside of school would have a positive impact on pupils' social skills.

They also predicted that unorganized and structured activities had an equally positive impact. They used the Activities Questionnaire, which they distributed to the pupils' parents. Parents recorded their children's activities for six months. Another questionnaire was the Peer Social Task Rating Scales, which focus on pupils' social competencies during activities with their peers. The questions dealt with conversation, engagement, helping others, etc. The latest Adaptive Behavior Scale-Caregiver Report covered the area from social behavior to language development. The survey confirmed the hypothesis of equal value of structured and unorganized activities. The positive impact of participating in activities was also confirmed due to better social competences and greater success among peers. Unstructured activities improved pupils' cooperation and social competence. Interestingly, however, the same was not confirmed for structured activities.

Lee et al. (2015) examined the factors that influenced the persistence of students with specific learning disabilities and emotional and behavioral disorders in post-secondary education. The results of the National Center for Education Statistics questionnaire (ELS: 2002 database) were analyzed, focusing on the transition from secondary to post-secondary education. The survey was repeatedly applied in 2002, 2004, and 2006. A total of 10,760 individuals made up the final sample, of which 9,900 were intact and 770 had specific learning or emotional and behavioral disorders. The evaluated factors were: individual, school, family, community, and peer factors. According to the results so far, these factors are decisive in the retention of students in education. Of all the factors, the most important were individual factors (gender and work aspirations), mutual communication about the school with parents and their expectations. Another important factor is the number of friends who are students and of those excluded from the school system. The study also confirmed the influence of socialization and the social environment on the successful education of individuals with specific learning disabilities. The research also revealed that two thirds of students with specific learning disabilities are unstable in education. This result is up to double that of intact students. However, no clear differences were found between the groups with specific learning disabilities and with emotional and behavioral disorders.

Floyd and Olsen (2017) examined the interactions of problem-solving in the families of school-age children (7–11 years) with intellectual disabilities ($N=37$), with specific learning disabilities ($N=48$), and without disabilities ($N=22$). First, all family members took part in a ten-minute discussion about their family's current problem (cooperation between children, family rules, etc.). The records of the family discussions were then coded in a system consisting of 38 specific behavioral codes that assessed interpersonal communication skills, problem-solving skills, and other behaviors that either facilitated family discussion and successfully solved the problem or disrupted the process by withdrawal, hostility, or aversion. The last part consisted of an evaluation of the target child's experience of receiving peers through a set of parental reports (usually the mothers) and teacher report items derived from scales of peer relationships and teacher measures. The analysis of group differences in the children's behavior and peer acceptance in all groups revealed that the behavior of mothers – which encouraged egalitarian problem-solving – predicted a more involved and skillful solution to the children's problems. However, controlling mothers, who controlled behavior, indicated fewer of these behaviors in the children. Fathers' behavior had mixed connections with children's actions, probably because they responded to children's uncontrolled and negative behavior. For the children, greater engagement, easier behavior, and less negativity with their families were associated with greater acceptance of their peers, which encouraged family ties in children at risk of peer rejection.

Conclusion

Based on the literature review, it can be stated that the issue of specific learning disabilities brings with it a significant risk of social barriers and difficulties in relationships. A characteristic feature of these barriers is their impact, which affects not only individuals with specific learning disabilities, but also their families, teachers, classmates, and the wider social environment. It is also possible to confirm the impact of specific learning

disabilities on the education of these pupils, which is clear from the beginning of education through secondary school to higher education. These individuals are mainly influenced by their social environment and the personality factors that surround them.

The studies selected for this review can be defined using three categories: the quality of life, education, and behavior of pupils. The first category is based on the results of standardized tests from two surveys. Karande and Venkataraman (2011) addressed a group of pupils with specific learning disabilities with average intellect. Ginieri-Coccosis et al. (2013) examined not only the pupils, but also their parents. Pupils with specific learning disabilities and intact pupils took part in the survey. The conclusions of both studies yielded similar findings, which demonstrate that pupils with specific learning disabilities experience social exclusion, lower self-esteem, greater stigma, and difficulties with their immediate social environment.

Two other studies were compared in the education category. Both surveys compared the results of pupils with specific learning disabilities and pupils with intellectual disabilities. The first was a survey ($N=1,300$) that dealt mainly with social status and was conducted in both mainstream schools and schools for pupils with special educational needs. The questionnaires were administered to pupils and teachers. The results show that pupils with special educational needs felt rejected and unpopular in both types of schools (Bakker et al., 2007). The second survey examined pupils with specific learning disabilities and intellectual disabilities as well as intact pupils as a control group. The research dealt with the relationship between frequency and type of social activity towards social competencies. The total number of pupils was only 117, so it is not possible to compare the conclusions with the previous sample, which was many times higher (Brooks et al., 2015).

The last category is research on student behavior. Gadeyne et al. (2004) examined problems in behavior and self-perception, school evaluation, and other areas in pupils aged 6–7 years. They concluded that pupils with specific learning disabilities addressed more of the behavioral problems highlighted by their teachers, as well as difficulties with

social preference and social integration. The study by Rose et al. (2013), which dealt with the issue of bullying in secondary school, drew a similar conclusion and stated that the prevention of socially pathological phenomena is very important for the inclusion of students. From the very beginning of schooling, it is necessary to focus on inclusion and thus prevent much greater problems in the form of bullying. Lee et al. (2015) used previously published information from databases for their research and worked with it further. Their sample was substantially larger, encompassing 10,760 individuals. This survey also worked with two groups of pupils, the first being pupils with specific learning disabilities or emotional and behavioral disorders and the second one being intact pupils. The research examines the factors that influence the persistence of pupils with specific learning disabilities and with emotional and behavioral disorders in post-secondary education. The main factors were individual factors (gender and work aspirations) and mutual communication about the school with parents and their expectations. Another important factor is the number of friends who study or are excluded – in other words, socialization – and the influence of the social environment on the success of individuals with specific learning disabilities. The latest research in this category compared three groups of individuals: those with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, those with specific learning disabilities, and intact individuals. The pupils with specific learning disabilities performed worse than the intact pupils, but even worse were those with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders. Pupils with specific learning disabilities showed worse results in the areas of communication, socialization, and everyday activities. The social skills of pupils with specific learning disabilities improved with age (Fagerlund et al., 2012).

Pupils and students with specific learning disabilities often have striking features that may be misunderstood by those around them. They also very often do not realize how their behavior is perceived by other people. The constant failures and possible misunderstandings of a person with specific learning disabilities with of his immediate surroundings, whether they are a family member or a teacher, play a significant role in shaping the person's personality. Unpleasant experiences, mainly from

the period of schooling – which people with specific learning disabilities experience more often than people without such disorders – have an unavoidable influence in the social and emotional spheres throughout the individual's life.

Comprehensive support for pupils and students with specific learning disabilities should include three basic components: adjusting the conditions of school work so that pupils and students can work at the level of their school year, possibly with the use of various support aids; their own reeducation of specific learning disabilities; and giving encouragement to pupils, students, and parents so that they can endure and manage long and difficult struggles with specific learning disabilities.

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Connective Learning as Teachers' Approach to One's Own Professional Development: The Case of Poland

Abstract

Although the genesis of connectivism as a theory of learning in the digital age dates back to the early 2000s, in Polish pedagogy this concept remains relatively unknown, sparse in academic debates, and downright rare in empirical research. The main purpose of the article is to present the knowledge and opinions of Polish teachers regarding connectivism. To what extent do Polish teachers know the theory of connective learning? Which of its assumptions do they see as key? To what extent are they willing to apply these assumptions in practice as a path or tool for developing their own professional competences? These research questions were the basis for a survey, the presentation of which constitutes the backbone of this article. The research indicates a clear cognitive dissonance in the minds of the teachers surveyed: the gap between the perception of the potential values of connectivism and the ability/readiness to use its tools in their own learning. The summary of the text contains conclusions for in-service teacher training, which needs to be reorganized to include the most valuable connected

learning instruments so as to provide teachers with the skills necessary for successful self-regulated learning in the digital age.

Keywords: connectivism, connective learning, teacher professional development, in-service teachers, personal learning environment, social learning environment

Connectivism as a Theory of Learning in the Digital Era – Its Origins and Assumptions

Connectivism is an innovative perspective of analyzing the course and effectiveness of the teaching and learning processes, from both the theoretical and methodological aspects. Its creators are Canadian scientists George Siemens (2006) and Stephen Downes (2006; 2012). According to them, connectivism is a conceptual framework that explains learning as a network phenomenon entangled in a virtual system, requiring not only a different description of learning mechanisms, but also a different epistemology of knowledge and a new language (digital literacy). Philosophical and epistemological research (Verhagen, 2006; Kerr, 2007; Bell, 2011; Ravenscroft, 2011; Barry, 2013; Clara & Barbera, 2013) has shown that the basic principles of connectivism can be derived from the traditional epistemological paradigms included in constructivist theories. The lack of extensive research in this field, along with the selectivity and randomness of available studies has also been criticized (Kartensi 2013; Bell, 2011).

Connectivism is the concept of “learning online” or “building a learning community” that not only uses the modern digital resources of knowledge accumulated on the Internet, but also offers a “community of learning minds” as a forum for knowledge exchange, discussion, and a critical evaluation of existing educational resources/ideas. Therefore, connectivism assumes that human knowledge does not have to be all in one’s head, but that the knowledge needed to perform a specific task is available in devices and information resources. Information should be searched for, acquired, and collected, then processed, used, and applied (Gregorczyk, 2012, p. 8). Knowledge is perceived as sub-symbolic, its meaning resulting

from interaction and a set of connections, in which critical thinking is highlighted. It determines the knowledge, understanding, and use of the word. Teaching pupils how to think should be prioritized in any educational area at the early school stage. A school of *thinking* should be built, eliminating the school of *knowledge acquisition*. The theory of connectivism assumes that we base our decisions on a specific information resource that is constantly changing, constantly being filled with new information.

Connectivism as a theory revolutionizes thinking about learning and combines many learning theories. It grew out of the experience of conventionalism, a field that deals with the study of neural networks, artificial intelligence, and the theory of social networks – describing the development and spread of ideas in society. In its assumptions about the organization of teaching and ways of learning for yourself – by combining sources and making decisions about their quality – it refers to the earlier thesis of Andy Clark and David Chalmers (2014). In their opinion, the theory of mind is expanded to cover all the tools that are prostheses for the mind, replacing or improving its capabilities. In turn, Ray Kurzweil (2013, 2018) – an American futurologist – claimed that the human mind, shaped by evolution, develops linearly, while information technology develops exponentially. As a result, there will come a moment when it will be impossible to keep up with the escaping technique, unless it combines biology with technology to strengthen human capabilities through technological solutions (Benedyk-Rotkiewicz, 2010, p. 65; Baron-Polańczyk, 2014, p. 240).

The Learning Environment as a Virtual Ecosystem

The 21st-century teacher needs to be a *new-age* educator, a competent professional taking up numerous educational challenges, able to meet all innovative challenges, open and flexible, and looking for solutions in which both the analog and digital worlds complement each other. The right path in this situation, as noted by Katarzyna Borawska-Kalbarczyk (2017, p. 158), is to find didactic homeostasis between linear, word-based learning and hypermedia learning, using digital means.

In the “information age” and the era of building a “knowledge society,” teachers of early childhood education in Polish schools are required to prepare students to cope in a world that is opening up to new and increasingly mobile areas, in which reality becomes as important as the virtual world. Connectivism as a learning theory is open to such challenges and is a response to cultural realities; it allows full individualization and unlimited choices; it creates an environment for competent and active analysis and the processing of specific information; it promotes emancipation. The school as a social institution should ensure the creation of a space – an inspiring virtual territory – that will become the training ground for skills, creativity, learning, and getting to know each other.

The learning environment primarily means building a kind of support for learners, giving them opportunities to develop and seek answers to their changing reality, and being a synergistic learning platform that consists of three components: physical, which includes the school space and its equipment and infrastructure; social, which takes into account relationships between the participants of the educational process, which are a source of inspiration and mutual motivation; and virtual, which refers to modern information and communication technologies that provide access to tools and digital resources. J. S. Brown (1999: 34) defined the learning environment as an ecosystem of learning, an open, changing, complex system that is characterized by a variety of elements and the dynamics of its relationships and connections. The metaphor of an ecosystem in the interpretations of J. Nowak (2015, pp. 7–8) and Dumont et al. (2012) allows a much broader view of the learning process, including interacting and building relationships with the material and social world. The role of the learning ecosystem is to connect participants and resources in a broad educational environment through collaboration, publishing, reflection, and development. The teacher creates the opportunity to participate in social networks, which become a tool for establishing contacts, exchanging thoughts, actively creating content, working on joint projects, and systematically communicating. The networks that one can connect into can be small and local or extensive and global (Siemens, 2006; Downes, 2006, 2012). Knowledge is perceived here as

a fluid, dynamic process flowing through people's networks and their artifacts. When it flows, it becomes part of the network; it is open to many interpretations and changes. According to connectivists, knowledge is found in networks. They describe the learning community as a hub that is always part of a larger network. Hubs emerge from connection points found in the network. The learning process is cyclical; everyone connects to the network to find and share new information.

Maciej Tanaś (1997, p. 165) pointed to many dimensions of development which might be supported by modern technology. These include the involvement of the emotional and motivational spheres, multi-sensorial learning, interactivity, simulation, communication skills, visualization and multiplication. The virtual learning environment is an interdisciplinary element of the educational process in which the modern teacher of early childhood education should find themselves, while the learning space within and outside the classroom becomes a source of various educational impulses and cognitive conflict. In social practices, it is understood as the correlation and interaction of four elements: the learner (who?), the teachers (with whom?), the content (learn what?), and the objects, equipment, and technology (learn where and with what?). The organization of learning itself follows three principles: "whatever," "whenever," and "wherever" (Kołodziejczyk-Polak, 2011). Education in this case is permanent and holistic, allowing the freedom to choose the content, space, time, place, etc.

The Subjective Dimension of the Learning Environment in Connectivism

Connected learning is a new challenge for teachers. This is personal, practice-based learning that emphasizes recognition and responses to specific phenomena in which individual knowledge covers the network. Being a teacher is not only a profession, but a specific active lifestyle that is manifested in an innovative pursuit of self-development and self-discovery; it is a constant attitude of astonishment, motivating others to seek answers to questions about the purpose and meaning of implementing

new technologies in education. It is also creating one's own cognitive world of reflection by perceiving problems, formulating questions, investigating, considering, and developing multidirectional interests, experience, subjectivity, and favorable conditions for developing skills and acquiring new competences.

Self-education in teacher development is an integral element of the innovative education process; it is considered to be purposeful and subject to one's own control acquisition and the modernization of knowledge (Wenta, 2003, p. 104; Batorowska, 2012). The contemporary teacher according to connectivism undertakes a number of challenges and tasks that determine the quality of their work, in which they critically reflect on the teaching/learning methods, techniques, and strategies being used, develop independence and sensitivity to values, use resources, and initiate an attractive virtual climate. The teacher creates a completely different picture of the learning process – which does not set time/ space restrictions and assumes the role of a leader guiding the students through the maze of knowledge, motivating and supporting them in coping with psychological problems related to information overload and the inability to deal with them (Donderowicz, 2014, pp. 159–160). To teach means to propose a model and experience, while to learn means practice and reflection. Entering the world of creating one's own "I," the teacher learns active system thinking, creative action, specific knowledge construction, innovation, communication on the Internet, connecting to online resources, and looking for ways to practice IT competences. These processes evolve towards a meta-learning that exposes self-learning. At the same time, preparing for continuous self-education in areas saturated with interactivity, they enter the "magic digital partnership" and create a "stage of mutual attention" (Tomasello, 2002; Nowak, 2015; Kruk, 2018; Batorowska, 2012; Czaja-Chudyba & Muchacka, 2016; Karbowniczek, 2013) that contains cognitive potential, which is activated during the interaction, constituting the material for constructing knowledge structures and generating new behavior. Its traditionalism replaces connectivism and constructivism. By creating a personal territory of culture and learning in an original and ingenious way, it creates a network of activities in which

it participates, develops specific interests, and systematically broadens the field of experience. Designing various exercises and practical tasks *immerses* one in an authentic digital environment by interacting with it (Downes, 2012). Teachers get messages by connecting with pupils on the networks. Here they exchange information, thanks to which they acquire new connectivistic competences, which are a set of skills necessary in didactic and educational work in light of the increasing access to information and its sources and resulting from the need to assess its veracity, validity, and reliability and to understand and use it legally and ethically. They seek, collect, and use information obtained online for education. Innovation, creativity, and independence become a multi-intelligent signpost to the cyclical enrichment of digital competences. Early childhood education teachers including connective learning in their practice may consider the following suggestions: follow blogs which introduce innovations thanks to information technologies; experiment with internet services and tools that enrich the teaching/learning process in integrated classes; encourage the use of networks to obtain scientific, critical, and selective resources; offer scaffolding and support; create opportunities for reflection; use, publish, and share resources via blogs, websites, wikis, photos, and videos; create flexible, lean environments with an authentic context (e.g. using problem-based materials and case studies to build shared resources) and share them with best practices; use media effectively; create online communities through the media, promoting connectivity and commitment to, cooperation with, and development of professionalism; and introduce new world models (Bell, 2009; Goldie, 2016, p. 1066; Cheston, 2013).

The Social Dimension of the Learning Environment in Connectivism

Connectivism as a learning model takes into account the mutual relationships of people connecting and cooperating in a network. Its semantic determinants are social networks and communities (leading to

a portable, variable identity); interaction network (creating target groups); autonomous learning centers; the diversity of networks (multiple views and technologies); and a network as an open phenomenon of interconnection and interactivity (Downes & Siemens, 2006). The diversity among the participants of this network, its openness, and its ability to ensure interaction between them mean that they can use their potential. The learning process means joining the network – interacting with other teachers, ideas, resources, and events. The network works to connect dispersed groups and individuals into an integral community. They form a variety of interactive relationships. By transforming “Me” into “We,” we build a social network, develop space and an active field of cooperation, and use tools to jointly create and edit associative networks, project notes, and final works, allowing for a non-linear presentation. Teachers should demonstrate the ability to connect to specific nodes or information resources, be able to search for useful knowledge, and maintain and strengthen connections. In this model, the idea of a “partnership for real learning,” knowledge sharing, common creation, partnership, contact, and communication is generated between educators. The task of everyone who wants to learn something is to participate jointly in the creation and flow of knowledge. Participation and partnership require reflection on the social and cultural contexts in which information is used (Batorowska, 2012, p. 37). Participation, in turn, is focused on joint discussion, problem-solving, and discovery of meanings. In the context of collectivist assumptions, an active and creative teacher using the network requires the presence of other teachers, creating a community in the process of developing creative thinking. Co-existence with each other – proactive, joint, and cooperative learning – should be focused on creating meanings and not on accepting them in a ready form. Thanks to this, a way of thinking can be designed using new media, which in turn helps ideas be developed and helps perspectives to change. According to Bruner (2006, p. 103), Kochanowska (2018, p. 158), and Pole (2017, p. 38), a culture of mutual learning based on a community of learners is important. Members of the community are involved in solving problems; they awaken metacognitive thinking, or an awareness of what they do, how they do it, and why they do it.

Interaction learning creates a community of online learners and serves as a source of impulses to develop an intellectual disposition and a context for building members' social identities. Teachers help each other by cooperating with community support groups, expressing their views, discussing, negotiating, and presenting specific understandings of the world. By confronting them with others' interpretations, they show a variety of perspectives coming from the different perceptions of others. Their minds become common social constructs. They develop in the network in the context of social interactions, but also through interactions. They join the community of communicating minds – active minds which seek dialogue and discourse with others.

Research Methodology

The main purpose of the research was to explore teachers' knowledge and opinions about the possibilities of using connected learning theory as a tool for planning and stimulating one's professional development. The following research questions were formulated:

1. What do teachers know about connectivism as a learning theory?
2. How do they assess the values and threats related to the use of connected learning in educational practice?
3. What aspects of connected learning theory do they use in their own self-learning practice?

To collect teachers' opinions, an online questionnaire was constructed, consisting of 21 semi-open questions. For the purposes of this article, only the first part of the survey was used. A total of 89 in-service teachers from two different academic centers in southeastern Poland completed the questionnaire. Over 46% of them were secondary school teachers; a further 38% were primary school teachers, 25.8% kindergarten teachers, and 20% teachers of adults.

Research Results

Knowledge of the assumptions of connectivism

Over 57% of the surveyed teachers declared that they knew the assumptions of connectivism. However, only 14% use them in their own educational practice. Over 42% of respondents do not know the theory, including 32.6% who declared a willingness to read its assumptions and 10% who did not feel the need to make any changes in their own professional practice. In answer to the question of what principles of collectivism they consider the most important, the surveyed teachers selected the following:

- the possibility to enrich and update one's knowledge by searching for new information (over 64% of responses)
- the ability to create independent, multidimensional knowledge by juxtaposing/combining various opinions (over 49% of responses)
- the ability to connect to information resources/nodes on the network, which significantly relieves human memory and allows one to "take knowledge" with one, hidden in a small mobile device (another 49% of responses)

Interestingly, only one third of the surveyed teachers perceived the subjective dimension of online learning as a process that requires independent decision-making (independent planning and monitoring in the course of knowledge acquisition, setting goals, controlling effects, etc.). Even fewer – only 21% of respondents – were aware of the social dimension of learning as the ability to create and maintain connections with other participants and to build a community learning from each other.

Perceiving the value of connectivism as a theory of learning

To diagnose the teachers' perception of the values and threats of connectivism, three questions were asked:

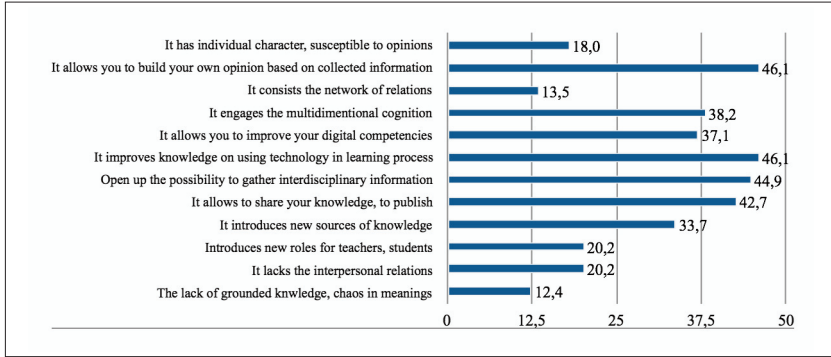
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- What is personal online learning?
 - What meaning does personal online learning have for a learner?
 - What determines the importance of such learning?

Defining the essence of personal online learning, the respondents highlighted three main aspects (Fig. 1):

- A. the technological dimension of such learning, which not only enriches the user's knowledge about modern technologies (46% of responses), but also allows personal digital competences to be improved and which are the basis for effective functioning in the modern world (another 37% of responses)
- B. the quality and multi-perspectivity of knowledge acquired in this way: the ability to develop a personal opinion on a topic by comparing various opinions and compiling information from various sources (46% of statements), the interdisciplinarity of acquired knowledge (another 44.9% of responses), the multi-faceted nature of knowledge (38% of choices), and the ability to access sources of information not available in traditional school teaching (33%)
- C. the ability to share knowledge and achievements with others, to appear on the Internet, publish one's own ideas, and thus build a positive image of oneself (42.7% of statements)

Interestingly, only a small group of teachers emphasized the social, communal dimension of the online learning environment, understood as establishing relationships and contacts that are important for learning and being part of a community that negotiates meanings and works out common solutions to everyday educational problems (13.5% of responses). An equally small group perceived online learning in negative categories as posing a threat due to social isolation (20% of responses), chaos of meanings, or lack of authority and consolidation of knowledge (12%).

**Figure 1. Answer to the question,
“What is personal online learning? Choose 4 answers.”**



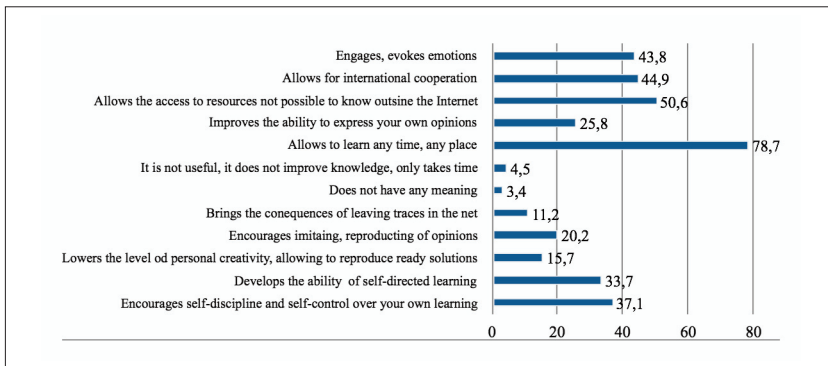
The teachers' perception of the importance of improving their professional competences through online learning confirmed such understanding (Fig. 2). Only 8% of the respondents questioned the value of such learning, claiming that it has no significant meaning in their life (3 people) and can only be a waste of time (4 people). The vast majority of respondents focused on the positive aspects of online learning, highlighting in particular:

- the sense of freedom associated with the use of network resources, thanks to which one can learn at any time or place (over 78% of responses)
- access to information that could not otherwise be obtained (50.6% of responses)
- the possibility of cooperating with teachers from other countries (almost 45% of responses), although in another question they admitted that they very rarely use such a possibility
- the emotional engagement awakened by being on the Internet (over 43% of responses)
- independence in thinking and learning, which connectivist learning entails – in the opinion of the surveyed teachers, this type of learning requires self-discipline and self-control (37% of responses), develops the ability to self-regulate one's own learning

and independently manage its course and evaluation (33.7% of responses), and perfects the ability to independently form opinions and create one's own resources on the Internet (25.8% of responses)

Only one fifth of the surveyed teachers noted potential threats related to learning based on the collectivist paradigm, indicating that it can promote copying, reflection-free reproduction of existing resources, best practices or other people's opinions (20% of respondents), limits personal creativity (15% of answers), and leaves traces on the network that can later be used against a learner (11% of responses).

Figure 2. Answer to the question, "What does personal online learning mean for a learner?"



Teachers were also asked what, in their opinion, determines the importance of online learning. Here, the largest group of respondents pointed to the diversity offered by the network – the ability to view a problem or issue from many different perspectives (almost 60% of responses). Interestingly, this time, the surveyed teachers paid much more attention to the social dimension of the learning environment offered by modern technologies: for over 50% of respondents, interactivity and reciprocity of connections are of particular value, as are the abilities to establish close relationships and to create target groups interested in specific issues. The openness of the network and access to free content on a wide range

of issues were also very important (42.7% of responses). Interestingly, 9% of the teachers surveyed could not answer this question.

The use of connectivism in self-education

To check the extent to which teachers apply the principles of collectivist learning in their own lives, the participants were asked two questions: Which of the following online learning methods do you use in your own self-education? What activities do you do during online learning?

The forms of online learning used by the respondents turned out to be somewhat superficial; they do not fully use the opportunities offered by connectivism. The answers to the first question revealed that the vast majority of respondents stop at simply browsing the Internet (almost 70%; Fig. 3). Only half of the respondents use organized education in the form of e-learning courses, while even fewer (9%) take blended-learning courses. Over 47% of the surveyed teachers actively participate in social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter, while another 44.9% systematically run or browse blogs or video blogs (21.3% of responses). Slightly over one fifth of the respondents value and willingly use chatting or video chatting. Only 15% of teachers have tagged content found on the Internet. Only one person indicated that they use the Internet to check current scientific research results for the needs of work, and another two people use scientific scripts and other materials published by universities. Four people do not use any of these forms of online learning.

Figure 3. Answers to the question, “Which of the following forms of online learning do you use in your own self-education?”

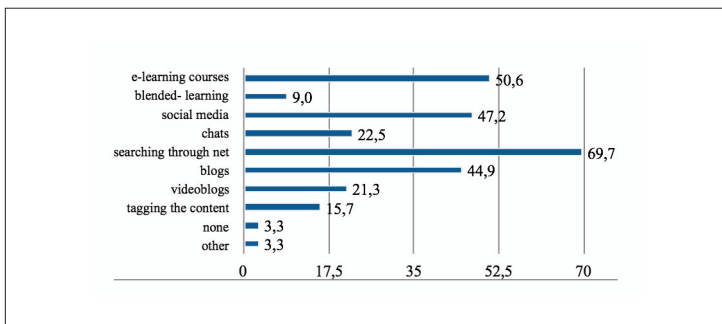
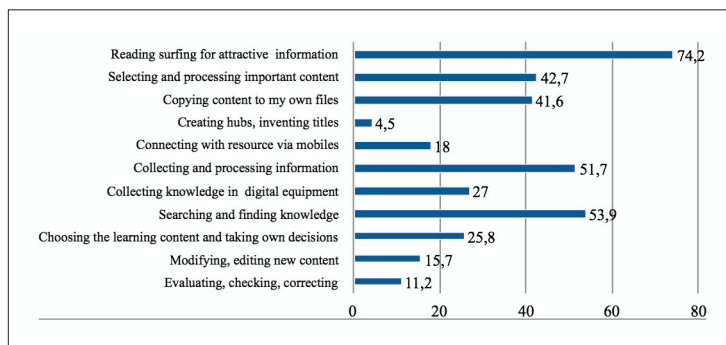


Figure 4. Answers to the question, "Which of the activities of connective learning do you perform while expanding your own knowledge?"



The activities that the surveyed teachers perform while acquiring and expanding their own knowledge belies a certain superficiality in the meaning of connective learning (Fig. 4). The vast majority of respondents stop at reading news websites and browsing interesting content (74% of responses). Only slightly more than half (53.9%) actively look for new knowledge or necessary information. Interestingly, the dominant activity in teaching/learning turned out to be simply collecting the necessary information, i.e. copying, saving, and transferring content to one's own files (41.6% of responses), as well as saving information on mobile devices (27%). Much less frequently, the respondents indicated attempts to actively process and transform content found on the Internet:

- only 42% of the respondents admitted that they critically assess the quality of information found and select the most important and valuable information
- another 25.8% emphasized the need for independent thinking and decision-making when selecting reliable sources and information while learning online
- only 15% of the respondents creatively modify the content they find, by shortening, editing, or reformulating it
- 11% see the need to check and verify content

Interestingly, relatively few teachers connect to network resources in mobile devices such as phones and tablets (18% of responses).

Conclusions

The research shows that the respondents still had relatively limited experience with the practical application of the principles of joint learning and that their opinions and beliefs are unstable and based largely on colloquial knowledge – weakly crystallized, sometimes internally contradictory, emotional, and often not very logical. It seems that Polish teachers find it very difficult to navigate the dynamic world of digital media. A teacher, in this universality of access and simultaneous invasiveness of communication technologies and media, should show information vigilance and should have a wise, active, and critical way of using resources electronic knowledge that may be useful to their professional development. The key in this regard seems to be the ability to critically analyze resources, perceive problems and existing threats, think independently, and recognize mechanisms of influence and manipulation to allow an appropriate level of critical awareness. The surveyed teachers are fully aware of this, but only at the theoretical, declarative level. At the same time, however, they experience a deep cognitive dissonance, intuitively sensing a gap between what they theoretically know about connective learning and how much they can use its tools. The analysis of the empirical material identified two regularities in the teachers' beliefs:

- A. The surveyed teachers focus rather on the individual and technological dimension of online learning, but treating knowledge resources in a passive, superficial way. They are passive consumers of content on the internet, rather than creators. Only when they use social media is a more active attitude triggered, as the respondents treat this as a forum for publishing their own creations. Generally, they understand the role of independent thinking and information alertness as well as the need for a reflective and critical approach

to network resources, but – as they admit – they neglect this independence in their own learning, instead mainly searching and saving content, copying ready information and patterns of activity, rarely processing them critically, transforming, or adapting them to their own needs. The likely reason for this is a lack of epistemological awareness: as Downes points out, the ontological assumptions of connected knowledge are somewhat different than in existing learning theories. The knowledge found on the Internet is not only dispersed, encoded in the network of interaction, but also – by definition – not only from authorities. Justifying its legitimacy requires different mental actions than in the positivist model. “The idea of truth devolves into an account of perspectives and points of view. Having a reason for action is not a matter of argumentation or deduction, but rather one of comfort, familiarity, and an inner sense of balance, the sort of instant awareness we would characterize of an expert” (Downes, 2012, p. 10). This multiperspectivity of knowledge makes it difficult for teachers – when self-learning is not easy to critically analyze many contradictory perspectives, information, attitudes, or interpretations of events – to know who is right, who can be considered an expert.

- B. As Downes (2012, p. 11) argues, “connectivism learning is a process of immersion in an environment, discovery, and communication – a process of pattern recognition rather than hypothesis and theory formation. Learning is not a matter of transferring knowledge from a teacher to a learner, but rather the product of the learner focusing and repeating creative acts, of practicing something that is important and reflecting on this practice”. The respondents underestimate the social dimension of online learning – understood as the possibility of creating groups/communities of people interested in a particular topic, exchanging materials, and arguing and discussing a specific issue in order to give it personal meaning. This is likely due to the fact that the respondents did not have experience creating such learning communities during their vocational preparation; they did not have the opportunity to gain the necessary tools and to awaken the need

to be part of such a community. Theoretically, they know that the Internet offers such a possibility and they intuitively sense its educational value, but they do not use it themselves.

To sum up, the respondents were aware of the huge potential of community, flexible, and creative learning that the Internet opens up to modern people, but they do not use most of its potential because they do not know how.

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Attitudes Toward Inclusion Among Polish Primary School Teachers: A Strategic Factor in Implementing Inclusive Education

Abstract

The purpose of the article is to determine the dominant attitude toward inclusive education among primary school teachers in Poland and to explain the predictors of this attitude. Research conducted on a group of 71 teachers using the “Attitudes Toward Inclusive Education” questionnaire showed a moderately positive attitude toward inclusive education among teachers, with statistically significant differences between teachers of grades 1 to 3 and 4 to 8. The much more positive attitude among the teachers of lower grades is supported by their richer experience of working with students with special educational needs and their broader competences and qualifications in inclusive education. These results give an important perspective that should be considered when implementing the idea of inclusion in the Polish education system (mainly when preparing teachers for the profession) so as to ensure continuity in supporting the development of all students at every stage of their education – not only in grades 1 to 3.

Keywords: teacher education, attitude toward inclusion, special educational needs, Polish teachers, teacher training

Introduction

The Polish education system strives to create optimal conditions for learning at the school which is closest to each student's place of residence, including students with disabilities. The preamble to the Act of 14 December 2016, the Law on School Education, reads "the school should provide each student with the conditions necessary for their development and should prepare them to fulfill family and civic obligations based on the principles of solidarity, democracy, tolerance, justice, and freedom." Legislation that would fully implement the concept of inclusion in Polish kindergartens and schools is currently being consulted with stakeholders to create a comprehensive "high-quality education model for all students." This model, the result of more than two years of work from a team of experts appointed by the Ministry of National Education and supported by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2018–2020) analyzes in detail the conditions for the successful implementation of inclusion, referring to socio-cultural, economic, legal, and intrapersonal factors associated with individual beliefs about inclusive education held by teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. It is compatible with the worldwide trends of preparing teachers for inclusive education (Florian & Rouse, 2009; Florian & Camedda, 2020).

The quantitative characteristics of inclusive education must be supplemented with qualitative analyses and research into the effectiveness of such education for both students with special educational needs (SENs) and neurotypical students (Keffalinou & Donnelly, 2019). An important element of the developed *model of high-quality education for all students* is the preparation of systemic solutions that strengthen teachers' competences in working with students with diverse educational needs, since they are the ones who are key to the effectiveness of such support (see Avramidis et al., 2000; Balboni & Pedrabissi, 2000). The involvement of the teaching staff in strengthening their skills in the area of inclusion depends on their fundamental beliefs about inclusive education, among other things. "Inclusion largely depends on teachers' attitudes toward learners with SENs, their view of differences in classrooms and their willingness

to respond positively and effectively to those differences (EADSNE 2003, p. 15). At the same time, as numerous studies demonstrate, enriching experiences and expanding qualifications have a positive effect on teachers' attitude toward inclusive education (see Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Boyle et al., 2013; Ahsan et al., 2012; Saloviita, 2020). The aim of this research is to examine the teaching staff's readiness (in terms of awareness and competence) to engage in the process of increasing the quality of education for all students. The analysis of the results and recommendations can be used to improve the quality of education not only in Poland, but also in other countries – especially those in the process of moving away from special education toward inclusive education.

Polish Path to Inclusion

The Polish education system consists of three main stages: pre-primary (kindergarten), primary (grades 1–8), and secondary (grades 9–12). Pre-primary education is available to – but not obligatory for – children from the age of 3 years. One year before entering school, a kindergarten education is obligatory and provided to every child by the state. Children start school at the age of 7 or – with their parents' consent – at the age of 6. There are three main types of schools: special, integrated, and mainstream (inclusive). Special schools in Poland are usually designed for three groups of children: 1) those with intellectual disabilities, 2) those with vision impairment, 3) and deaf and hard of hearing children. These are segregated schools, where the children have fewer opportunities for socializing with their non-disabled peers, but where qualified instructors and teachers very often make it a safe environment for the children to develop life skills and learn independence. The second category of schools is the integrated schools, where classes are smaller than in the mainstream schools. Usually, there is about 75% non-disabled students and 25% students with different disabilities in such schools. Lessons are conducted by two teachers: a lead teacher and a support teacher. Integration started in Poland only after the 1989 transformation and, admittedly, education

integration in many communities started the process of social integration on an unprecedented scale. The mainstream schools (lately often called inclusive) provide education for every child who lives in a given district. Parents still have the right to send their child to any other school, but the child will be admitted only if there are enough places. It is advised that children with SENs attend the school which is closest to their place of residence – where they would be admitted if they were neurotypical.

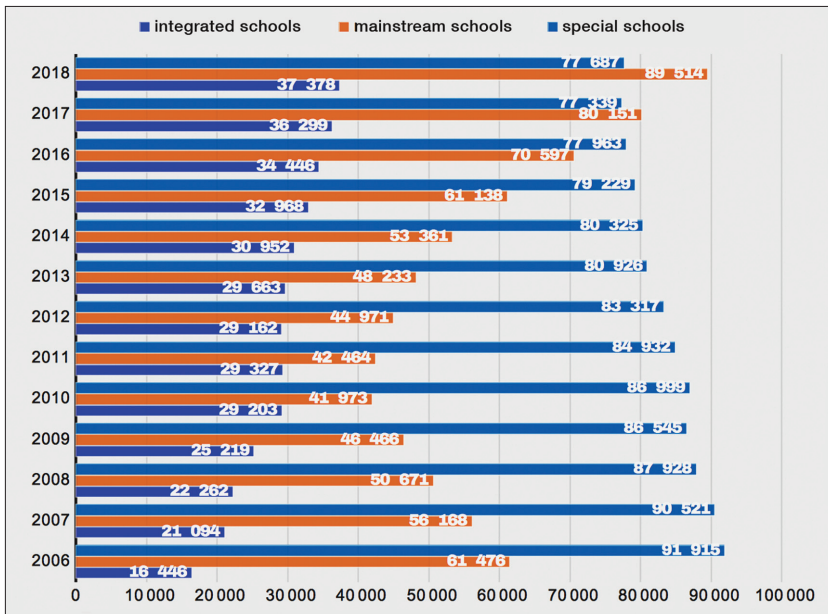
Statistical data show that in quantitative terms, inclusive education is already a fact in Poland. The following observations testify to this:

- a) For about a decade, the percentage of children receiving psychological and pedagogical support in kindergartens and public schools has been approx. 30%–35% of the population.
- b) In the 2018–2019 school year, 63% of the pupils with a statement of special educational needs (due to disability or social maladjustment) attended mainstream schools.
- c) Parents of children with a statement of special educational needs often decide to send their children to a mainstream school (instead of a special school), seeing it as an appropriate place for their child (detailed data for the period 2006–2018 are presented in Figure 1).

The research to date indicates that Polish teachers hold ambiguous attitudes toward the idea of children and adolescents with SENs learning alongside their peers. Out of 86 articles from 2013 to 2016 on the education of students with SENs from 11 Polish journals in the field of pedagogy (6 of which were in the field of special education), 10 articles were found on teacher attitudes (Domagała-Zyśk, 2018a). The results show that between 2000 and 2017, the level of acceptance of students with SENs in integrated and mainstream classes increased significantly in Poland. The highest level of acceptance (in various studies, it is usually above 60%) concerns children with mild motor and/or intellectual disabilities, visually impaired children, and children with hearing impairments. The least accepted are mentally ill children and children with moderate or profound intellectual disabilities. Skura (2019) also found that 68% of mainstream

Fig. 1. Participation of students with a statement of special educational needs in special schools, integrated schools, and mainstream schools.

Source: Ministry of Education, Educational Information System



school teachers and 65% of integrated school teachers ($N=225$) admitted that they would not like to work with students with moderate or severe intellectual disabilities. These results are consistent with the results of international research. Both the review of 28 studies conducted from 1958 to 1995 in the USA, Australia, and Canada by Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) and the meta-analysis by de Boer et al. (2011) showed that an overall positive attitude toward inclusion was held by about 60%–70% of teachers, with a clearly higher indicator of teachers' acceptance of inclusion per se and a lower willingness to accept students with severe disabilities into their classes.

Recently, Chrzanowska (2018, 2019) conducted research on the attitudes of special kindergarten teachers toward inclusion, investigating the relationship between teachers' seniority and their attitudes toward

inclusion. Among a group of 127 special kindergarten teachers, those with fewer than 10 years of professional experience showed more positive attitudes toward inclusive education than the teachers with more seniority (Chrzanowska, 2019). Most teachers with less seniority (75%) indicated that inclusive education can be beneficial for students with SENs, especially for those with intellectual disabilities and hearing or vision impairments. According to Chrzanowska (2018), integrated kindergarten teachers, regardless of their seniority, were positive about integrated teaching of disabled students (64% of teachers with 10 years of professional experience or less and 60% of teachers with 24 or more years of teaching experience) and students with developmental difficulties (83% and 75%, respectively). These numbers indicate that teachers with less seniority were more supportive of inclusion.

An analysis of the pedagogical study programs and postgraduate study programs on offer currently or in the past three decades shows an evident increase in issues related to inclusive education. It can therefore be assumed that the new generations of teachers are better prepared for inclusion in terms of content and mentality, although the issue of the relationship between the age of teachers and their attitudes toward inclusion is not clear (Galaterou & Alexander-Stamatios, 2017). Research shows that individual factors can mediate teacher training and preparation: Woodcock and Jones (2020) reported that research attitudes toward classroom inclusion have been affected by individual factors, such as expressed affection and other relational factors. Whirter et al. discovered that teachers who believe an inclusive classroom is an effective way to teach all students reported higher levels of teacher self-efficacy than those who did not (Whirter et al., 2016).

More recent studies on attitudes toward students with SENs included students with autism (Nowakowska & Pisula, 2018). University students in teacher training programs ($N=70$) and teachers ($N=70$), despite the current 12 years' worth of knowledge about autism, thought that teaching children with autism or Asperger syndrome in special classes was more appropriate than teaching them in mainstream classes (53% of students and 64% of teachers). The respondents also expressed concern

that children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) would experience learning difficulties, distract other students from learning, and be discriminated against by non-disabled students (over 70% of the responses in each group).

An analysis of the methodology of research conducted in Poland revealed that it mainly relied on authors' own questionnaires, whose psychometric properties were not verified. Before beginning our research, we carefully examined the existing tools for measuring attitudes toward inclusion and checked their Polish version in a pilot study: "Attitudes Toward Inclusive Education Scale" (Wilczenski, 1995), "Differentiated Attitudes Toward Inclusion Scale" (Lübke et al., 2018), "The Sentiments, Attitudes, and Concerns about Inclusive Education Revised (Forlin et al., 2011)", "Teacher Self-Efficacy for Inclusive Practices Scale" (Sharma et al., 2012), and the "Scale of Teachers' Attitudes Toward Inclusive Classrooms" (Nishimura & Busse, 2015). Though they were designed relatively recently and the Polish education system is not very different from Western ones, the instruments did not answer the problems we wanted to pose in our research. Indeed, some of their questions can be regarded as promoting segregation: in some questions teachers are asked which group of students should be integrated in mainstream education – and which not so much. We think this way of asking as building unnecessary biases and space for comparing the assets and difficulties of one group of students with disabilities or special needs – against other groups. This revealed the need to construct a new measure with good psychometric properties that would measure teachers' attitudes toward inclusion in a contemporary context. An important aspect of the uniqueness of Polish education philosophy is the explicit consideration of the education process as consisting of both cognitive education and moral education – supporting the students to form attitudes towards other people and different elements of reality around : this dyad should also be captured in the measurement.

Method

Aims of the Study

In connection with the changes in Polish education connected with the implementation of the model of inclusive education, it was considered important to conduct a series of studies that would identify the most sensitive areas of risk. One such area is the teaching staff's readiness (in terms of their awareness and competence) to engage in the process of increasing the quality of education for all students.

The purpose of the present study was to answer the following research questions:

- Q1: What is the attitude of Polish primary school teachers toward inclusive education?
- Q2: Are there significant differences in attitudes toward inclusion between teachers in the first (grades 1–3) and second educational stages (grades 4–8)?
- Q3: What is the relationship between teachers' seniority, work experience with students with SENs, qualifications in inclusive education, and attitudes toward inclusion?
- Q4: Which variables best explain teachers' attitudes toward inclusion?

Participants

A total of 71 teachers (39 women and 32 men) employed in 14 public primary schools comprised the study group. The schools are located in three voivodeships¹: Lublin (6), Lesser Poland (4), and Mazovian (4). Eight of the schools were city schools, while the remaining six were rural schools. There were 33 early childhood education teachers (grades 1–3) and 38 teachers teaching specific subjects (Polish, English, Mathematics, Biology, History, Chemistry and Physics). The questionnaires were distributed and collected between September and December 2019 using paper and electronic versions of the research instruments.

¹ This is the highest-level administrative unit of Poland.

Instruments

Two measures were used in the research:

1. "Attitudes Toward Inclusive Education Scale" (AIE; Knopik, 2022) – the respondents are asked to rate 10 statements related to inclusion on a four-point scale. A validation study conducted among 98 primary school teachers showed high internal consistency of the measure (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.92$) and satisfactory test stability (Spearman's $\rho=0.81$; test-retest, measurements 10 weeks apart). Additionally, the test differentiated teachers who explicitly identified themselves as supporters ($M=32.12$) from opponents of inclusion ($M=20.24$) during the consultation meeting (differential validity). The version of the scale used in the study is the result of a two-stage reduction and modification of the statements by a group of five competent judges (experts in the field of education); only items with a content validity ratio of at least 0.99 were selected (Lawshe, 1975); the factor analysis confirmed the homogeneous structure of this construct, as no factors were distinguished.
2. The author's own questionnaire, containing questions about gender, level of teaching (first educational stage or second), seniority, qualifications in inclusive education (a description is presented in Table 1), and experience in working with students with SENs in the past three years (one point for each example cited). The respondents were also asked to indicate the type of SEN according to the classification in the "Regulation of the Polish Ministry of National Education on the principles of the organization of psychological and pedagogical assistance" from August 9, 2017. The proportions of various types of SENs of students, as indicated by the respondents, is presented in Table 2.

Table 1. Point values for variable qualifications related to inclusive education

Form of acquiring qualifications in inclusive education	Score (points)
Training on the topic, min. 5 hours	1
Training on the topic, over 5 hours	2
Training course	5
Postgraduate or Bachelor's degree program on the topic	10
Conference or seminar on the topic	2
Other forms	1

Table 2. Experience working with students with SENs

SEN category	Percentage of the students with the SEN, as reported by the respondents
Disabled students with – ASD or AS – intellectual disability – motor disability – sensory disability	Total: 35.2% – 16.2% – 8.2% – 5.4% – 5.4%
Students with language impairments	16.8%
Students with specific learning difficulties	16.2%
Talented students	12.2%
Students at risk of social maladjustment or socially maladjusted	8.4%
Students with chronic illnesses	6.2%
Bilingual students	5.0%

Results

The average attitude toward inclusive education in the study group had a value of 26.44, which indicates a moderately positive attitude (sten

score of 6, according to the temporary norms developed for the AIE scale). The attitude of women and men were at similar levels, as confirmed by the test of significance ($t=1.55$, $df=69$, $p=0.127$). However, significant differences were found when comparing the attitude toward inclusive education of teachers teaching grades 1–3 and grades 4–8. The former showed an above-average positive attitude toward inclusion ($M=30.9$, which indicates a sten score of 8 or 9), while the latter had a moderately negative attitude ($M = 22.55$, indicating a sten score of 4). The differences between the groups also concerned qualifications and experience: the early childhood education teachers had both higher qualifications and richer experience in the field of inclusive education. There were no differences in terms of seniority in the teaching profession between the two groups.

The analysis of correlation coefficients (Table 3) revealed that the strongest positive relationship was between experience and attitudes toward inclusive education (Pearson's $r=0.54$); there was a slightly weaker correlation between qualifications and such attitudes (Pearson's $r=0.45$). No significant relationship was found between seniority and attitudes toward inclusion as measured by the AIE, although the negative Pearson's r value suggests that teachers with more seniority may have slightly less positive attitudes toward inclusive education.

Table 3. Correlations between the variables of seniority, qualifications, experience, and attitude toward inclusive education

		AIE
Seniority	Pearson's r	-0.189
	Significance (two-tailed)	0.114
Qualifications	Pearson's r	0.451
	Significance (two-tailed)	<0.001
Experience	Pearson's r	0.542
	Significance (two-tailed)	<0.001

After five variables were introduced as potential predictors of teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education, the regression analysis showed that three variables explained 51.4% of the intensity of the dependent variable: the level of teaching, experience and the respondents' seniority (Table 4). Interestingly, qualifications were not included in the model, while experience was a stronger predictor, shaping attitudes to a greater extent (in the behavioral aspect of attitude).

Table 4. Stepwise regression analysis

Model	R	R ²	R ² change	Standard error of the estimate
1	0.627 ^a	0.393	0.384	5.253
2	0.682 ^b	0.465	0.449	4.968
3	0.731 ^c	0.535	0.514	4.667
a. Predictors: (Constant), stage				
b. Predictors: (Constant), stage, experience				
c. Predictors: (Constant), stage, experience, seniority				

Discussion

The study shows that teachers' general attitude toward inclusive education is moderately positive. About one third (30.9%) of the respondents showed a negative attitude toward inclusion, which is consistent with the results of international research (e.g., Saloviita, 2020), indicating a consistent percentage of teachers opposed to inclusive education for over three decades (de Boer et al., 2011). Presumably, this regularity is conditioned by some teachers' fundamental beliefs about the essence of education, which are not susceptible to any changes, despite various forms of promoting the idea of inclusion. This is evidenced by the assessment of the first item on the AIE scale, "The education system should strive to create conditions that enable all students to study in the mainstream

school.” In the group of teachers with a negative attitude toward inclusion, this statement obtained the lowest score ($M=1.68$), while among the remaining respondents – proponents of inclusion – the average score was 3.12. This indicates a basic conflict between teachers’ views of the function of education and the gradation of its axiological sources, for example, the place that equality and equity have in the subjective hierarchy of values (see Kwieciński, 2009). It seems that inclusion training and awareness-raising activities aiming at changing teachers’ attitudes toward inclusion (which have been widespread in our country in recent years) have not been as effective as they were thought to be. These results call for future research on the correlations between attitudes toward inclusion and deeper awareness-raising work that would rethink the basics of inclusive education for diverse groups.

The results show visible differences in attitudes toward inclusive education between teachers of early childhood education (grades 1–3) and subject-based education (grades 4–8). The much more positive attitude of the first group toward inclusive education is probably due to the slightly different nature of the tasks performed by teachers at the two educational stages in primary schools. While the lower grades are usually taught by one teacher in the same classroom following a similar daily rhythm, higher grades have lessons that take place in different classrooms, are taught by different teachers using different teaching styles, and much more often have unannounced changes in the timetable. This can cause great discomfort for SEN students (especially those with ASD); hence the teachers’ fear of the effectiveness of inclusion and its positive impact on them and the whole group of students. Students in higher grades are more often bullied by their peers and enjoy less support from their teachers, who assume greater independence and self-reliance among their students, though in the case of students with SENs this is not always true (see Symes & Humphrey, 2010; Ross-Hill, 2009). The Polish curriculum emphasizes concern for students’ sustainable development in grades 1–3 (teachers should help students develop cognitively, emotionally, socially, and in personality), whereas in the higher grades the main focus should be directly related to knowledge. This directs the teachers’ work: maintaining a clear

focus on psychological and pedagogical assistance in early childhood education and teaching specific subjects at the second stage. This social mechanism is well reflected in the script of a teacher in grades 1–3 being a “motherly” figure, preparing pupils for professional education by learning subjects (Czaja-Chudyba, 2010), while a teacher in grades 4–8 is seen as an expert in “real” teaching within scientific disciplines, where there is limited space for therapeutic or developmental support. This is also confirmed by data presented by the Polish Ministry of National Education (2019), which show that about 82% of the activities related to psychological and pedagogical support in primary schools are done in grades 1–3.

On the one hand, this can be considered a natural consequence of linking support activities with students’ developmental challenges (i.e., learning to read is a challenge, and difficulty in meeting this challenge requires support), which are especially difficult at the beginning of school education. On the other hand, subsequent stages of students’ development also imply specific problems that are probably neglected in the course of an education that is reduced to subject teaching. Moreover, disabled students developing neuroatypically do not suddenly lose their diverse needs; these needs simply cease to be noticed at school, which has serious consequences for these students’ further education (Domagała-Zyśk et al., 2017). Therefore, the key is that in Polish schools the therapeutic and supportive role of subject teachers is not emphasized enough (either in the core curriculum or during initial teacher education). These results indicate an area for further research and awareness inclusion training, since it seems that teachers limit the notion of the child’s belonging and inclusion to younger children. They seem not to follow the recommendation in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Article 24) that inclusive education should be offered to students at every stage of education, not only to the youngest ones. This may also reflect teachers’ anxiety over the education reform in Poland (in 2018), which extended primary education from 6 to 8 years and closed the junior high schools, which had offered segregated education. This has led to more children with SENs attending regular primary schools for 8 years instead of 6, a fact which may be greatly concerning to subject teachers.

The results also show significant positive relationships between a teacher's qualifications, experience, and attitudes toward inclusive education, which confirms research from other countries (Burke & Sutherland, 2004; Emam & Mohamed, 2011; Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007) and indicates that direct contact with students with SENs helps educators to better understand their needs and capabilities and to develop a positive attitude toward their inclusion. In the literature on the subject, however, contrasting results can also be found: Dias and Cadime (2016) reported that previous teaching experience with students with SENs was a predictor of a less positive attitude toward inclusion in a group of Portuguese teachers ($N = 68$). Likewise, in the present research these variables clearly differentiated the teachers in grades 1–3 from those in grades 4–8. The former showed both better preparation for inclusive education and more experience working with students with SENs. It can therefore be concluded that competences strengthen teachers' agency and equip them with practical tools to create an inclusive classroom on a daily basis. The scope of professional interaction with students with SENs provides further examples that confirm the legitimacy and feasibility of implementing inclusive education. It would be interesting to explore whether the teachers in grades 4–8 actually have such limited experience working with students with SENs, or whether it is related to the fact that such students are not identified in the class. For example, a detailed analysis of the results showed that only 12 teachers of grades 4–8 had worked with talented students in the last three years. Since the population contains 16%–20% talented people, these results should be considered evidence of teachers' lack of competence and commitment to the process of identifying students' individual resources (see Dyrda, 2000). Research also shows that in forming positive attitudes toward disability, it is not only the scope of experience that counts, but the nature of it (Enns et al., 2010). This means that even when subject teachers have extensive experience teaching students with SENs, if it is marked by protracted difficulties and a lack of support, they may be discouraged rather than encouraged to become further involved in inclusive education. The results may reflect a vicious circle of negative teachers' experience with the inclusion of SEN students leading to the decision to segregate classes

at the subject teaching stage (grades 4–8). This further results in less extensive exposure to teaching SEN students, which in turn leads to less experience and more negative attitudes toward inclusion.

Insufficiently trained teachers of grades 4-8 for inclusive education also results from an ineffective system of acquiring teaching qualifications by university students (or graduates) of non-pedagogical specialties (e.g., mathematics or geography). The issues of working with a class with diverse educational needs and identifying individual resources and developmental difficulties constitute only a small part of the degree programs' curricula (app. 10% of the content is devoted to psychology and pedagogy). The ineffective teacher preparation system, both initial teacher education and continual professional development, is further worsened by the typical model of the courses and training programs, in which the goal is to provide teachers with knowledge about a specific disorders only (e.g., only about students with ASD or about students with visual impairment). This limited scope often deters teachers, who think they must know an impairment in depth to be able to work with a student who has it. Teachers comment that embracing inclusion would amount to them changing their profession from a subject teacher to a special education pedagogue. This kind of approach seems to be more divisive than supportive in preparing teachers for inclusive education (Cochran-Smith & Dudley-Marling, 2012). It seems that a more effective model would be to prepare the teacher to work with diverse students within the context of regular classes, taking the perspective of reconciling the tension between excellence and equity (Florian & Rouse, 2009) and using the universal design model. This model prepares the learning process so that it can be used by the largest group of students without the need for specialized adjustments or modifications (e.g., videos with subtitles help students with various special needs: hearing loss, autism, dyslexia, language difficulties, etc.; see Domagała-Zyśk, 2018b). Such a change in the teaching paradigm could give subject teachers a greater sense of professional agency and confidence.

The regression equation identified three predictors of teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education in the study group. In addition to the ed-

educational stage and experience, the model included seniority. Interestingly, the results point to a certain paradox, as the relationship between seniority and positive attitudes toward inclusion, although not statistically significant, was negative. At the same time, experience is naturally related to seniority and subsequent years of work should – as a rule – expand this experience. A detailed data analysis, however, shows that the nine teachers with the most seniority (over 25 years) had an extremely negative attitude toward inclusive education ($M=19.25$) and had less experience working with students with SENs ($M=18.75$) than teachers with less seniority ($M=22.40$). This is probably the result of these people's attachment to the segregated education model that dominated during most of their professional life.

Implications

The results can be used to formulate recommendations for strengthening the conditions conducive to implementing inclusion, not only in the context of Polish education, but also probably in any other education system with the principle of putting equal opportunity into social practice:

1. Supplement pedagogical preparation programs in non-teaching university specialties (such as biology, geography and foreign language departments) with an extensive module on inclusive education in different classes following the model of universal design.
2. Strengthen the involvement of universities (as part of the “third mission,” for example) in developing the competences of pedagogical staff in kindergartens and schools in the field of inclusion: transfer between science, current research, and educational practitioners, based on cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary collaboration of many kinds (see Cochran-Smith & Dudley-Marling, 2012) or intentionally linking coursework with field experience (Walton & Rusznyak, 2020).
3. Create training schools where pedagogy students can gain experience and knowledge in the field of inclusive education by working with

-
- students with diverse developmental needs and being mentored by experienced, instructionally effective teachers (see Richmond, 2019).
4. Activate teachers' networks of cooperation and self-education in the fields of special education (see Spear et al., 2018) and inclusive education in order to share good practices and cooperate on emerging difficulties on an ongoing basis.
 5. Cooperate more with special schools (Blanton et al., 2018) and organizations that work with children and young people with SENs, which would allow pre-service teachers and teachers to learn about people with disabilities, better understand their needs and capabilities, and start cooperating with these children's parents.

Limitations

The study was conducted on a non-representative group of teachers with appropriate care to ensure the sociodemographic representativeness of the sample. This is an important argument in the discussion on the standards of teacher education which is currently taking place in Poland. This study should be treated as an introduction to further, extended research that could constitute a permanent component of the monitoring system for inclusive education in Poland.

Ethics

The Institute of Pedagogy KUL Research Ethics Committee approved the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were free to withdraw from the study at any time; all data was rendered anonymous.

Data

The full data set is available on request from the first author.

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If I were a teacher...: Concepts of People on the Autism Spectrum About the Education System

Abstract

Assumptions: This article is part of a wider study on adults with autism. The main assumption of the series of studies is concerned with listening to and hearing the voices of those most affected – those with a diagnosis of autism. The material, which is based on the experiences of people with autism, allows us to present views on the role of the teacher – the creator of the educational space. Thus far, we have presented the experiences and comments of teachers and therapists; now we can listen to the voices of not only students and parents, but people with autism. The research problem was to present the educational experiences described by autistic people in a paper on pedeutology.¹ The aim of the study was to investigate the opinions on education held by people with autism.

Method. This study employed the netnographic method and involved a group of people with a diagnosis of autism who met online and agreed to participate.

Results. Reaching out to a large group made it possible to analyze their statements by ranking and creating meaning bundles.

¹ The research presented herein is part of a broader study to be published in a forthcoming book, titled *What People with Autism Tell Us About Education: Research Report*.

Conclusions. The first conclusion is that there is a difference in the approach to the teaching/learning process. This is due to symptoms that are specific to autism, as well as to the different educational and therapeutic approaches. The second conclusion is related to the use of punishment that, in addition to forbidden forms (such as physical punishment), often evolve into psychological and social punishment, such as isolation, marginalization, or a lack of interest. It seems to be equally important to draw attention to the ineffective attempts to impose recognized normative forms of functioning (often referred to as a violation), as well as treating these people as not fully intellectually capable, which is not a condition (intellectual disability can co-occur in a few cases [see Casanova et al., 2000]).

Keywords: education, adolescence, autism, netnography, teacher

In previous research and publications, I have dealt with the perception of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), trying to present it from the point of view of a person displaying the disorder (Bleszyński, 2020). Often, as professionals we are convinced of our knowledge of how to perceive and shape the world of others, including non-normative people. We know from experience that this is not always objective, but in fact most often deceptive. The problem of understanding the other person was addressed in philosophy by Husserl, Stein, Węgrzycki (1992), and many others (see Bleszyński, 2020, pp. 17–37). Therefore, it is necessary to understand the different perceptual states experienced by people with autism, for example. In this publication, I present a portion of the study with the aim of making a convincing case for the validity of phenomenological research, especially when we want to gain insight into a closed, separate (or separating), primarily different environment.

Research on people on the autism spectrum nowadays, requires attention to the new options for understanding autism. Thanks to the social, economic, and cultural (including religious) changes taking place, we are becoming a more open, inclusive society. This allows for extended analysis based on netnographic research, drawing on the students' own experiences and reflections on the educational process.

Description of the study group and the research method

The aim of the study was to investigate the opinions on education held by people with autism. The respondents were members of closed online forums which verified their diagnosis of autism. I have also cooperated with the foundations *Autism Team* from Łódź, *Prodeste* from Opole, and *Alpha* from Lublin, which bring together adults with an autism diagnosis and support their functioning in society. A total of 62 people from all across Poland took part in the study (34 women, 26 men, and two people who specified their gender as other). The respondents were aged between 14 and 47 years (average age: 28.3). Four students were in their final year of primary school, nine were in secondary school, and 14 were university students. Among the respondents, 33 had graduated from higher education in various fields (mostly the humanities and arts). The remaining two people did not indicate their education. These people mainly experienced mainstream education, at a time when many initiatives to support people with an autism diagnosis were emerging.

For this study, I used the netnographic interview method, which is based on the concept of Kozinets (2012). I have used it before in my research into people with autism and their functioning (Błaszynski, 2020, 2021; Garcia et al., 2009). In light of reviews and opinions, the material presented previously has served its purpose. Thanks to my cooperation with foundations and the community's interest in changing the perception of autism, it was possible to gather the relevant material. The study was conducted by means of an online survey in Polish which was placed on the Google Forms platform. The survey was distributed electronically and was available at a distributed URL to selected groups of people with a diagnosis of ASD.

The pilot study was conducted from November to December 2019, with the main study taking place in 2020 and 2021. The survey consisted of 20 closed-ended, multiple choice, open-ended, and evaluation questions, which were divided into four sections.

Closed questions:

1. General
2. Pertaining to education: preference of learning styles, forms of education, and therapy

Open questions:

3. Respondents' vision of education and therapy
4. Evaluating institutional and non-institutional support

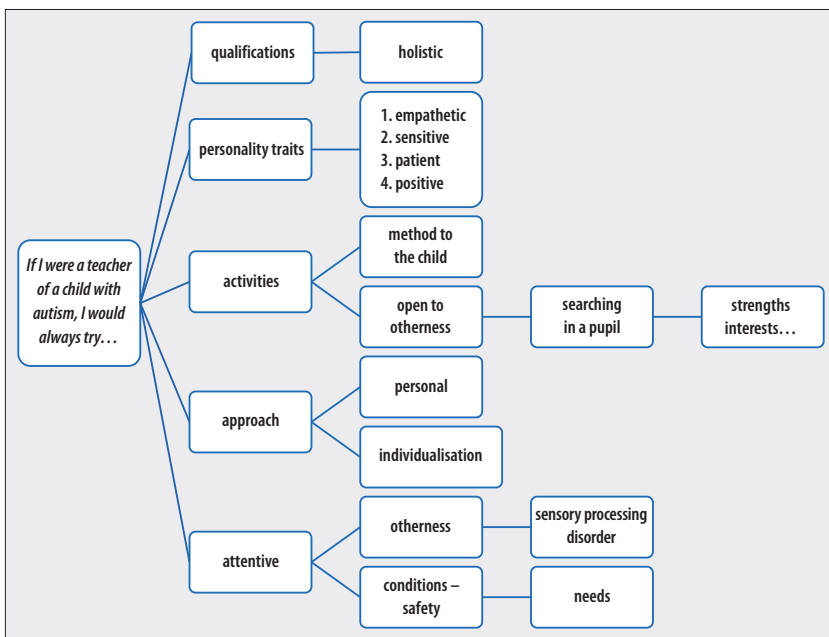
The research was voluntary and complete anonymity was ensured. The material was collected as part of research conducted at the Institute of Pedagogical Sciences of Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń and the Institute of Pedagogy of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw.

Cogitation on the state of the educator/teacher – “If I were a teacher...”

“If I were a teacher...” is a problematic statement that invites reflection, as it relates to internal beliefs stemming from one's experiences at school. These are our perceptions as well as our wishes, which stem from being a student, a parent of a student, or a teacher. These experiences are differentiated in time referring to historical and organizational conditions, for example, segregated education. Experiences are also related to the period of introduction of the integration and inclusion system, which can be described as a mixed and often heterogeneously introduced system, as can be seen in the different approaches to integration systems in European countries, from single team attempts to total integration, as for example in Scandinavia or Italy. It is these conscious or unconscious experiences that allow for a probabilistic, often wishful, idea of school. Imaginings do not always focus on idealized schools but often incorporate a rational view of the kind of school it should be by design, the kind of school one could aspire to. My research focuses primarily on analyzing the placement of the child with ASD in the education system.

The first question that was asked of the respondents was “If I were a teacher of a child with autism, I would always try...” As mentioned above, the respondents formulated their suggestions based on their own childhood experience of being a student with autism, which the education system considers to be a deviation from normal development, a disability, a disorder. According to respondents, the teacher should be guided by an adaptive, compensatory system geared toward the desired educational outcomes.

Figure 1. Statements of the respondents to the question “If I were a teacher of a child with autism, I would always try...”



The statements of the respondents can be divided into activities (duties) as one’s status of an educator, personality traits that a teacher should have, and what they should pay more attention to in the case of children with ASD. At the forefront of the many qualities required of teachers is the

ability to sense the mental states of others – subjects, pupils, or the parents caring for them. The ability to adopt others' way of thinking includes looking at reality from their perspective. It is also the ability to imagine a mental perspective that belongs to another person: decentration.

This attitude is linked to patience and is based on personalization and individualism. Here, above all, a positive attitude is linked to sensitivity and to empathy. In principle, what is important above all else is not to cope, reduce, or lower the requirements, but to mobilize self-education and self-determination. The respondents highlighted conscious leadership and building on motivation towards self-development through guided, individual interpretation. Examples of this emerge from the concepts mentioned by the respondents (described according to gender [F – female, M – male, and O – other] and age in years): “understand the pupil” (F41); “listen to his/her needs, be patient” (M41); “look for strengths, follow special interests, learn from this child to see the world through his/her eyes” (F39); “understand what he/she feels” (O21); “respond to the child's needs, develop self-awareness” (F41); “look for teaching methods that suit the needs of the pupil” (M24); “find out what the sensory needs are in order to be able to emphasize some and minimize others” (F45).²

The actions taken should be based mainly on adapting the system to meet the needs and abilities of the pupil and learning about his/her resources and limitations in order to optimize the actions taken. However, such an approach is not a traditional system that focuses on mastering as much material as possible, but rather a progressive system that focuses on learning skills and using various sources. It is a search for opportunities for the student to expand their knowledge and to build skills based on their individual predispositions and aptitudes, which should be a determinant of his/her further development (for example: “try to build a positive relationship with him/her” (F43); “listen, support, and not interpret behavior,

² The quotes are translated from the original: “zrozumieć ucznia; wsłuchać się w jego potrzeby, być cierpliwym; szukała mocnych stron, podążała za szczególnymi zainteresowaniami, uczyła się od tego dziecka widzenia świata jego oczami; zrozumieć to co ono czuje; odpowiadać na potrzeby dziecka, rozwijać samoświadomość; szukać metod nauczania odpowiadających potrzebom ucznia; dowiedzieć się, jakie są potrzeby sensoryczne, żeby moc jedne wyeksponować, a inne zminimalizować.”

give maximum security" (F19); "be alert to his/her needs and follow them, try to create a maximum comfortable learning environment" (F42).³

Working with a student with ASD is unique because of his/her different way of perceiving – which is based on perceptual systems (depending on the channels of experience) – and because of the need to perceive his/her condition (often referred to as *reading*). For example, the following concepts were mentioned by the respondents: "being sensitive to the student's needs, taking into account different emotional codes" (F41); "take into account the needs and the future of the child" (F18); "follow the needs of the pupil, help him/her to develop passions, adapt the forms of delivery of the material to his/her cognitive abilities; follow his/her step, interests and memorizing ability" (M22).⁴

These comments indicate positive attitudes toward behaviors found in students with ASD, often incorrectly formed approaches (due to our attitudes and negative experiences). This is often the result of the different emotional code of people with ASD, as well as the environment as it is perceived by pupils with ASD. This has a significant impact on their sense of security, and is due to the specific perception of sensations (e.g., thanks to people with ASD, quiet rooms have been created for neuralgic pupils). Some examples are "be aware of the child's needs and differences" (F35); "adapt the teaching method to the child (anyone, not just those with ASD)" (F36); "better understand emotions, feelings, and experiences (specifically sensory experiences, smell, hearing, etc.) in different situations" (O26).⁵

³ Original: "starła się budować z nim pozytywne relacje; słuchać, wspierać i nie interpretować zachowań, dać maksymalne poczucie bezpieczeństwa; być czujną na jego potrzeby i podążać za nimi, próbować stworzyć maksymalnie komfortowe warunki do nauki."

⁴ Original: "była uwrażliwiona na potrzeby ucznia, uwzględniałabym odmienne kody emocjonalne; brać pod uwagę potrzeby i przyszłość dziecka; podążać za potrzebami ucznia, pomagać rozwijać pasje, dostosowywać formy podawcze materiału do jego zdolności poznawczych; podążać jego krokiem, zainteresowaniami i możliwościami zapamiętywania."

⁵ Original: "zwracała uwagę na jego potrzeby i odmienność; dostosować metodę nauczania do dziecka (każdego, nie tylko tego z ASD); lepiej zrozumieć emocje, uczucia i doświadczenia (konkretnie doświadczenia zmysłów, węchu, słuchu etc.) w różnych sytuacjach."

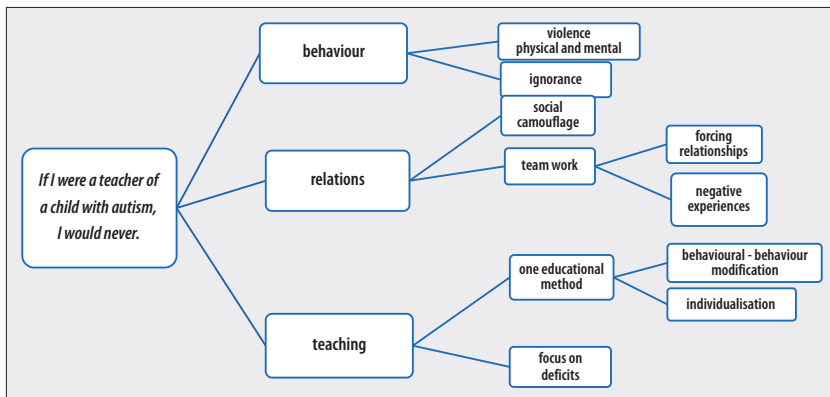
The experience does not at all point to an ideal teacher, but to one who focuses primarily on the student, on his or her individual development, and on integrating him or her into the social system. Attention was drawn to the need for adaptation and inducement rather than simple assimilation. These are primarily actions taken by the teacher to enable the pupil to find his or her place within the peer group. The main objective is inclusion, understood here as being in the community, rather than transforming any of the parties (student or system). Creating optimal conditions adapted to the needs and possibilities are required to accept otherness, understand/comprehend and favoritism.

**What we should avoid or abandon in our teaching work –
“If I were a teacher of a child with autism, I would never...”**

The experience of education also includes envisioning something that one would never want to experience in education. Pupils who deviate from the norm and are considered *non-standard* are especially affected; this applies to both gifted pupils and those with difficulties and disorders. In the case of autism, it is their abnormal social behavior that draws attention, as well as the range and depth of their interests. In such situations, the educational system needs to be modified and non-standard, specialized interventions sought.

After analyzing the material, I categorized the answers to the question “If I were a teacher of a child with autism, I would never...” according to the activities mentioned. In terms of the educators’ behavior, the most frequently indicated negative impacts were verbal and physical violence. Despite assurances and the existence of recommendations and regulations, such as the *Charter of Rights for Persons with Autism* (Hague, 1992), the interviews very often included statements about violent behavior. These were arbitrarily regarded to be abnormal or forbidden, and in the case of people with ASD, to not produce the expected results (if not the opposite). These behaviors are often a sign of helplessness or professional burnout (Piętko, 2005) and should not be tolerated or allowed. The statements

**Figure 2. Statements of the respondents to the question
“If I were a teacher of a child with autism, I would never...”**



pointed to behaviors such as labelling, which aims to depreciate, or ignoring physical needs and emotions, which leads to a serious feeling of irrelevance or even applied exclusion. Here, mention was also made of judgement, often comparing against another person, as well as rushing and applying punishment.

The relationships developed in school have different dimensions. It is important to shape them, but not to force them, as doing so can create artificial relationships that result in violence or that ignore students with ASD. Negative conditioning within groups undermines self-esteem and well-being of students with ASD. As the respondents pointed out, the difficulty they face is teamwork, which – when imposed or treated as a limitation of autistic people – eventually becomes a hindering or prosocial action. The need for friends and peers for pupils with ASD is highly individualistic and often linked to self-determination.

The respondents pointed out the use of schematic approaches that indicate teachers' lack of understanding of their situation and social problems. For instance: “did not teach social masking” (M18); “did not expect me to learn in one particular way, even if this form of learning was convenient for me or worked well with other students” (M22); “I would not raise

my voice, would not impose being sociable, talking to peers. I wouldn't insist that everyone can and must have a girlfriend or friends. I know from personal experience that mobilizing in these areas in a 'Get on with it' way can make you depressed, discouraged, or irritated (M25).

When it comes to respondents' evaluations of education systems, a negative attitude was presented toward the behavioral influences that lie at the heart of the general (and special) education system. Behavior modification is mainly focused on change, on creating a different approach, and should focus on deficits (both partial and global) and pre-determined change, such as striving to achieve a specific goal set by the teacher. Example statements from the respondents include "I would not use violence" (F42); "I would not judge, I would not label" (F39); "I would not force with behavioral methods, shout, ignore his/her needs, messages, or use violence" (M42); "certainly corporal punishment, raising one's voice is not an option, neither is holding/restraining in other ways. I also find it unacceptable to ridicule and treat a child like a half-wit, because if they have a diagnosis of autism they probably understand less than their peers, so they require adjustments, as does a child with NI/strong learning difficulties themselves, not just a comfortable environment at work. In my opinion, it is also bad to be forced to participate in PE lessons. The lights shining in your eyes or the classes that were embarrassing for me, e.g., movement and dance classes, which I remember as the worst, and I was lucky not to take part in those despite the threat of getting the lowest grade for standing there like a pole" (F40).⁶

⁶ Original: "nie stosowałabym przemocy; nie oceniała bym, nie etykietowała; wymuszała metodami behawioralnymi, krzyczała, ignorowała jego potrzeby, komunikaty, stosowała przemocy; na pewno kary cielesne, podnoszenie głosu nie wchodzi w grę, podobnie jak przytrzymywanie/krępowanie w inny sposób. Niedopuszczalne jest również dla mnie ośmieszanie oraz traktowania dziecka jak półgłówka, bo skoro ma diagnozę autyzmu to pewnie mniej od kolegów rozumie, więc wymaga dostosowań jak dla dziecka z NI/mocnymi problemami z nauką samymi w sobie, a nie jedynie komfortowego środowiska w pracy. Złe jest też moim zdaniem zmuszanie do lekcji WF, walące po oczach lampy czy krępujące dla mnie zajęcia np. ruchowo-taneczne wspominam najgorzej, a w tych drugich udawało mi się na szczęście nie uczestniczyć mimo zagrożenia jedynkami za stanie jak słup."

The issue of social masking, as the striving to become (as adaptation) more like one's peers, one's social environment – as mentioned by Liane Holliday Willey (2015) – was also addressed. This is a model of social utilitarianism, rather than a search for the individual qualities of the subjects, which is also a problem of unjustified extreme individualization, which makes it inherently impossible to adapt to the needs of the wider society. My previous research (Bleszynski, 2020) has already identified misplaced generalizations about students with autism. Some of the perceived generalizations are that students with autism are primarily interested in scientific subjects or that autism causes secondary intellectual disability or developmental delay. This assumption somehow forces the system to adequately adapt the curriculum in the education system toward people with autism: "she did not force him to do group work" (F35); "did not make him do something he already knew how to do" (F26); "she did not force the child to socialize, shout, ridicule, or allow peer violence" (F28).⁷

Summary

In conclusion, I would like to highlight the fact that the education of people with autism is mainly viewed from the perspective of teachers and the parents of such students. Many publications present ways to organize forward-looking models, such as May et al. (2020, pp. 331–339). Also, the work of Bolourian et al. (2021) is interesting; it outlines teachers' perceptions of autism and demonstrates opportunities for inclusive interactions and the formation of social relationships. McDougal, Riby, and Hanley (2020) outlined the problems faced by teachers teaching in classrooms with children with autism; a similar analysis was presented by Sciotto et al. (1999). Also, it seems important to address the perception among teachers that autism is a disorder that hampers the educational

⁷ Original: "Nie zmuszała go do pracy grupowej i nie kazała robić czegoś, co już umie; Nie zmuszał na siłę do pracy zespołowej; nie zmuszała dziecka do kontaktów społecznych, nie krzyczała, nie ośmieszała, nie zezwalała na przemoc rówieśniczą."

process, as mentioned by Arif et al. These observations are consistent with the experience of Polish teachers, as described in research conducted by Antonik (2015) or Woźniak (2018), who point out the difficulties in education. However, the mainstream approach is individualized guidance. This system is based primarily on incentives and the use of punishments and rewards (for example, in the form of applied assessment). In the case of pupils on the autism spectrum, one of the most effective methods is based on behavioral interactions, which was adopted in the 1990s (Schopler et al., 2002). At the time, alternative forms of education and therapy for pupils with autism were emerging (e.g., the Option Method). This is a response to a non-directive system of pedagogical influence. The statements of the respondents presented herein allow us to direct our visions of education away from differentiation and separation, mainly toward an inclusive education in which forms of coercion, imposition, and punishment cannot be used. This approach, indicating the importance and necessity of moving from segregated education to inclusive education was presented by Rebecca Wood (2019), who confirmed the approach with empirical research. According to the positive vision, school should be individually tailored to the needs and abilities of the pupils, adapting optimally without abandoning educational requirements. This is first and foremost enabling and following the student with the requirements. The respondents indicated that school cannot be understood as an imposed and enforced education and upbringing model, and that it is important to allow the student to influence this educational program. It should be noted that people on the autism spectrum often drew attention to the downplaying, leniency, and abandonment of interventions on the grounds of autism, which they considered to be inappropriate or even derogatory. Particularly from their adult perspective, they were critical of the possibility of being ignored because of their diagnosis. Autism, from their point of view, is not a limitation, but a different perspective on knowledge and the surrounding reality, which often does not conform to commonly accepted norms. This results in frequent misunderstandings and negative attitudes toward people with autism, who are described as difficult to live with, having limited perceptual capacities

(often referred to as handicapped), and not conforming to the assumptions of the education system and the conventions accepted in society.

The current state of knowledge, as well as the development of research and analytical techniques, should compel us to continue to gain insight into the experiences of the people described, rather than limiting ourselves to our own experiences. This shifts the focus onto the subject, a student with ASD in the school system, and moves away from the beaten track of education in favor of listening and searching for alternative, innovative solutions – starting with the essence of inclusion. To achieve an open and searching society, it is important to respect and enable those who hitherto have been defined as *Others*. It is a move away from the primacy of knowledge and its transmission, toward exploration and formation.

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Reflections by C. S. Lewis on Biblical Narrative as a Literary Phenomenon: The Cathartic Example of the Youth Literary Cycle *The Chronicles of Narnia*

Abstract

This essay provides a detailed exploration of interest in the Bible as a literary phenomenon. We start with Frye's research in order to analyze academic perspectives that studied the Bible as a form of literary criticism. Among these perspectives, it is worth highlighting those that define biblical narrative as the principal element of the Western imaginative tradition. This phenomenon builds a set of interrelations that have shaped our specific literary tradition, imbuing it with this symbiosis between sacred and profane influences. Moving on to a second level of interpretation of the question at hand, we examine the encounter between secular and religious literatures as a consequence of the work initiated by Frye. The philological background of the writer C. S. Lewis is key and unprecedented in shedding light on the frontiers between reality and fantasy in the field of literary studies, as exemplified in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. The Narnia books allow their readers to experience catharsis. This experience is foundational for the acquisition and cultivation of some character strengths, as the ancient Greek tradition held and put into practice centuries ago.

Keywords: literary studies, Western literary tradition, C. S. Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, catharsis, mimesis, character strengths

Introduction

Interest in the Bible as a literary phenomenon grew with the publication of Northrop Frye's *The Great Code* in 1982. From an academic perspective that Frye (1988) called non-theological, his book sought to "study the Bible from the point of view of a literary critic" (p. 11). Taking the Bible as the main element of the Western imaginative tradition, he set out to analyze the structural relationship between the Bible and the conventions and genres of Western literature. To this end, the book explores the concepts of language, myth, metaphor, and typology in order to reach concrete conclusions about biblical rhetoric, its narrative aspects and the phases of revelation. Together with his other two works, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* and *Words with Power* – published in 1957 and 1990, respectively – Frye establishes a particular vision that will be of great importance for the reflection that concerns this work. Henceforth, and not necessarily in a specific order, since they feed and inform each other, we will distinguish between the two great blocks that underlie the research by scholars in the field of literary criticism: study of the Bible as a literary work,¹ constrained by the same criteria that apply to all studies of Western narrative, and the influence of the consequences of such studies on later works. It follows, then, that if we read the Bible as a literary creation, its motifs can be replicated and reformulated in other literary creations just as the latter are embedded in many others, forming a set of interrelationships that, in turn, build a concrete literary tradition.

¹ In other words, "our position is that the Bible in some fundamental respects is not different from the works of, let us say, Shakespeare or Emily Dickinson or Henry Fielding or Ernest Hemingway. If we were actually studying the works of these authors, such a chapter as this would not be necessary – for who can imagine needing to read something called 'Shakespeare as Literature' or 'Emily Dickinson as Literature'? We assume that their work is literature; it needs no demonstration. But different assumptions have historically been applied to the Bible, and in many circles they are still in force. ... As a prerequisite to further study, we must attempt to make it clear why and how the Bible, as literature, belongs in the same category with all these other pieces of writing" (Gabel et al., 1996, p. 4).

Frye (1988) states that “literally, the Bible is a gigantic myth, ... unified by a body of recurring imagery that ‘freezes’ into a single metaphor cluster, the metaphors all being identified with the body of the Messiah” (p. 252), and goes on to consider that one of the most striking characteristics of the Bible is its capacity for self-recreation. This, which leads on from the prior consideration of the pre-eminent position of typologies² over allegories, is what allows writers to recreate those biblical motifs in their own works. Each of the types, which can also be identified according to the seven stages of the Bible – namely, creation, revolution or exodus, law, wisdom, prophecy, gospel, and apocalypse – is type to the one that follows and anti-type to the previous one, a configuration that facilitates subsequent literary recreation.

In an attempt to describe the historical path of the reception of the biblical text, as well as its multiple translations – translations that will be determined by the mindset of the moment, of which they are also a clear reflection – David Norton published in 1993 *A History of the Bible as Literature*, divided into two volumes. As the author admits in the foreword, his objective is not in any way to take the Bible as literature (Norton, 1993a, p. XV), the first of the two large blocks we referred to, but rather to demonstrate how and why interpretative variations have emerged from it, an objective that does coincide with the second of those blocks of study mentioned above. In doing so, he describes certain ideas from the history of literature and standards of language, which he believes the Bible has determined in a crucial way, which would again support the importance of biblical motifs in Western literature. It should be noted, moreover, that if the Bible’s subject “is of real importance” (Norton, 1993a, p. XIV), any relationships that can be established between biblical literature and other literature are not futile in any sense of the word.

² Frye defined typology as “a figure of speech that moves through time: The type exists in the past and the antitype in the present, or the type exists in the present and the antitype in the future” (1988, p. 105). On the other hand, he also claimed that the three stages of the language he describes in his work – metaphorical, metonymic, and descriptive – are based on two types of unity, which exist simultaneously.

In the second volume of his work, Norton (1993b) devotes a chapter to presenting the conclusions of his research into the term “the Bible as literature” (262–285), attributing its creation to the English poet and critic Matthew Arnold. Subsequent use of the term, however, is not owed to Arnold, but to the conjunction of two situations: the cultural and social panorama of the time – which would have necessitated, sooner or later, this type of nomenclature – and the writings of Richard Green Moulton, whose title explained the object of study³. The works of Moulton, professor of literary theory and English literature at the University of Chicago, aided by his clear way of presenting and appreciating the biblical text, “would give him a fair claim to be considered the father of modern literary study of the Bible if such study needed a father, and indeed . . . , he is the most quoted of the period’s literary critics of the Bible” (Norton, 1993b, p. 277).

Harold Bloom (1989) joined the emerging interest in the study of the Bible as literature and, as summarized by Salvador (2008), he took “a critical approach to the presence of the biblical tradition in Western literature, focusing on representative cases: Dante, Shakespeare, . . . Milton, Wordsworth, Blake, Freud, Kafka” (p. 28). Despite the title, his work *Ruin the Sacred Truths: Poetry and Belief from the Bible to the Present* presupposes a clear focus on poetry rather than narrative and Bloom’s approach also touches upon works of this second genre from the same critical perspective taken by Frye.

Another great example of the study of the Bible as an eminently literary text⁴ is provided by Robert Alter and Frank Kermode. At the time, they

³ Moulton, R. G. (1986). *The Literary Study of the Bible: An Account of the Leading Forms of Literature Represented in the Sacred Writings*. Ibister & Co; Moulton, R. G. (1901). *A Short Introduction to the Literature of the Bible*. D. C. Heat & Co.; Moulton, R. G. (1901). *Select Masterpieces of Biblical Literature*: The Macmillan Company; Moulton, R. G. (1907). *The Modern Reader’s Bible Translation*. The Macmillan Company.

⁴ We refer to the statements of Gabel et al. (1996) when they clarify the extent of the reach of the term *literature* when applied to the study of the Bible as it is, i.e., how it is understood as a whole: “We are using the term ‘literature’ in its broadest sense. There is a narrower sense of the term that encompasses only what it is known as *belles-lettres*: poetry, short stories, novels, plays, essays. Although the Bible does contain this kind of material, it also contains genealogies, laws, letters, royal decrees, instructions

were classified by Norton (1993b) as an “authoritative source” (p. 357) that presented the literary discussion of the Bible in modern times, although the examples they select are predominantly narrative. As Alter and Kermode (1987) make clear in their work, they attempted to offer, along the lines of their contemporaries,

a new view of the Bible as a work of great literary force and authority, a work of which it is entirely credible that it should have shaped the minds and lives of intelligent men and women for two millennia and more. (p. 2)

This arose from the need to gain a new “accommodation with the Bible as it is, which is to say, as literature of high importance and power” (p. 4). Both authors, Alter and Kermode, produced research into the interpretation of the narrative in the Bible, which they reflected in their early writings, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* and *The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative*, respectively.

Norton’s commentary (1993b) in view of the modern concern for narrative and unity, sets out the relative harmony between the main thesis that Northrop Frye⁵ once held and the one⁶ held by Kermode:

for building, prayers . . . and other kinds of material more difficult to classify. We must acknowledge this remarkable diversity and be careful not to exclude any of it from the scope of our study” (p. 4).

⁵ “The linguistic idiom of the Bible does not really coincide with any of our three phases of language, important as those phases have been in the history of its influence. It is not metaphorical like poetry, though it is full of metaphor, and is as poetic as it can well be without actually being a work of literature. It does not use the transcendental language of abstraction and analogy, and its use of objective and descriptive language is incidental throughout. It is really a fourth form of expression, for which I adopt the now well-established term *kerygma*, proclamation. In general usage this term is largely restricted to the Gospels, but there is not enough difference between the Gospels and the rest of the Bible in the use of language to avoid extending it to the entire book” (Frye, 1988, pp. 54–55).

⁶ Kermode (1980) translates *kerygma* into a mystery that we understand because we have been taught to understand it, though this learning does not prevent confusion in the face of the impossibility of achieving a definitive intelligible form: “We are

the Gospels are – not history – but *kerygma*, proclamation. ... This religious declaration of faith is also a literary declaration of faith. The voice *is* there, in the light: narrative, this narrative at least, contains meaning. ... The Gospels have come to stand for all texts, Jesus for meaning. (p. 370)

This issue radically changes the interpretation of the Bible as an object of literary study: We now have a foreground in which tools and strategies are recognized in the Bible. Gabel et al. (1996) described point by point these literary⁷ strategies, justifying their use by means of a historical/cultural argument:

the means for getting the effects, however, are the means that authors have used ever since the dawn of literary culture, and we can approach the literature of the Bible with the full confidence that biblical authors drew their weapons from the same armory that supplies us today. (p. 23)

On the other hand, citing more examples of this type of interpretation, Alter (1981, pp. 179–184) produces a list of the four motives that warrant observation when reading biblical narrative and which coincide with the four great blocks into which his work is divided: words, actions, dialogue, and narration. Because the biblical narrative is so laconic in comparison with other types of narratives and because of this tendency to repeat certain words or expressions, it follows that something is being particularly hid-den and must be unraveled, both in words and in actions⁸ and

most unwilling to accept mystery, what cannot be reduced to other and more intelligible forms. Yet that is what we find here: something irreducible, therefore perpetually to be interpreted; not secrets to be found one by one, but Secrecy” (p. 143).

⁷ They refer to hyperbole, metaphor, symbolism, allegory, personification, irony, word games, and poetry (Gabel et al., 1996, pp. 23–42).

⁸ On the other hand, some are of the opinion that the Bible cannot be categorized as “literature” because it is something else. Josipovici (1995) exemplifies this when he says, “It is undeniable that modern specialists, for example Barr and Kugel,

dialogue. The most particular of these four characteristics will be narrative, mainly because of the way in which the omniscience of the narrator, whose knowledge extends from the beginning of things to their end, envelops us – “He’s all-knowing and also perfectly reliable” (Alter, 1981, p. 184).

However, the next level of interpretation that has been pursued in recent times in certain academic contexts is one that promotes the encounter between secular and religious literature, an encounter that contains two distinct levels simultaneously: the level of coincidence in narrative tools – a level that we have outlined – and the level of coincidence in meaning, or rather, in understanding or formation at a more personal, inspirational level. Though it is subject to various interpretations, the latter level has no less strong and evocative an influence on human beings, which led Lanero (2004) to state that

Scripture is important to Lewis because it conveys to us the essence of the person. ... The status of the Bible, dependence on its authority and on a concrete, unitary and verbal inspiration, only impresses Lewis’ literary and spiritual sense in a tangential way. (p. 114)

It is worth examining, then, the role of C. S. Lewis in such studies.

C. S. Lewis’s Perspectives on Literary Criticism: Imagination, Fiction, and Myth

We can add the efforts of C. S. Lewis to Frye’s aspiration to judge the Bible from a critical perspective. The former, with a clear philological background, tackled the question of literary criticism in some of his scholarly works – known less widely than his fiction – and tried, in a way, to present

are right to be concerned with the assimilation of the Bible into ‘literature.’ They are right because the Bible is not ‘literature’; however, what distinguishes it from ‘literature’ is not what they claim. ... On the other hand, I have tried to defend that it is not ‘literature’ as it has no time for ‘literature’” (p. 475).

his view on the apologetic aspect that underlay his writing. In some of these lesser-known works, such as the apologetic ones and the film adaptations of his young adult literature cycle, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, it is possible to rediscover in him a true passion for literary criticism, someone who has reflected deeply and profusely on the implications that underlie the fact that the Bible is no longer taken as a book of revelation. He uses the term "realistic fiction" to resolve the way in which, in his opinion, biblical narrative can enter into dialogue with secular narrative. Here one can intuit the relevance of the arguments in favor of humans as poetic beings and therefore as beings that beautify everything they touch, a discussion that once again takes us back to the starting point, that is, the dichotomy between religious and secular language. Lanero (2004) argues that though he was critical, Lewis was a reader of the Bible rather than a preacher, and he wonders to what extent Lewis would have agreed with the books on the Bible by Northrop Frye, Robert Alter, Frank Kermode, Gabriel Josipovici, and David Norton, among others. The reason for this doubt is where the focus of these works lies: All of them are devoted to analyzing the influence of the Bible as literary or even therapeutic material. The assumption that follows from such an analysis is that the Bible is no longer considered a book of revelation; "the most important theological change in modern times has been the consideration of God as immanent rather than transcendent" (Lanero, 2004, p. 103). Whether or not the Bible was considered to be a revealed divine truth, literary criticism has adopted this specific view and methodology in order to study it further.

In examining the writings of C. S. Lewis, it is clear that the discussion about whether the Holy Scriptures should be taken as a divine utterance is something that concerned him, although there is not a very considerable amount on the subject in his writings. In the controversy over fidelity to the biblical text, he analyses it according to the same criteria that he would have applied to any other type of literary text. Here one can highlight his essays on "the meanings of 'fantasy'" and "on realisms," which are included in *An Experiment in Criticism* in order to assess the extent to which he undertook an allegorical, metaphorical, or symbolic interpretation of the Holy Scriptures.

As his evolution continued, despite our author publishing both science fiction and Christian apologetic books, as Edwards (2007) points out, “his heart was always centered in myth and fairy tale” (pp. 3–4). Furthermore, Lewis answered the question of what inspired his books with the following: “Does anyone know where exactly an idea comes from? With me all fiction begins with pictures in my head” (Dorsett & Mead, 1985, pp. 68–69). This leads us to set forth the definition of imagination. It is said that “imagination is the power to create or form images in the mind. Or, with a slight modification: It is the power to create or form mental images” (Taliaferro & Evans, 2011, p. 12). Additionally, the action of imagining is included within the umbrella of other speculative mental states, such as conceiving and supposing (Kind, 2016, p. 214), and it occupies a major place in our lives for its instructive role in the pursuit of scientific understanding (Kind, 2016, p. 9), as well as in the lives of our youngsters for the game of make-believe it provides them with (Kind, 2016, p. 7).

We have described how the term “the Bible as literature” has evolved, leaving open the reflection on new types of interpretations that challenge the reader beyond the initial narrative level. We should, therefore, move on to distinguishing between fantasy and reality and the question of whether there is a relevant distinction between these elements in the relationship between secular and religious literature.⁹

The dialogue between fiction (in this case fantasy¹⁰) and realism (religious literature?) necessitates, first of all, a definition of the terms. C. S. Lewis differentiates between selfish fiction and disinterested fiction:

⁹ In other words, this leads us to ask ourselves how biblical writings should be taken. Are they real or pure fantasy? Would fantasy be a more *effective* resource than reality? And if so, what would they be better suited for? If, according to Redfield (2012, p. 84), “the appearances of things act upon us because we take the appearances for the things themselves,” then the fantasy that results from these myths is not then futile when it comes to understanding the appearance of the things we receive.

¹⁰ It is not the objective of this article to delve into the existing and obvious distinctions between the terms *fiction*, *fantasy*, and *imagination*. We will consider, with certain licenses, that fiction and fantasy are similar concepts in which the element of imagination is present, and thus leave the description of their differences for other future investigations.

in short, fiction that provokes in the reader the capacity to taste the ambrosia without having tried it is disinterested, while fiction that the reader only reads because they recognize in it the food they already eat is selfish. It is not, therefore, a true fantasy in the strict sense of the term if it reproduces exactly what one can see in one's world; that literature that sticks to the known universe will be the one that has the greatest appearance of realism, while nevertheless lacking it (Lewis, 2000, p. 60). Fiction "permeates contemporary life, via the novels we read, the stories we tell, the series we watch, and – as philosophers – the thought experiments we use. Many think it should be characterized in terms of a relationship to the imagination" (Kind, 2016, p. 204). Fiction is thus rooted in imagination because the latter enables us to escape from the world as well as learn from it; we tend to switch from transcendent uses of imagination – such as pretending, dreaming, or engaging with the arts – to instructive ones (Kind, 2016, p. 8). Lewis's thoughts on imagination are clear: We should care about imagination because although an undisciplined and unused one might offer trouble, it is a spiritual force within the domain of every human being and it helps us to shape our real world, to live our lives fully, and to involve us in the "imaginative enterprise that determines whether we live lives of 'quiet desperation' or meaningful engagement with the world He is redeeming, including our imagination" (Edwards, 2007, p. 7). For this reason, continues Edwards (2007, p. 5), fairy tales are said to be the most suitable vehicles for expressing a transcendent truth, from which Lewis will benefit when using them as a canvas to paint the pictures in his head;

in engaging his fiction, Lewis would have us come to see "imagination" as the divinely given human faculty of comprehending reality through the use of images, pictures, shapes, patterns: seeing what is, seeing what was, and seeing what could be, through artistic "representation." It is the counterpart and complement to reason. (Edwards, 2007, p. 8)

To define what realisms are, it will also be necessary to distinguish between "realism of content" and "realism of presentation" (Lewis, 2000).

In realism of content, the appearance of things is barely described; no information is usually given about how the characters dress and we do not even necessarily know which character is speaking, since they all follow the same pattern. They are “stories that are not themselves at all ‘realistic’ in the sense of being probable or even possible” (Lewis, 2000, p. 62). This does not mean that there is only one way to proceed with realistic literature or that one type of realism is better or worse than the other. Instead, realism of presentation is the one that presupposes that everything should be true, that is, it can lead us to say “this is lifelike.” Considering both options, and apart from this typical realism known as “realism of content,” stories of exceptional, incredible, and atypical things could also be called realistic (Lewis, 2000, p. 66). It would be a mistake, Lewis (2000) continues, for all literature to conform with perfect accuracy to reality; it is “not that all books should be realistic in content, but that every book should have as much of this realism as it pretends to have” (p. 69). Odera and Odera (1992) agree that “good literary fantasy can convey a much deeper vision of the world than some so-called *realistic* stories” (p. 384), which is why we find ourselves judging *The Chronicles of Narnia* in relation to the Bible, both of which have their own implications as specific literary works independent of one another. In dialogue with the religious narrative, we can corroborate from this that “realistic fiction” is possible¹¹ because, firstly, theology is not poetry. And if it is, it is not very good poetry, as Lewis (2000) states. However, theology has an esthetic value even if one does not believe in it – a value that increases the more one learns about it. As “man is a poetical animal that touches nothing that he does not adorn” (Lewis, 2002, p. 70), it is logical that theology is necessarily poetical; this does not make it more fictitious, but quite the opposite. Secondly, Lewis does not see a specific religious language such as science has; when theologians use scientific language (or rather pseudoscientific),

¹¹ We call this “realistic fiction” because it is a fiction that does not deceive us, but rather the opposite: “Admitted fantasy is precisely the kind of literature which never deceives at all. Children are not deceived by fairy tales; they are often and gravely deceived by school-stories. Adults are not deceived by science fiction; they can be deceived by the stories in the women’s magazines” (Lewis, 2000, p. 70).

they disconnect from the very literature on which they depend and do not gain a true understanding of Scripture (Lanero, 2004, p. 106). Therefore, we work on biblical texts using our own words.

Regarding discussions of what kind of fantasy *The Chronicles of Narnia* is and how its similarities to the Bible should be understood, we must note down that Lewis in the first place did not write the books with any allegorical intent, as Wagner (2005) determines categorically. He refers, instead, to a term that J. R. R. Tolkien coined, “applicability,” and which he applied to his own work in *The Lord of the Rings*, in an attempt to clarify that he had not written it with the intention of representing an alleged allegorical character. *Applicability* is therefore defined as follows: “the idea of giving a reader the freedom to extract meaning from an author’s work rather than an author forcing a particular idea onto the reader” (Wagner, 2005, p. 102). However, Tolkien himself did not approve of cataloguing *Chronicles* using that term, because, as he understood some Lewis’s comments, they should be categorized as yet another allegorical manifestation, that could be described as “supposal,” according to Wagner (2005, p. 99). It is worth mentioning in this context that the notion of “eucatastrophe,” also shared by Tolkien, is a neologism for the death and resurrection of Christ that means, oxymoronically, a “tragedy with a happy ending.” It marks Lewis’s new belief in the way a myth works in understanding the incarnation of Jesus Christ as a historical event (Edwards, 2007, p. 5).

In a letter that Lewis wrote to Sophia Storr in 1959, he explained to her what he meant by supposal: “I don’t say: ‘Let us represent Christ as Aslan.’ I say: ‘Supposing there was a world like Narnia, and supposing, like ours, it needed redemption, let us imagine what sort of Incarnation and Passion and Resurrection Christ would have there’” (Dorsett & Mead, 1985, p. 52). If the concepts in an allegory are real but the characters refer to something that is not themselves, then in the supposal, the fictional characters are real within the imaginary world. Following this theory, *Chronicles* is not an allegory either, but a kind of comparison in that, supposing that that imaginary world was real and the characters were to find themselves in the same dilemmas faced by Jesus Christ (in the case of Aslan)

and the apostles (in the case of the children who are the protagonists), they would have done¹² this or that.

Thus, having set aside allegory, it is possible to assume that “Lewis views *The Chronicles of Narnia* as a myth. He explains that an allegory is a story with a single meaning, but a myth is a story that can have many meanings for different readers¹³ in different generations” (Wagner, 2005, p. 100). Hartley (2012) tries to explain it as follows: “when Lewis reproduces the same situation [the same situation as a given biblical miracle] in *Prince Caspian*, in essence he constructs a Narnian ‘miracle’ that adheres to the same criteria to which Biblical miracles adhere” (p. 8). Consequently, we can argue that as a myth,¹⁴ *Chronicles* presents a world independent of any other, with its own meaning, origin, and end and whose particular mythology meets and dialogues with the myth that embodies the biblical story,¹⁵ while the images and literary motifs that they both develop are embedded in the same language and are part of the same literary tradition. When Lanero (2004, p. 110) tries to determine what C. S. Lewis was set on pointing out, he proposed that the answer was that which

¹² It should be noted here that it is the actions that prevail over the characters.

¹³ That is why it would not be appropriate to compare *Chronicles* with *The Lord of the Rings*, in terms of the simplicity of the former in comparison with the mature complexity of the latter, since the two are written in different styles and aimed at different audiences. It is worth reading the dedication of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, in which Lewis (1974) explicitly refers to the books as a fairy tale, giving the whole saga a complete profile: “My dear Lucy, I wrote this story for you, but when I began it I had not realized that girls grow quicker than books. As a result you are already too old for fairy tales, and by the time it is printed and bound you will be older still. But someday you will be older enough to start reading fairy tales again.”

¹⁴ “Lewis, Tolkien, and the other Inklings took to be foundational to what they called mythopoeia – or the act of new myth-making. Myth for them was not defined as a legendary tale told with dubious authority; but instead it was the grand overarching narrative that created the reason to be, and to become, for members of the village, the polis, and the nation, touched by its encompassing themes, images, characters, and plot lines” (Edwards, 2007, p. 9).

¹⁵ We can call it a myth from the literary consideration of the concept of “the Bible as literature” set forth above, a term that allows us to take these *licenses* – as it evinces narrative aspects, as well as any of the other literary aspects – of the story being told in the Bible.

Christians obtain by reading the Bible, and not what they might obtain. And what is obtained, distilled from the fantasies, brings us closer to the real version of events.

The reading of the Gospels takes us away from our fantasies, contrasting them with the reality of Jesus . . . The Bible is a book that offers us reality. And the essence of that reality is that the reader's response to the Bible is a matter of the utmost consequence. (Lanero, 2004, pp. 110–111)

The following statement by C. S. Lewis (2000) precisely summarizes what he thinks a book does for the reader: "Ideally, we should like to define a good book as one which 'permits, invites, or compels' good reading. But we shall have to make do with 'permits and invites'" (p. 115). That is, a literary work invites – or rather, we would add, provokes – a powerful affective experience whose fictional mechanisms evoke certain types of connections with the reality in which one participates, both the reality in which one is inserted and the one in which the work resides. The *logos*, what is said, is the factor that evokes these connections, and these connections will be stronger the more they use our language,¹⁶ language that is understandable. An approximation to that *logos*, though, is not possible without *poiema*, deeds on which the reactions that the *logos* provokes in the reader are built; as has been pointed out, the more fictional this is, the stronger the reactions will be.

One of the most prominent and influential scholars of his time, who suggested connections between the secular and religious literary traditions that encompass much of the Western tradition is Erich Auerbach (1950). He followed the Greek concept of mimesis as an imitative/representative paradigm of reality, opposing the literary tradition that favored

¹⁶ Schökel (1966) presents three different levels of language, and concludes – as does the thesis presented here – that "if Sacred Scripture were to employ exclusively technical language, it would be far more precise and far less rich" (p. 147). Furthermore, this richness helps to create the stylistic force that permeates the whole Bible and makes *effective* receptive experience in the reader possible.

the separation of styles over that which rejects them, in order to conclude that the literature of the Western world is an imitative configuration that can help explain how our representation of reality is shaped. By reading the Bible as a literary creation, as he argues, we see how its motifs can be and are replicated in other literary creations. One could deduce, then, that Auerbach's mimetic representation of reality is a kind of reformulation of the self-referencing¹⁷ of which Frye spoke: having a base model on which to construct subsequent references allows imitation according to that same model and the consequent symbolic understanding of the original concept. Alter and Kermode (1987) stated that Auerbach's contribution in attempting to point out the possibility of a figurative interpretation of the Bible allowed for new perspectives in the analysis of the Bible, as well as connections between the works of biblical writers and the Western literary tradition. They also take the work of the German philologist as "the point of departure for the modern literary understanding of the Bible" (Alter & Kermode, 1987, p. 23). Norton (1993b) said something similar of Auerbach:

by placing a biblical narrative at the head of one of these traditions, Auerbach ensures that it will be treated not only on the same terms as other narrative, whether fictional or historical, but as a primary element in a literary study that is not confined to the Bible as literature. (p. 359)

Conclusions

According to Ricoeur (2000), we must "search in the *mythos* not for a fable, but for its coherence" (p. 96). What is interesting about the narrative, the *mythos*, is the thing itself, a true, credible, and recognizable action that can be extrapolated to our own actions. A fable is not a fable

¹⁷ This self-referencing was also referred to by Bruns (1987) when he stated that "the Bible always addresses itself to the time of interpretation" (p. 627).

until it shows us its verisimilitude, thanks to which we can judge to what extent we see ourselves reflected in it. Up to now, we have understood that the evolution of the concept of “the Bible as literature” responds to the need to demonstrate that not only is it possible to reformulate the biblical narrative by taking it as a literary object, but that this is necessary and happens. A superficial observation of this situation reveals that this application – or rather replication – of biblical literary motifs generally occurs in works of fiction, of which *The Chronicles of Narnia* is one example.

In order to demonstrate the complexity of the topic and to foster some reflections over the many aspects of the reception of the Biblical text, as well as the subsequent texts that heavily rely on it, we justify this analysis under one hypothesis. The connection between the two objects, the Bible and *Chronicles*, offers a significant understanding of certain literary motifs, the latter of which (the motifs of *Chronicles*) will revert directly to the former (the motifs of the Bible). It is worth highlighting Redfield’s statement (2012) about Aristotle, as he is certain that the philosopher meant that “we take pleasure in imitating these things because through imitation we learn something. So perhaps learning itself purifies” (p. 119), which eventually raises the educative issue of the learning of those character strengths exhibited by the main characters of any narration (Carreira Zafra, 2020). We would therefore conclude that through the number of references and connections in *Chronicles*, these literary motifs, which come under the structure of fantasy sagas, are of the utmost significance when compared to the influence that other types of literary motifs may have had on *Chronicles*. This learning or understanding occurs through the mimetic process of representation and the shaping of reality. We take this mimesis as an essential foundation for new interpretations of the biblical narrative, those which offer an integrative vision that compares secular and religious narratives and in which it is no longer the analysis of the purely narrative that prevails, but rather the perspective that the reader acquires from them. The reader, then, is responsible for putting them together and allowing the evocation of interpretations that they recognize as belonging to another place but which are the basis of a common tradition that they know because they have been taught to know.

It would be logical, however, to argue that any reading of specific biblical passages we might undertake is approached in accordance with a certain interpretation with which a reader outside our particular perspective cannot identify. However, even though we accept that the interpretation of a text does not have to be unique, we also reject the kind of contemporary agnosticism about the meaning of texts to which Alter refers (1981, p. 179). In order to correct a hypothetical *sui generis* view that judges the content of possible and hypothetical comparative studies of reductionists, it would be wise to provide sufficient examples to create a range of authoritative references on which to base the reasons behind one's own interpretations when observing these biblical motives narrated in fictional literature.

Finally, the following reflection should be made: If the analysis of what we receive from a work is to be only literal or, worse, if it does not provide any possibility of being interpreted from different angles, then no comparative or other literary study would have any reason to exist, and therefore, one might dare to suggest that there would not be a literary tradition on which to base ourselves, an assertion that today we know to be false. We reaffirm this attitude of openness with regard to textual interpretation under the auspices of C. S. Lewis (2000): Apart from telling a story, the work has its own entity, and can be considered an *objet d'art* in itself. Regarding the role artists may have when creating their *objet d'art* and its link to the Christian notion of creation, Taliaferro and Evans (2011) note that "artistic activity can be used to fill out the image of God as creator. Aquinas commended the thesis that the God of Christian theism is analogous to an artist" (p. 182). On the other hand, it would not be appropriate, perhaps, to look for the value of a literary work in the commentaries on life that it provides us, but rather we should look for the effect it has on us when we read it, what we recognize and feel. As mentioned above, in ancient Greece the goal of mimesis was catharsis, that is, purification. It was this purification that, according to Aristotle's view, gave rise to a possible, though not explicit, pedagogical use of his mimetic theory. Again, Redfield (2012) was enlightening in saying that "I suspect that Aristotle meant by katharsis exactly this combination

of emotion and learning [sic]" (p. 119). Learning, then, is of the utmost importance when it comes to putting into practice the literary phenomenon described, which might be the same as Aristotle planned when thinking about mimesis and catharsis. Apart from that, we must not forget that

the emphasis in Lewis's fiction (and nonfiction) is always "seeing with the heart," of apprehending images and tracing metaphors that instill faith and inspire journeys into the never-never land of the spirit. For the heart reveals our true character, and, ultimately, where our treasure is. (Edwards, 2007, p. 4)

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The Model of A Polish Diplomat and Its Evolution From the 16th to the 21st century, in the Context of Education, Axiology, Professionalism and Socialization

Abstract

The contemporary model of a Polish diplomat is the result of a long evolution. The first mentions of the topic date back to antiquity and the Middle Ages. It was not until modern times, however, that more interest was vested in this issue. In Western Europe, Niccolo Machiavelli, Torquato Tasso, Abraham de Wicquefort, François de Callierrès, Harold Nicolson, and others have commented on this topic. In Poland, Jakub Przyłuski, Krzysztof Warszewicki, Wawrzyniec Piaseczyński, Stanisław Miński, Tadeusz Morski, Adam Czartoryski – and currently Jerzy M. Nowak, Roman Czyżycki, and Bogdan Grzeloński – have discussed the virtues and vices of diplomats. Their remarks provide a sufficient basis for developing a model of a diplomat and following its evolution over the span of five centuries. To achieve this goal, I utilized my proprietary method of pattern research, analyzing the four components of genealogical, personality, professional, and social conditions. The first is related to one's birth, which can lead to a comprehensive education, good physical condition and inherited wealth. The last one was important in the past, but of no importance now. The second concerns the personal predispositions of a diplomat, in which effectiveness initially took precedence over morality, but morality is now on par with effectiveness.

The next set of determinants relates to professionalism, which entails a great responsibility for the position of the state in the international arena and for the fate of one's fellow citizens. Thus, it is more than a profession, as it constitutes a kind of mission and service to one's country. The last component – social conditions – determines the relationships with members of the diplomatic corps, which is especially important today, now that diplomacy has become a team sport. Such a pattern remains difficult to follow, both for past and present generations. However, it is still a desired object of aspiration meant to transform into actual patterns.

Keywords: diplomat, role model, education, axiology professionalism, socialization, evolution

Introduction

The figure of a diplomat has as long a tradition as diplomacy itself. Still, while the latter may boast many a study devoted to it, the figure of the diplomat himself has been treated quite marginally. Little attention was paid to it in either ancient or medieval times. Only in modern times has there been a gradually developing interest in those people referred to as envoys, parlementaires, negotiators, or ambassadors and appointed to represent the state or its institutions externally and to pursue its interests. This is evidenced by many publications, starting with *De legato* (1485) by Guondislavus, *The Prince* (1532) by Niccolo Machiavelli, *De officio legati quem vigio Ambassiadorem vocant* (1541) by Etienne Dolet, *De legationibus libri quinque* (1548) by Konrad Braun, *De legato libri duo* (1566) by Ottavian Maggi, *The Six Books of the Republic* (1576) by Jean Bodin, *Il Messaggero* (1582) by Torquata Tassa, and *De legationibus libri tres* (1585) by Alberico Genitili, through the 17th century maxims by Belshazzar Gratian, the most detailed work, *L'Ambassadeur et ses fonctions* (1681), by Abraham de Wicquefort, and the 18th century remarks contained in *De la manière de negocier avec les souverains ou de l'utilité de negociations, du choix des ambassadeurs et des envoyés et des qualités neccesaires pour réussir dans ces emplois* (1716 and subsequent editions) by François de Callierrès, to the

regularly reissued *Diplomacy* (1939, 1950, 1963, 1964, 1966) by Harold Nicolson (1939, pp. 54–61), especially in the chapter titled “Ideal Diplomat.”

Poland also joined in this interest. The discussion of a model diplomat was initiated by Jakub Przyłuski in the 16th century, in Chapter 5 of his *Leges seu Statuta* (1553). His contribution is not very original, as the author relied on the above-mentioned work by Braun, copying entire passages with minor adjustments (Boczek, 1953, pp. 189–220). Priority in this regard should therefore undoubtedly be given to Krzysztof Warszewicki and his *De legato et legatione*, which was published in 1595 in Krakow and reissued in 1935. This journalist, historian, politician, and diplomatic practitioner (he was an envoy to Sweden) was recorded in historiography as the creator of insightful and extremely useful advice for envoys. He is considered one of the main teachers of the art of representation due to the originality of his thought and his achievements as a writer. Second place is taken by Wawrzyniec (Ławryn) Piaseczyński, a representative of the Republic of Poland in the Crimea from 1601 to 1603. He made some observations there, and then recorded them in the form of a brief set of instructions entitled *Powinności poselskie* (1947, pp. 164–172), summarized in 34 points of practical advice to candidates for Eastern missions. The list of the authors of 17th century diplomatic manuals ends with Stanisław Miński, also a practitioner, who was a delegate to the Vatican between 1593 and 1595. He offered his observations in a publication titled *Sposób odprawowania poselstwa, ceremonii, zachowania posłowi z obediencią od Króla Jego Mości do Rzymu* (1889, pp. 440–468), written in 1606 and 1607. From the following century, the end of the First Polish Republic, special attention should be drawn to Tadeusz Morski, a royal envoy to the Spanish court and the author of *Myśli o potrzebie i sposobach przysposobienia młodzieży do służby dyplomatycznej w Polsce*, from 1792 and reissued in 1919.

The period of the partitions served neither diplomacy nor its practitioners, yet that was when Adam Czartoryski, an émigré politician and ambassador of a non-existent state – or a state understood as a deposit of values – published his treaty, *Rozważania o dyplomacji* (1830). The first part of his work is devoted to the profile of a diplomat, mainly focusing on ethical values – or rather the lack thereof – in relation to the profession. Even

less progress in constructing a model of a diplomat was recorded in the times of the Second Polish Republic. Admittedly, a lively foreign policy was pursued at the time, but within the theoretical domain it was limited to re-issues of previous works by Tadeusz Morski and Krzysztof Warszawski. The latter remained fresh and up-to-date for a long time, as his publication was used by Jerzy M. Nowak, a practitioner and theorist of diplomacy in the times of the People's Republic of Poland (2014, p. 162). That period had little to offer in this regard. It is commonly held that by ideologizing the diplomatic service, they diverged from the previous principles, shifting the established pattern to the anti-pattern. Thus, with the establishment of the Third Polish Republic, there was an urgent need to return to the old tradition and to modify it in light of the new requirements and related standards. Discussions on the matter took place among both specialists with experience in embassies and historians of diplomacy publishing their findings in scientific journals or in wider editorials. From this group, authors such as the above-mentioned J. M. Nowak (2008), Roman Czyżycki (2005), Tomasz Orłowski (2005), Cezary Ikanowicz and Jan W. Piekarski (2004), Bogdan Grzeloński (2006), and Przemysław Grudziński (2008) deserve special attention along with the others cited in the present sources. The model of a diplomat from the historical perspective is also one of my research interests, as attested to by several publications (Świdarska-Włodarczyk 2016, pp. 537–555; 2017, pp. 64–72).

Methodological Note

The list of authors presented above covers a period of nearly five hundred years, not including Jan Długosz's comments on the attitudes of medieval envoys (Świdarska-Włodarczyk, 2018, pp. 131–132). Thus, the whole is characterized by a broad chronological range, a variety of forms, and an individual perspective, depending on the time and place in which a statement originates. As such, it constitutes a significant cultural capital, as understood by Pierre Bourdieu (1989, pp. 241–258) and subject to Braudel's (1971, p. 55) principles of "long duration," which require analytical reflection culminating in a final synthesis.

In order to achieve this goal, I shall rely on my own method of examining personal patterns, based on the logical structure of its components, arranged vertically. Then, the *sui generis* matrix shall be juxtaposed with the horizontal sub-periods marked with subsequent publications in order to capture some evolutionary changes within the pattern. The latter was defined in detail in my earlier works, listed in the footnotes. In this case, I shall use a brief observation, which is necessary for the clarity of the further reasoning. Thus, the personal pattern shall be understood as a fictitious, personified yet depersonalized being. Like the actual models concerned with authentic characters, it is always connected with the axiological system of the respective times, thus constituting a desired point of reference for social aspirations. The common part for the templates and patterns was four components: genealogical, personality, professional, and social conditions. The first of them is an objective, external determinant and the result of such values as birth, education, wealth, age, and appearance. The second component is located in the internal sphere and its direct exponents are characterological features, one's talents, predispositions, and qualities of a moral and intellectual nature. Next, the professional dimension, is considered to be equal to the skill and proficiency necessary to perform various functions, in this case those of a diplomat. I assumed the last component to be social determinants, translating into one's public image according to familial, civic, and religious aspects.

The order of these conditions is by no means accidental. It is determined by the axiological weight and hierarchy of the individual components, which also determine the order of further argument, inscribed in the cultural framework of the period under study. As such, it refers to the spectral approach of Jacques Derrida (2006, pp. 10–11), according to which it was assumed that the model of a diplomat was initially based on pan-European (thus also Polish) values, and will eventually contribute to the final result of a contemporary model of a Polish diplomat.

Genealogical Conditions

In line with the above assumptions, I used the analysis of genealogical conditions as a starting point for constructing the model of a diplomat. Proper birth is the first criterion here. In fact, at the end of the 16th century, a leading expert on the subject placed ethical values over the quality of one's blood, writing that "it is not the origin, but personal qualities that attest to the value of a diplomat" (Warszewicki, 1935, p. 238). On the other hand, following the example of Maggi, Gentili, and many others, he still favored noble genealogy. This choice was dictated by utilitarian considerations. In the times of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, it was preferable to have come from "an excellent and noble family" (Warszewicki, 1935, p. 196). Only then, given the dominant role of the nobility in European and non-European courts, could the king be properly represented, especially if the legation was of the representative type. The practice would go hand in hand with these recommendations. Although it is known that diplomats were recruited from various backgrounds, the majority of them represented the nobility (Grzybowski, 1966, p. 175). This unwritten rule was followed until the partitions, only to return in a modified form in the interwar period. The priority in diplomatic careers was then given to the gentry (Grzeloński, 2006, p. 43), that is, the direct heir to the nobility, who were stripped of their titles under the March Constitution. At first glance, one might think that the birth criterion must have lost some of its importance in the Polish communist era. Contrary to appearances, this was not the case; in fact, it remained as important and perhaps became even more important than before. Nonetheless, the beneficiary of the diplomatic promotion shifted to representatives of the working-and-peasant class associated with the communist party (*PZPR*; Grzeloński, 2006, p. 69), while the part of the landed gentry that managed to survive the war and the repressions of the new authorities was deprived of such opportunities. The real changes came after 1989 with the emergence of democracy, when this criterion of birth ceased to be a *sine qua non* condition for diplomatic careers.

A noble birth is naturally connected with the property census. In each epoch, this concerned either inherited goods, which of course does

not exclude the possibility of their further multiplication, or the wealth accumulated by an individual. In the Old Polish period, the first variant was extremely desirable, as the genealogical age constituted an additional asset. It is also not without significance in modern times. Today, however, we remain closer to intellectuals' axiology. We value an individual's specific achievements much higher than those attributed to them by virtue of their birth (Jakimiuk, 2017, pp. 83–98). Regardless of time, however, affluence in itself has never been a sufficient prerequisite for verification and moralists have always argued about its value and anti-value. It is no wonder, then, that wealth for the sake of wealth was not explicitly praised. On the contrary, the complaint was that "everything succumbs to Mammon" (Kochanowski, 1982, p. 172) and "the scabby figures of the rich" (Warszewicki, 1935, p. 51) were criticized. On the other hand, wealth was perceived as being advantageous. It allows a high-ranking official to "properly fulfil his duties, assist fellow citizens, and do what his virtue suggests he should do" (Goślicki, 2000, p. 509), while a diplomat is able to continue the tasks entrusted to him, especially in the event of delays in payments, necessary to accomplish his mission (Kromer, 1981, pp. 78, 81). For such reasons, Tadeusz Morski argued, in the election of envoys, "priority should be given to the wealthy, when they have equal qualities, so that they are able to protect the public treasury from their own property, covering some of the costs" (Morski, 1919, p. 73). In general, however, in line with the principle that gentlemen do not talk about money, financial matters were rarely discussed. Warszewicki wrote little about it, while Piaseczyński, Miński, and Czartoryski did not discuss the matter at all. Contemporary diplomats also tend to ignore this issue, perhaps because it is no longer necessary, since their remuneration is regulated by the Foreign Service Act (Polish Journal of Laws, 2001, no. 128, item 1403, art. 29, 30).

While birth and wealth, in the context of genealogical conditions, are inherently optional, the same cannot be said about the education criterion. It is always associated with one's social background, as confirmed by the findings of pedagogical and sociological research (Hinc, 2009, pp. 9–23; Sawiński, 2009, pp. 89–114). Proper upbringing, crowned with an education from a well-established school and supplemented by educational journeys

and self-improvement in adult life, is a *sine qua non* condition of the model diplomat. This requirement was mentioned by all theoreticians of the art of representation, from the Renaissance to the present day. It concerned more than the general knowledge acquired in colleges, and later in middle schools, secondary schools, and universities. From the very beginning, the emphasis was on the need to establish a specialized educational program to professionally prepare its students for diplomatic work. Such demands in the times of the First Republic were put forward by Jakub Przyłuski, Krzysztof Warszawicki, Reinhold Heidenstein (1960), and Tadeusz Morski.

The last one in particular left behind a wide-ranging plan for modern education. Due to the lack of professional staff, he suggested that a school based on a multi-year curriculum in preparation for foreign service be established. He considered the practice of diplomats in the royal chancellery and on parliamentary missions to be a significant supplement to theoretical education (Morski, 1919, p. 51). The loss of independence impeded the implementation of this plan. As a result, the issue of educating diplomats did not re-emerge until after 1918, when the School of Political Sciences (later transformed into the Academy of Political Sciences) became the place for staff development. It contributed to the formation of specialized diplomatic corps, which are highly valued in the international arena (Nowak, 2008, p. 151). After the Second World War, the school was nationalized, and then replaced by the Main School of Foreign Service. The latter, for ideological reasons, and especially out of fear of educating overly neutral diplomats, was shut down at the beginning of the 1960s. The only alternative for ambassadors-to-be was the Diplomatic Academy in Moscow or courses and training sessions organized by the Communist Party in the country (Sutor, 2010, pp. 16–18). It is no wonder, then, that after the political system changed, it became necessary to redefine education. As a result, first the Diplomatic Academy was established, and then the Polish Institute of Diplomacy named after Jan Ignacy Paderewski (2012). It was there that all training courses for future diplomats and consular officials took place, until 2016. Applicants were required to possess a master's degree and knowledge of at least two languages, and the condition for graduation was a passing score on the consular and diplomatic exam (Łakota-Micker, 2016, pp. 88–92).

Currently, candidates for the diplomatic service learn from annual courses organized by the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They involve five months of traditional classes, five months of internship in ministerial units in the country, and two months of internship in foreign institutions. Upon completion, participants take the final examination and, as before, obtain a first degree in the foreign service (Polish Journal of Laws, 2016, no. 128, item 11174).

Regardless of the epoch and form, all the theorists of education stressed the importance of knowledge and the competences necessary for the proper performance of an envoy's duties. Despite the long time span, they remained surprisingly consistent in their ideas. For each of them, general knowledge was an important starting point for detailed knowledge (Pielgrzymowski, 2010, p. 152). An exemplary envoy should be "familiar with ethics, the judiciary, and the art of governing" (Warszewicki, 1935, p. 196) and be conversant in philosophy and literature in order to always keep up with the intellectual pace of his interlocutors. The skill of erudition was also considered very useful, which translated into the art of communication in this profession. As Wawrzyniec Piaseczyński noted: "*Oratia*, or speech, is to be able to use consistent words and reasoning to be sure and show true *clare* while having a business with someone or a dispute on one's own or someone else's behalf" (1947, p. 171). At times, there were arguments about educational priorities. For Warszewicki, the most important thing was history, as "the knowledge of history is even more necessary for diplomats than the undeniably useful skill of languages" (Warszewicki, 1935, p. 46). He put language learning second, although he considered it crucial. Stanisław Miński also made proficient knowledge of a foreign language a top priority, recommending that an envoy who was "skilled at language and aware of local customs" be delegated to Rome (1889, p. 446) as well as to France, Germany, or Turkey. However, we owe the broadest educational curriculum to Morski (1919, pp. 35–48). Among the compulsory subjects he listed were knowledge of languages, geography, history, and foreign governments and of the laws of nations and the trade relations and treaties between them. Similar requirements are placed on today's candidates for foreign service.

The condition for admission to the course is not only a certified higher education and knowledge of foreign languages, but also confirmation of a general familiarity with national and international politics, an understanding of alliances, administrative structures, financing, trade, minority problems, armed conflicts, the personalities of the main luminaries of power, and the rules of operation of interstate organizations, with the historical context in mind (Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, n.d.). To quote Krzysztof Skubiszewski, "professionalism, diligence, and full loyalty to the government should be expected" (Nowak, 2008, p. 155) from a graduate.

A list of genealogical conditions of the model diplomat would not be complete without a consideration of the criterion of physical condition. It is the result of such values as good health, an appearance that fosters acceptance, appropriate age – preferably middle age (Świdarska-Włodarczyk, 2008, pp. 81–89) – and even appropriate clothing, that enables the performance of assigned tasks. Without strength, endurance, and resistance to the hardships of travel and climatic differences or without a favorable appearance, no mission had any chance of success. Maggio, Tasso, and Dolet paid attention to such assets. The same was expected of an ideal senator by Goślicki (2000, p. 493) and by Warszawicki, Piaseczyński, Miński, and Morski from a model envoy. Someone aspiring to represent the state "should be of significant height, adorned with elegant attire and gestures, that is, a modest attitude" (Piaseczyński, 1947, p. 171). Under no circumstances should the mission be entrusted to a disabled person, as those "humpbacked, lame, or handicapped by other body defects risk being laughed at" (Warszewicki, 1935, pp. 48–49), and worse, may expose the vital interests of the country to irreparable losses.

An appropriate outfit was a necessary complement to proper appearance, which was unanimously emphasized by all the authors of handbooks for envoys. It would distinguish a diplomat from the commoners, but at the same time remain free of unnecessary pomp. "An envoy does not need to dress up" (Miński, 1889, p. 459) in satins and velvets, as these are not the factors that determine the success of the mission. On the contrary, excessive lavishness can make a bad impression. Most of these recommendations have lost little of their relevance in modern times. Although

political correctness precludes formulating certain recommendations too directly, the requirement of good physical and mental health has been prescribed by law (Polish Journal of Laws, no. 128, item 1403, art. 12). This value was also pointed out by practitioners of the foreign service. Good physical condition is a factor in the success of the mission in difficult climatic conditions, which are conducive to tropical diseases. It is equally necessary because of the non-standard working hours, as are a number of necessary skills, such as playing tennis, golf or squash, or jogging, which can be important for establishing and maintaining proper relations in the country of residence (Czyżycki, 2005, pp. 4–5). An equally important issue is appropriate dress, governed not only by the provisions of the diplomatic protocol (Orłowski, 2005, pp. 311–326), but also by personal taste and attention. Any kind of “neglect and sloppiness should not be tolerated, as they affect the image and reputation of Polish diplomacy” (Nowak, 2008, p. 165). As in the times of Warszewicki, even today outfits should be adapted to the occasion as well as to the figure, but by no means should it be too conspicuous (Ikanowicz & Piekarski, 2004, p. 163). Good taste and elegance form the basis of good manners and, at the same time, a pass to diplomatic careers.

Personality Conditions

As can be seen from the above, possessing the right genealogical conditions is an important element of the model diplomat. One’s personality seems to be of equivalent weight. Without entering into definitions compiled for the purposes of psychology, philosophy, pedagogy, or sociology, I understand it as a result of character traits – innate ones and those perfected by individual talents or predispositions – and qualities of a moral and intellectual nature. All the theorists and practitioners of diplomacy, from the Renaissance to the present day, have written on such values, treating them as a cardinal requirement. They primarily appealed to the four basic virtues: prudence (*prudentia*), justice (*iustitia*), courage (*fortitudo*), and self-restraint (*temperantia*). The first of them was

equated with wisdom, cleverness, and intelligence. The importance of such advantages was emphasized by Krzysztof Warszawicki, followed by Andrzej Maksymilian Fredro, as “the wisdom of a man” (Fredro, 1999, p. 143) inspires respect from strangers. “Prudence is the first and most important attribute of an envoy;” wrote Tadeusz Morski (1919), provided that it remains within certain limits: “when it is excessive, it becomes timidity or slyness” (pp. 79–80). Timidity, or excessive caution, is not desirable, as it voids the chances of successfully pursuing matters. Slyness, on the other hand, is a kind of craftiness that uses cunning and deception, far from honesty and integrity. An exemplary diplomat should steer away from such flaws, yet at the same time be aware that such methods may be employed by counterparts. Thus, he should not be misled by empty declarations or promises. He should, however, “hardly trust anyone and be slow to believe the reports and advice that are given to him” (Morski, 1919, p. 82). He should at all times be accompanied by “moderation, that is, prudence and freedom of steps, which is known as phlegm,” as it “is an essential part of prudence and indispensable in the diplomatic service” (Morski, 1919, p. 84).

As can be seen from the above, a model envoy should be alert to any attempts at obfuscation from their political partners. At this point, the honesty of those aspiring to become role models becomes problematic, especially since many commentators have admitted a peculiar kind of moral immorality. One of them was Wawrzyniec Piaseczyński, who formulated his recommendations explicitly:

Don't be eager to say what you know.

Don't do what you can.

Don't believe what you hear.

Don't judge what you see.

All this do *peccato animo*. (Piaseczyński, 1947, p. 170)

Warszewicki (1935, p. 161) proves to be equally categorical on this matter. He recommends telling the truth, but maintaining silence about what is to remain secret. He advises against lying, but if required by the *raison d'état*, a “compulsory lie” is allowed. He recommends being honest, but

far from frank, straightforward, and sly at the same time, as an envoy has two faces: their own and the royal one. Morski, on the other hand, warns against double standards, as “an envoy may indeed mislead everyone on one occasion, but then he won’t be found trustworthy even if he provides the most salutary advice and suggestions” (1919, p. 80). As a result, credibility – once lost – disqualifies an envoy and their case forever. This attests not only to the deputy’s lack of credibility, but, even worse, it undermines the success of the mission. Adam Czartoryski took an even more critical position on the issue of double morality, writing with a great deal of irony and disapproval about those who made it a virtue:

What are the attributes that shall adorn the picture of an excellent diplomat? The very sound of the word conjures up a smart man who rarely tells the truth or tells half the truth; who knows how to turn his speech so that its ending contradicts what the beginning seemed to announce; who pretends to know when he doesn’t know or that he doesn’t know a thing while he knows; who secretly tries to surprise others, and is guided in his actions by personal advantages and interests, without due regard to truth and justice. Finally, we see a man who, if necessary, will lure the gullible and naive into the trap, to keep the appearances, more or less successfully, and important adversities obscure the meanness of his behavior. Saying that someone is a good diplomat is not a reason to boast, and a similar reputation will not earn anyone friends. (Czartoryski, 2011, p. 22)

Czartoryski’s assessment is interesting for many reasons. After all, he was an important figure in the field of diplomacy, so he draws his conclusions from his own experience. Hence, his judgments are credible. It follows from such devastating comments that the moral condition of diplomats must indeed have left a lot to be desired. There is no doubt, however, that, in general, such practices were accepted at worst and tolerated at best. The combination of prudence and rationing of the truth, dictated by a higher interest – in the name of the Machiavellian principle

that the end justifies the means – was then and for a long time afterwards considered a condition of diplomatic effectiveness. Representatives of Western thought also wrote in the spirit of praise for moral relativism. One of them was François de Callierrès, who believed that the success of states depends on the negotiating skills of their envoys. As he himself wrote, “I know that if you are always guided by the truth, it is difficult to negotiate successfully” (1997, p. 64). Therefore, he did not rule out resorting to bribery when the interests of the highest importance were at stake. The same remark, albeit less categorical, was heard in the second half of the 20th century and later. It concerns the very popular publication by Harold Nicolson, a great expert in the art of diplomacy, in which he emphasizes the value of truth as a *sine qua non* condition of interstate negotiations. However, he understands it as a precise statement which does not change the meaning of the message, and thus does not lead to serious misunderstandings. In no way, however, does he identify instrumental truth with absolute truth. In line with his predecessors, he considers it advisable to rely on pragmatism, which allows for the transfer of information that is beneficial in the course of affairs and conceals information that could burden the final stage of negotiations (Nicolson, 1939, pp. 58–60).

In the 21st century, the relationship between prudence and moral relativism already seems to be an anachronism. At least, Jerzy M. Nowak, the author of *Model idealnego dyplomaty*, adopted this position. This change is related to a change in the concept of loyalty. In the face of the processes of globalization, the alliance with NATO, and the membership in the European Union, Polish diplomats do not serve only their country, but the commonwealth of states. Thus, they must act as a team for mutual benefit, pushing the political individualism of those in power to the background. In this situation, “truthfulness constitutes the basis of effective action The discovery of a lie damages the reputation oftentimes forever and, worse, it also jeopardizes the reputation of the embassy, one’s own agency, or even country” (Nowak, 2008, p. 167).

This ethically conditioned prudence aroused and continues to arouse great interest among theoreticians and practitioners of diplomacy, as confirmed by comments from former ambassadors. This does not

mean ignoring the remaining cardinal virtues – justice, fortitude, and self-restraint – which respectively require one to act within the limits of the law, demand the courage to present one’s own position in external contact and towards one’s superiors, and always follow one’s conscience, since “we owe the greatest obligations to ourselves and our dignity” (Warszewicki, 1935, pp. 56–57). François de Callierrès and Harold Nicolson held similar positions. This recommendation is still valid, as evidenced by the comment made by Jerzy M. Nowak:

If a diplomat was fully convinced that the orders and instructions he had received are contrary to the Polish *raison d’état* or his internal conviction, then he should be bold and refuse to perform such tasks. This is, however, an extreme situation that is rarely faced by a diplomat in a normally functioning democracy. If he does, however, he should make sure that he does it in a restrained fashion, not revealing the backstage of his decision and not criticizing his superiors. (2008, p. 164)

As can be seen from the above, a model representative of the foreign service should not be merely a blind executor of orders, forsaking subjectivity, dignity, and honor. They must remain both distant and objective, which excludes any political or nationalist sentiment or resentment. Regardless of the circumstances, they should always remain faithful to their homeland. As Warszewicki wrote, “the most valuable asset of an envoy is and has always been loyalty Treason is the most shameful of crimes: There is no greater gulf than that between treason and virtue” (1935, pp. 55–56). Similar criteria apply today, and traitors must consider the severe penalties called for by the penal code.

The last of the cardinal virtues is self-restraint, equated with moderation in all aspects of diplomatic activity. Any excesses in this regard have always been criticized. Warnings have been issued against immoderate consumption, extravagance in clothing, luxury in everyday life, and talkativeness and even over-zealousness in performing diplomatic duties. “For all of boastfulness and empty words cannot earn sympathy and

sophistication in clothes, splendor in equipment, horses, etc. is very unpleasant" (1935, p. 62), Warszewicki warned. The same convention included an excessive sense of personal pride, since "a conceited envoy is pleasant neither to God nor to people" (1935, p. 61). Moderation is an important skill to move within the golden mean between greed and extravagance, laziness and workaholism, withdrawal and hyperactivity, excessive commitment and distance, self-criticism and complacency, because moderation is based on properly understood professionalism.

Professional Conditions

Professional conditions are a key component of the model of a diplomat. Nonetheless, it has never been defined through the prism of the profession as understood today. Even today, diplomats are more than salaried employees. Their work is a kind of mission and service, as it is associated with great responsibility for the place of the state in the international arena, and thus for the fate of their fellow citizens. That is why they are not mere passive executors of their principal's orders, but "the eyes and ears of the state" (Warszewicki, 1935, p. 60). They are to guard political agreements and, following the example of the progressive tradition initiated by Jakub Przyłuski, to prevent war and strive for peace (Świdarska-Włodarczyk, 2016, p. 548). According to Tadeusz Morski (1919), "a Polish envoy represents the king and the states gathered; he is the visible knot between the two courts and the link of all relationships connecting these two nations" (p. 71). Nowadays, they are defined as "a member of the broadly understood foreign service effectively defending and pursuing the country's *raison d'être*" (Czyżycki, 2005, p. 4). Regardless of the time, they can play a double role: the representative and the causative. In the former, they are the embodiment of the state, while in the latter, they pursue its vital interests. However, as Morski noted:

to know the true purpose of a relationship with a foreign nation,
one must keep in mind the actual interest of their homeland,

with its history, government, needs, and ways, and know exactly when the previous relationships with this foreign nation took place. Speaking on behalf of the entire nation, one must know all of what the entire nation can know about its relations with this court. (Morski, 1919, pp. 26–27)

For a model diplomat, the starting point for all their actions has always been their home *raison d'état*, though today the concept has been extended. It not only concerns a sovereign state, but also its place within the EU and NATO, and alliances with other entities. Such an arrangement forces old interests to be redefined bilaterally and written into the community perspective. In this context, as J. M. Nowak notes, the concept of professionalism “must include the ability to absorb the European culture of political and social life, especially at the level of international relations, the ability to weave realism, national patriotism, and Europatriotism into its attitude” (2008, p. 162). Timeless professionalism also means effective dialogue and negotiations in accordance with the instructions from the top. It involves building multi-dimensional coalitions. Finally, it is the fulfillment of one’s obligation to provide current information to the superior minister and to submit a final report at the end of one’s mission.

Successes of a substantive nature are always the measure of the model diplomat, but the form or the way in which they are secured play an important role alongside their content. Previously, this was associated with the ability to move according to the rules laid down by the court ceremonial (Taźbierski, 1986); today it concerns the requirements listed in the diplomatic protocol. Both are

the technique of the work of the foreign service, the task of which is to create the climate of respect due to them in relations between countries, which is an expression of recognition of their sovereignty and equality, and to harmonize contact between their official representatives, that is, the diplomatic corps. (Orłowski, 2005, p. 15)

Despite the rigidly established rules, it is not limited to properties of a formal nature. At the same time, it plays the role of a kind of transmission of content that is not formulated directly, but consists of easily readable instruments of foreign policy. An exemplary diplomat must be familiar with gestures of this kind, and at the same time must avoid breaching the etiquette in place. They should therefore know the diplomatic *dress code*, adhere to the procedures of welcoming and saying goodbye during official and informal meetings, raising toasts and broadly understood *savoir vivre*, and must not commit any disqualifying blunders. After all, their professionalism is a showcase of the state, and thus any flaw in it is tantamount to a flaw in the image of the state. Professionalism also means caring about language, culture, erudition, and avoiding the language of violence and harassment in international relations (Nowak, 2008, pp. 162–163). Finally, it is a practical implementation of the oath that a representative of foreign policy takes when they receive their diplomatic appointment:

I hereby promise and undertake to represent the Republic of Poland with dignity, to see to her interests and good name, to perform the duties entrusted to me reliably and conscientiously.
(Foreign Service Act, 2001, Art. 14)

Social Conditions

The above discussion of the professional aspect of the model diplomat is far from exhaustive. I consciously avoided a meticulous analysis of the competences associated with individual levels in the clerical hierarchy, with its division into ambassadors, counsellors, secretaries, attachés, and consuls, as this is the subject of a specialist study. As for my research, values that are not legally decreed remain less tangible, but are no less important in terms of image. In this convention, apart from the genealogical, personality, and professional conditions discussed above, there is the last type – social conditions – which constitute a kind of clamp binding all the other components together. They concern the quality of the relationship between

the personal model and its closer and more distant surroundings, from the family, through the professional environment, to relationships with the nation at large and religious co-followers. Therefore, each envoy, depending on his stage of life, should be a good son, husband, or father, a caring relative and kind neighbor, and an exemplary citizen and zealous Christian (Świderska-Włodarczyk, 2017a, pp. 72–96; 2017b, pp. 149–155). Such criteria were in force in the Old Polish period, addressed mainly to noble hosts, parliamentarians, and soldiers. They were therefore probably also to applicable diplomats, although in their case, the substantive requirements were more often emphasized than the social ones. The same is true for modern recommendations for the diplomatic service. This does not in any way mean that it remains free from such expectations.

What connects the past with the present is an incidental and laconic form of social admonitions, while what divides the two is axiological priorities. In the first case, great importance was attached to piety and active participation in religious life. Krzysztof Warszawicki (1935, p. 78) explicitly recommended that the parliamentary missions be entrusted to good and zealous Christians, preferably Roman Catholics. Others pointed to generosity toward church institutions. Baltazar Gracjan put this postulate most succinctly in the last point of his diplomatic maxims: “Live a holy life” (2004, p. 27).

There are no such recommendations in the contemporary literature on the subject. Religious affiliation or lack thereof remains the private matter of every diplomat, and thus, in no way determines his image. On the other hand, proper civic and patriotic attitudes should be considered common to all periods. Declarations of attachment to these values were made, at times indirectly, by Warszawicki, Miński, Piaseczyński, and Pielgrzymowski (2010, p. 211). Later, Morski and Czartoryski (2011, p. 24) subscribed to them. It seems, however, that the current diplomats pay the most attention to those. On the one hand, they feel they are citizens of the world, and on the other, they warn against weakening ties with their home country. Not only that, they recommend promoting their homeland at every opportunity. The basis for such activities is solid knowledge, which is necessary to enable one to talk about it beautifully, with deep

knowledge and commitment. Our words, albeit void of exaggerated and artificial pathos, are supposed to show genuine attachment to it (Czyżycki, 2005, p. 8). It is also important that this attachment remains far removed from political sympathy. Party affiliation, or merely sympathizing with a specific ideological group, distorts the essence of patriotism and destroys its modern understanding. Although national interest is at the root of all patriotism, the concept of this interest today is different than in the past centuries. As Jerzy M. Nowak admits, "opening up a wide space to Poland after 1989 created an opportunity to shape modern patriotism, and rebuild the state and its economic power, integrating her with Europe, taking pride in the achievements of the past and present times in civilization" (2008, p. 163). In this context, this interest is still one of the state's main goals, and remains tangent to the community's interest, while maintaining the priority of the Polish *raison d'état*. In order to implement each of these aspects, considering their importance, a model diplomat or one who aspires to such heights must demonstrate a number of social skills with an interpersonal dimension. It is emphasized that a person representing the state cannot be an introvert; on the contrary, desirable people are empathetic, full of positive energy, outgoing, and tactful (Morski, 1919, p. 26). Each of these features is very important, as it allows one to establish proper relationships with one's colleagues, which in turn translates into good results of the entire embassy's work. It also provides a greater opportunity to establish contacts, especially informally, among foreign partners. Hospitality, sociability, and an interesting way of being a diplomat are important prerequisites for personal friendships (Grudziński, 2008, p. 158) and in consequence to what is most important in diplomacy: closer friendly cooperation between states.

Conclusion

The sum of genealogical, personality, professional, and social conditions translates into a complementary model of a Polish diplomat. This figure has crystallized in the course of a long evolution. It was marked by

gradual changes taking place in Poland and Europe that were primarily dictated by the political reality. In practice, they resulted in a re-evaluation of axiology, in which efficiency initially took precedence over morality, but now morality is on par with efficiency. The final result of this process is a contemporary picture of a perfect diplomat, personified in a fictional, and therefore imaginary and ideal, form. Such a construct remains difficult to follow, both for past generations and for today's diplomatic corps. However, it is a desired object of aspiration meant to be converted into actual patterns. The long existence of the model for diplomats has its advantages and disadvantages. The positive aspects concern the continuation of universal principles as predictable and constant values. Paradoxically, however, what remains constant also serves to consolidate the values that have nowadays passed into the sphere of anti-values, namely, the model of a diplomat being defined from the male perspective. Today's world is becoming unified, with women playing the same roles as men. Women have become prime ministers, senators, and ambassadors. Nevertheless, men are still in the foreground of the current model of diplomats, and women are only in the background, filling offices and secretariats. This suggests that this contemporary point of reference has become at least partially obsolete in the present day, prompting the need to rewrite the model of the diplomat.

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Faith, Works and Grace According to Saint Augustine and Its Pedagogical Relevance

La fe, las obras y la gracia según san Agustín y su relevancia pedagógica

Abstract

This article deals with the concept of Saint Augustine about faith, works and grace, showing, according to his philosophical and theological perspective, what would be the faith worthy of being considered true and what would be, therefore, a false faith. Regarding divine grace, it is discussed here the controversy between Augustine and Pelagius, which shook the Church in middle of the 5th century. The text reflects to what extent and in what way Saint Augustine's thought is still relevant for current times, both for Christians and non-Christians. Finally, the article speculates on how Augustinian approaches on the aforementioned issues are relevant for education and moral formation of individual.

Keywords: Saint Augustine, faith, works, grace, education

Resumen

Este artículo versa sobre el concepto de san Agustín acerca de la fe, las obras y la gracia, mostrando, según su perspectiva filosófica y teológica, cuál sería la fe digna de ser considerada verdadera y cuál sería, por consiguiente, una fe falsa. Por lo que respecta a la gracia divina, el texto discute la polémica

entre Agustín y Pelagio, que sacudió a la Iglesia a mediados del siglo V. Igualmente, expone en qué medida y de qué manera el pensamiento de san Agustín sigue siendo relevante para los tiempos actuales, tanto para cristianos como para no cristianos. Finalmente, el artículo analiza de qué modo los planteamientos agustinianos sobre los temas arriba mencionados son relevantes para la educación y la formación moral del individuo.

Palabras clave: Agustín, fe, obras, gracia, educación

Introducción

Doctor de la Iglesia y uno de los más importantes pensadores occidentales, Aurelio Agustín nació en el año 354, y murió en el 430 de la Era Cristiana. Su vida transcurrió, por lo tanto, en un período de grandes transiciones, en el que ya se vislumbra la caída del Imperio Romano de Occidente, evento histórico que señalaría el fin de la Antigüedad y, luego, el comienzo de la Edad Media. En una vida casi tan turbulenta como la época en la que vivió, Agustín se identificó, durante algún tiempo, con la filosofía de los maniqueos -discípulos del filósofo persa Manes (215–276 d.C.)-, los cuales veían en el universo dos principios opuestos igualmente dotados de existencia ontológica, tesis que san Agustín acabará por negar y combatir, afirmando que solo el bien tiene sustancia propia y es real por sí mismo, siendo el mal la corrupción del modo, de la especie o del orden natural (Agostinho, 2018). El mal es por lo tanto, según Agustín, no un ser propio sino la ausencia o privación o corrupción de otro ser. El mal no tiene naturaleza alguna; la pérdida del ser (o del bien) es lo que ha tomado el nombre de mal (Agostinho, 2008). De este modo, por cuenta de esta divergencia en cuanto al problema del mal, como por otros motivos más, al acercarse de sus 32 años de edad, Agustín se convirtió a la religión cristiana, luego siendo hecho sacerdote y, más adelante, obispo de Hipona, en África. Todo su largo y arduo proceso de conversión está narrado en sus *Confesiones*, redactadas entre 397 y 398.

En cuanto a su vasta obra, sus libros tienen interés no solamente para la teología y la filosofía sino también para la literatura, y no solamente la literatura latina sino toda la literatura occidental, incluso por cuenta de los varios géneros en los que se expresó: epistolario, tratados, diálogos, autobiografía, comentarios, apologética, debates, exegesis bíblicas, homilias y sermones, pues “Agostinho é uma das maiores personalidades da literatura universal”¹ (Carpeaux, 2010, p.137). En lo que se refiere a su pensamiento, revela una significativa influencia platónica y neoplatónica, ya que, además de Platón (428/427–348/347 a.C.), Agustín también encontró en Plotino -neoplatónico que vivió en el siglo III d.C.- importante referencia. Tal hecho se constata en varios textos agustinianos, como en este extracto del libro X de su obra *La Ciudad de Dios*:

Escolhemos os platônicos, sem dúvida os mais eminentes dos filósofos, em especial, porque, havendo reconhecido que a alma do homem, embora imortal e racional ou intelectual, não poderia, sem a participação da luz de Deus, seu autor e autor do mundo, ser feliz, negam que à felicidade a que todos os homens aspiram ninguém pode chegar, caso amor casto e puro não o una ao Deus sumamente bom, que é o Deus imutável². (Agostinho, 2007a)

San Agustín siempre se vio envuelto en muchas polémicas durante todo el transcurso de su larga vida. Además de romper y debatir con los ya mencionados maniqueos, trabó combate también con los donatistas, los pelagianos y los priscilianistas (Agostinho, 2017), así como ayudó a dirimir graves dudas de los propios cristianos con respecto a importantes y cruciales cuestiones como la fe, las obras y la gracia.

¹ “Agustín es una de las mayores personalidades de la literatura universal”.

² “Hemos elegido a los platónicos, sin duda los más eminentes de los filósofos, en particular, porque, habiendo reconocido que el alma del hombre, aunque inmortal y racional o intelectual, no podría, sin la participación de la luz de Dios, su autor y el autor del mundo, ser feliz, niegan que a la felicidad a la que todos los hombres aspiran nadie puede llegar, a menos que el amor casto y puro lo una al Dios supremamente bueno, que es el Dios inmutable”.

La fe y las obras

San Agustín escribió *La fe y las obras* en 412/413, en un único libro, con el objetivo de orientar a algunos fieles laicos que le habían escrito con dudas acerca del referido asunto. Ya en los primeros párrafos, Agustín afirma que es equivocada la posición de los que dicen que es lícito administrar el bautismo a quienes no estén seriamente comprometidos con realizar en sus vidas un cambio de comportamiento, de una conducta torpe hacia una conducta noble, explicando que la Iglesia debe acoger a todos sin dejar, sin embargo, de instruir en lo que concierne a los preceptos cristianos, les estimula a que modifiquen su modo de vida, en rumbo de lo que es santo. Para ello, recomienda que la Iglesia combine, en su acción, severidad y paciencia, con el debido equilibrio y moderación entre ambas cosas. Por consecuencia, para que la conducta practicada no contradiga la fe, defiende que los que aspiran al bautismo sean, antes que nada, instruidos en todas las cosas concernientes a la moral cristiana, para ser admitidos al sacramento bautismal. Se fundamenta en varios pasajes del Nuevo Testamento, en palabras de los apóstolos san Pedro, san Juan, san Pablo y Santiago, de Juan Bautista y de Jesucristo. El obispo de Hipona explica que es así en razón de que la fe, por sí sola, no es suficiente, puesto que, siendo verdadera, habrá de manifestarse, necesariamente, por medio de la práctica de buenas obras y de una vida que se desarrolle de acuerdo con las enseñanzas de Cristo.

Sería redundante mapear cada uno de los trechos bíblicos que Agustín utiliza y que dan sustento a la tesis que postula. Con todo, es imprescindible que algunos sean mencionados. Por ejemplo, definiendo entonces la verdadera fe como aquella que actúa a través de la caridad -y considerando equivocados los que afirmaron que el apóstol Pablo había defendido una fe sin obras- cita al propio san Pablo, en la primera *Epístola a los Corintios* y la *Epístola a los Romanos*, demostrando exactamente lo contrario:

Daí que aquela fé, que a alguns parece ser suficiente para a salvação, não é de nenhuma utilidade, como se diz: "Ainda que eu

tivesse toda a fé, a ponto de transportar montanhas, se não tivesse a caridade, nada seria". Porém, onde opera a caridade da fé, sem dúvida se vive bem; "a plenitude da lei é a caridade"³. (Agostinho, 2017)

En esta misma página, san Agustín sigue argumentando que son inicios aquellos que interpretaron ciertos pasajes oscuros de las palabras de san Pablo como un permiso para que no trataran de vivir de acuerdo con las virtudes y la moral, seguros de que la salvación ocurre simplemente por medio de la fe, sin que tengan que hacer nada más que creer. Él recuerda que el propio apóstol Pablo advirtió que algunos pasajes de su mensaje son difíciles de ser entendidos, y que los hombres los han interpretado mal -como otras partes de las Escrituras-, para su propia destrucción (Agostinho, 2017).

Más adelante, para reforzar lo que considera fundamental -que la fe sea demostrada no solo por medio de la palabra, de la devoción y de la liturgia, sino también mediante un modelo de vida coherente con los principios del Evangelio-, invoca la autoridad de san Pedro, a quién la tradición católica ve como siendo el primer papa:

É por isso que Pedro, de modo evidente em sua segunda epístola, exorta à santidade de vida e de costumes, e anuncia que este mundo é passageiro e que novos céus e nova terra -que será dada aos justos para que a habitem-, são esperados, para que estejam atentos ao modo de viver, para que sejam dignos de tal habitação⁴. (Agostinho, 2017)

³ De ahí que la fe, que a algunos les parece suficiente para la salvación, no sirva para nada, como se dice: "Aunque tuviera toda la fe, como para mover montañas, si no tuviera caridad, no sería nada". Pero donde opera la caridad de la fe, sin duda se vive bien; "la plenitud de la ley es la caridad".

⁴ Por eso, Pedro, de manera evidente en su segunda epístola, exhorta a la santidad de vida y de costumbres, y anuncia que este mundo es efímero y que se esperan unos cielos nuevos y una tierra nueva -que serán entregados a los justos para que los habiten-, para que estén atentos a la manera de vivir, para que sean dignos de tal morada.

Entonces, basándose en la *Epístola de Santiago*, Agustín concuerda con la enseñanza del apóstol, según la cual toda fe sin obras es una fe muerta. San Agustín llama la atención, incluso, a partes de la referida epístola en las que Santiago dice que, creer por creer, hasta los demonios lo hacían (Agostinho, 2017).

“Meus irmãos -diz Tiago- se alguém disser que tem fé, mas não tem obras, de que lhe aproveitará isso? Acaso a fé poderá salvá-lo?” Disse também: “A fé sem obras é morta”. A que ponto, então, enganam-se aqueles que se propõem a vida eterna com base em uma fé morta!⁵ (Agostinho, 2017)

Por fin, apoyándose en la autoridad del propio Jesucristo, Agustín cuestiona con fuertes indagaciones: ¿Por qué razón Jesús nos recomendó que cumpliésemos los mandamientos, si la práctica de buenas obras no es importante? ¿Por qué Él reprendió a aquellos que no lo socorrieron cuando lo vieron en cualquier ser humano pobre, enfermo y hambriento, si hacer buenas obras no es fundamental? (Agostinho, 2017). Comentando de nuevo el mensaje de san Pablo, el Doctor de la Iglesia simplemente recuerda que las buenas obras deben estar fundamentadas en el amor, enseñanza suprema de Cristo, pues aunque uno distribuya todos sus bienes entre los pobres, si no tiene amor, el significado máximo de la caridad, de nada ha servido la distribución de sus bienes (Agostinho, 2017).

El sentido de la gracia

San Agustín considera tan crucial que la fe esté vinculada a obras que, en la síntesis conclusiva de su libro sobre la fe y las obras, define como muy peligrosa la ausencia o la quiebra de tal vínculo, por la indiferencia hacia tan grave problema. Por consiguiente, es esencial que la fe

⁵ “Hermanos míos -dice Santiago-, si alguno dice que tiene fe y no tiene obras, ¿de qué le servirá? ¿Puede la fe salvarle?” También dijo: “La fe sin obras está muerta”. ¡En qué momento, entonces, se engañan los que proponen la vida eterna sobre la base de una fe muerta!

se exprese a través de obras que la comprueben, que la confirmen de manera concreta. Pero, a pesar de ello, Agustín no desemboca, de modo alguno, en el extremo opuesto, que sería pensar que la fe no es tan importante. Por el contrario, es categórico al decir que los preceptos morales son dados por Dios al hombre, cuya ejecución constituye las buenas obras, pues, sin la fe, dichos preceptos no pueden ser observados ni guardados (Agostinho, 2017). Otra cosa que el Doctor de la Iglesia deja clara es que, a pesar de la importancia tanto de la fe como de las buenas obras, ambas son insuficientes sin la gracia de Cristo. Fundamentándose de nuevo en el apóstol san Pablo, expone que, conforme demuestra toda la *Epístola a los Romanos*, es necesaria la gracia de Cristo, por la cual somos salvados (Agostinho, 2017). De este modo, se concluye que la concepción agustiniana acerca de esta cuestión no se limita a la fe y a las obras, tampoco a la armonía entre ambas. Tal concepción solo se vuelve completa en una trinidad, en la que la fe y las obras, partiendo del hombre, se encuentran con la divina gracia, que viene de Jesucristo.

Sin embargo, a pesar de la fuerza de su pensamiento teológico y filosófico, esta discusión concerniente a fe y a obras no es una cuestión zce rrada, tampoco un problema definitivamente resuelto en la historia del cristianismo. Recuérdese que en el siglo XVI, más de un milenio después de la época de san Agustín, fue justamente un monje agustiniano -Martín Lutero- quien, por singular ironía, proclamó que la fe, por sí sola, ya sería lo suficiente para garantizar la salvación del alma. “Não é o esforço, não são as obras que, para ele [Lutero], abrem as portas da salvação. É exclusivamente a fé”⁶ (Suffert, 2001, p. 248). Esta y muchas otras divergencias con respecto a la doctrina católica acabarían deflagrando la Reforma Protestante, abriendo en la Cristiandad una hendidura que permanece hasta hoy en día, tras generar consecuencias no solamente religiosas sino también políticas, económicas y sociales en buena parte de las naciones occidentales. Pero, el análisis de tan amplio fenómeno histórico sobrepasa, por supuesto, el objetivo y las delimitaciones de este artículo.

⁶ “No es el esfuerzo, no son las obras las que, para él [Lutero], abren las puertas de la salvación. Es sólo la fe”.

Agustín y Pelagio – Un duelo de gigantes

Las cuestiones acerca de la gracia, conllevaron uno de los más intensos e importantes debates de la larga y fecunda trayectoria de san Agustín. Un teólogo contemporáneo suyo -el monje de origen británico Pelagio (360?-420?)-, además de negar la doctrina del pecado original, suponía que el hombre era capaz de alcanzar su redención simplemente por medio de sus propios esfuerzos, al contrario de Agustín, que a su vez defendía que este esfuerzo del hombre no era por sí mismo suficiente, de ahí la fundamental necesidad de la gracia divina, bajando hasta él para ayudarlo a subir.

La posición de Pelagio busca su fundamentación en el hecho de que -según él- la transgresión que implica el pecado no ha afectado la naturaleza humana, solamente le ha quitado al hombre el mérito, pero su naturaleza sigue íntegra en sí misma, de manera que el ser humano se encuentra perfectamente capaz de cumplir todos los mandamientos de la ley divina por su propia fuerza, por su propia voluntad. Es decir, le es suficiente el libre albedrío y la ley natural para que consiga tal intento. Por ende, Pelagio no da énfasis a la necesidad de la oración, pues entiende que Dios ya le ha dado al hombre todo lo que le precisa para seguir en el camino correcto, así que no es necesario incomodar más a Dios con nuevos pedidos, muchos menos a menudo.

Sin embargo, sería equivocado pensar que Pelagio niega la gracia divina y su necesidad en la trayectoria del hombre. Lo que ocurre es que, para Pelagio, dicha gracia ya está presente en el hombre desde su creación, cuando Dios le dio razón para discernir y libre albedrío para tomar la decisión correcta, además de la ley natural y de las santas escrituras, siendo esa divina gracia algo inherente a su condición, por lo que -según entiende Pelagio- el ser humano ya tiene, por lo tanto, todo lo que es indispensable para que pueda vivir una vida recta y sin pecados. Por esta razón, ¿para qué incomodar a Dios implorándole una gracia que Él le dio desde que lo creó?

Se entiende tal vez un poco mejor el posicionamiento teológico de Pelagio teniendo en cuenta su contexto y las circunstancias que tuvo

que enfrentar en su trayectoria como sacerdote. Pelagio era un monje austero que se escandalizó con la falta de un compromiso más fuerte con los principios del Evangelio por parte de muchos cristianos de su época (Agostinho, 2007b). Pelagio no aceptaba la disculpa de los que decían que pecaban porque eran débiles por naturaleza, alegando que no cumplían los preceptos del Evangelio porque no podían contra la naturaleza humana, que sería esencialmente mala y, por lo tanto, culpable de los pecados que ellos cometían, de los cuales resultarían, de esa manera, inocentes. Así que las numerosas conversiones a la religión cristiana levantaron en el rígido clérigo graves indagaciones. ¿Serán estos nuevos cristianos de veras conscientes de lo que significa ser un seguidor de Jesucristo? A la vez, si es que tienen la debida conciencia de ello, ¿estarán a la altura de lo que exige la nueva fe que han decidido profesar? (Suffert, 2001). La respuesta de Pelagio a dichas preguntas será en el sentido de que la naturaleza humana es en sí misma buena y sana, fuerte y preparada para que los hombres -en el caso de que decidan vivir de manera virtuosa- puedan cumplir los mandamientos divinos y acercarse a Dios cada vez más, simplemente por medio de su propio esfuerzo humano. Así que, para Pelagio, no cabe al hombre ninguna excusa para mantenerse en el pecado, pues nada lo inclina al mal sino su propia voluntad, cuando al mal se adhiere es por su libre decisión.

San Agustín está de acuerdo con Pelagio en algunos puntos, pero no en otros, conforme deja claro en sus obras sobre la naturaleza y la gracia, en el año 415, escritas a petición de los monjes de Adrumento, ciudad ubicada a sudeste de Cartago, en el norte de África. Los monjes estaban confusos acerca de la obra *Sobre la naturaleza*, escrita por Pelagio en 414, y solicitaron a Agustín un esclarecimiento. En respuesta a los monjes, dijo san Agustín acerca de Pelagio:

Deparei nele um homem deveras preocupado contra aqueles que, em lugar de imputar seus erros à vontade humana, inculpam a natureza do homem e nela se apóiam para se desculpar. No entanto, excedeu-se no ardor em combater essa epidemia

que autores antigos censuravam com veemência [...].⁷ (Agostinho, 2007b)

Así como para Pelagio, para el obispo de Hipona el ser humano tampoco tiene cualquier disculpa que pueda alegar para no hacer el bien, para no intentar cumplir las enseñanzas de Jesús y alejarse del pecado. Sin embargo, al contrario de lo que enseñaba el teólogo bretón, Agustín responde que, además de la gracia divina inherente al hombre desde su creación, visible por medio de los atributos de la razón, la inteligencia, del sentido de moralidad y numerosas capacidades para lidiar con lo abstracto y lo concreto, el ser humano no solo necesita sino que también depende de la ayuda y el socorro de Dios en cada uno de sus hechos y en cada momento de su camino en la vida (Agostinho, 2007b). Así es por cuenta del pecado original, que ha dejado la naturaleza humana lacerada desde entonces, de tal manera que el ser humano no tiene más condición que caminar todo el tiempo en el sendero cierto sin contar con la ayuda de Dios. Es decir, con el socorro de la gracia. Lo que no significa, de modo alguno, que el hombre no deba ser partícipe de su propia salvación. El ser humano no se queda inerte en ninguna etapa del proceso. Al contrario, colabora con la obra divina, pues uno de los efectos de la gracia es precisamente hacer al espíritu humano más capaz de buenas obras y de buenas acciones, en la medida en que la gracia promueve la curación de la naturaleza humana, herida y enferma en consecuencia del pecado. Si para Pelagio, el pecado de Adán y Eva no fue transmitido a su descendencia, que es toda la humanidad, pues no afectó a la naturaleza humana en sí misma sino a ellos dos solamente; para san Agustín, por otro lado, la naturaleza humana, en sentido general, fue afectada por el pecado de Adán y Eva. Por consiguiente, todos nosotros ya nacimos con la mancha de dicho pecado en nuestra condición, razón por la cual necesitamos mantenernos abiertos a la intervención de la gracia todo

⁷ Encontré en él a un hombre verdaderamente preocupado contra aquellos que, en lugar de atribuir sus errores a la voluntad humana, culpan a la naturaleza humana y se apoyan en ella para excusarse. Sin embargo, se excedió en su ardor al combatir esta epidemia que los autores antiguos censuraban con vehemencia [...].

el tiempo. La posición de Agustín en cuanto a esta cuestión, tal vez la comprendamos mejor reflexionando acerca de un padre y una madre que -debido a alguna conducta equivocada- han sido contaminados por una grave pero no mortal enfermedad, de manera que todos los hijos por ellos generados han nacido con la misma enfermedad, aunque no hayan cometido jamás el equívoco que sus padres cometieron y que los dejó enfermos.

A natureza do homem foi criada no princípio sem culpa e sem nenhum vício. Mas a atual natureza, com a qual todos vêm ao mundo como descendentes de Adão, tem agora necessidade de médico devido a não gozar de saúde. [...] sua fonte é o pecado original que foi cometido por livre vontade do homem. Por isso, a natureza sujeita ao castigo atrai com justiça a condenação⁸. (Agostinho, 2007b).

El resultado es que, si para Pelagio las buenas obras y la vida de acuerdo con las virtudes -de las cuales el ser humano es capaz sin la ayuda de la gracia- bastan para restablecer la conexión del hombre con Dios, para Agustín, sin embargo, el hombre no solamente necesita de la gracia para ejecutar buenas obras y vivir de acuerdo con las virtudes sino que, aunque pudiera ejecutarlas solamente por sus propios esfuerzos, tales obras buenas y virtuosas no bastarían. Él necesitaría todavía de la gracia para no tumbar ante la tentación de la vanidad, la soberbia y el orgullo, justamente debido al hecho de practicar buenas acciones, lo que derrumbaría cualquier mérito que creyera tener ante Dios y los demás seres humanos. Así, se explica la necesidad de la gracia divina para vencer tal tentación, lo que prueba que, hasta cuando el hombre está en el camino verdadero, depende del socorro de la gracia para no volver

⁸ La naturaleza del hombre fue creada en el principio sin falta y sin ningún vicio. Pero la naturaleza actual, con la que todos vienen al mundo como descendientes de Adán, necesita ahora un médico porque no está sana. [...] su fuente es el pecado original que fue cometido por la propia voluntad del hombre. Por lo tanto, la naturaleza sujeta a castigo atrae justamente la condena.

a pecar. Simplemente la fuerza humana y la voluntad bien dirigida a la verdad no son suficientes. Los pecados son fruto de malas obras, pero la soberbia se desarrolla también en medio de las buenas obras (Agostinho, 2007b).

Aunque todos estos conceptos teológicos parecen lejanos y completamente abstractos, es posible ver sus implicaciones en la vida cotidiana de las personas, en cualquier lugar del mundo y en cualquier época de la historia humana, a través de situaciones concretas que suelen ser a la vez perfectas alegorías para los referidos conceptos formulados por la teología. Por ejemplo, la persona que es alcohólica o drogadicta, una vez que haya tomado la decisión de recuperarse de su adicción al alcohol o a la droga, para volver a empezar una vida saludable, su decisión, su voluntad y sus fuerzas ya no son suficientes para que alcance esta meta. Para que pueda alcanzarla, tendrá que contar con la ayuda de otras varias personas, no solo de familiares, sino también de médicos y enfermeras que la acompañen durante todo su tratamiento, tanto en su hogar como en la clínica o el hospital donde tenga que rehabilitarse. Antes de haber experimentado la droga o el alcohol, podía todavía evitar hacerlo únicamente por su voluntad, pues su organismo aún estaba sano, pero, tras consumirlos repetidas veces, se ha vuelto adicto, o sea, su organismo ya no está más sano sino enfermo y, bajo el dominio del alcohol y la droga, inclinado por lo tanto a continuar bebiendo y drogándose. Incluso cuando ya esté finalmente curado, libre de tal adicción, siempre tendrá que seguir contando con el apoyo de la familia y de la orientación médica -tal vez también de algún medicamento- para que no se vuelva adicto de nuevo. Esta situación -tan común en la vida real de millones de personas y familias- ilustra muy bien lo que postula san Agustín cuando explica que el pecado original ha corrompido la naturaleza humana hasta tal punto que el hombre, desde tan gran caída, se encuentra siempre propenso a pecar, aunque no lo quiera. En lenguaje alegórico, la primera experiencia con el alcohol o la droga es para el pecado original así como la adicción a tales cosas -y las enfermedades de ahí derivadas- son para la corrupción de la naturaleza del hombre por el pecado original, mientras que la familia, los remedios, los médicos y las enfermeras corresponden a la gracia divina.

Se comprende, sin embargo, que Pelagio no haya llegado a estas conclusiones a las que llegó Agustín. Pelagio, como se ha manifestado arriba, siendo un monje de conducta austera, probablemente no tenía un historial lleno de graves pecados a lo largo de la vida, de manera que es más o menos natural que haya pensado que el hombre es capaz de ascender espiritualmente solo por su esfuerzo propio, a través del ejercicio de las virtudes morales y la práctica de buenas acciones, pues él mismo las puede haber realizado sin tan grandes dificultades, por lo que puede también haber incurrido, al mismo tiempo, en el pecado del orgullo, atribuyendo su buena conducta a sus propios méritos solamente, sin reconocer la presencia divina que le auxiliaba en cada momento. A Agustín, al contrario, como había navegado largo tiempo en los mares del pecado, le quedó muy clara y evidente la acción de la divina gracia interviniendo en su socorro, gracia sin la cual estaba seguro de que jamás iba a conseguir llevar adelante su proceso de metanoia, hasta la conversión final. "Donde abundó el pecado, sobreabundó la gracia." (Romanos 05:20). Lo que no implica tener que pecar para mejor percibir la acción de la gracia de Dios. El mensaje que se saca es que, para percibir muy bien la presencia de la gracia, lo fundamental es ejercer la fe, confirmándola por medio de buenas obras, pero sin sucumbir a la tentación de la soberbia debido a las buenas acciones realizadas. "¿Qué conclusión sacaremos? ¿Que vamos a seguir en el pecado para que la gracia se dé con mayor abundancia? Por supuesto que no. Los que hemos muerto al pecado, ¿cómo seguiremos viviendo en él?" (Romanos 06: 01-02).

Por lo tanto, ¡que no se concluya que, según Agustín, las personas ya no son culpables por sus pecados ya que la naturaleza humana las inclina a pecar! De cualquier manera, el hombre se vuelve culpable por sus pecados, crímenes y errores, siempre, pues, si su naturaleza lo inclina al pecado es porque ella está enferma, pero, si está enferma es porque el propio hombre la condenó a esta situación al cometer un día el pecado original, cuya consecuencia fue herirla hasta muy grave estado. Por esta razón, Agustín recomienda que el ser humano invoque la gracia en su socorro, así que, si no la invoca, es el propio hombre el responsable por no invocarla, por no abrirse a la intervención de la gracia, que jamás

interviene sin su permiso, o sea, violando el libre albedrío humano. El pecado no procede de Dios sino de la voluntad de los pecadores (Agostinho, 2018).

Mucho más que un intenso debate filosófico y teológico, la polémica entre Agustín y Pelagio fue una cuestión que sacudió a toda la Cristianidad en la primera mitad del siglo V de la Era Cristiana. La doctrina de Pelagio se diseminó por varias partes de Occidente y Medio Oriente: Gran Bretaña, Roma, Cartago, Egipto, Palestina, donde el propio patriarca Juan de Jerusalén concedió su apoyo a Pelagio (Suffert, 2011). Pero no solamente clérigos expertos en filosofía y teología sino también simples fieles laicos, hasta el punto de que san Possidio -por entonces obispo de Calama, norte de África-, en su obra sobre san Agustín, describe el pelagianismo como una herejía especialmente peligrosa. No solamente el contenido sino también el tono del discurso de san Possidio revelan cuanto consideraba graves las ideas pelagianas y su difusión.

Contra os pelagianos também, novos e astutos hereges contraversistas de nosso tempo, que escreviam com arte sutil e nociva, falando onde podiam, publicamente e nas casas, Agostinho durante quase dez anos elaborou, escreveu e editou numerosos livros e com muita freqüência falou na Igreja ao povo contra o mesmo erro⁹. (Possidio, 2017, p. 58)

Después de algunos sínodos en África y en Palestina, con o sin la presencia de Pelagio, sin que los obispos hayan llegado a un resultado unánime y definitivo para la cuestión pelagiana, san Agustín decide entonces apelar a Roma. El papa San Inocencio I, tras estudiar los informes, proclama el anatema contra Pelagio y sus discípulos. El hombre no puede vivir sin Dios. Su sucesor, el papa Zósimo, de inicio absolvió a Pelagio, pero, tras un concilio general africano en Cartago, en 418, confirmó la decisión de su

⁹ También contra los pelagianos, nuevos y astutos herejes polemistas de nuestro tiempo, que escribían con arte sutil y dañino, hablando donde podían, en público y en las casas, Agustín durante casi diez años elaboró, escribió y editó numerosos libros y muy a menudo habló en la Iglesia al pueblo contra el mismo error.

antecesor (Suffert, 2011). El concilio de Éfeso, ocurrido en 431, ratificó la condena a las doctrinas pelagianas, así como el concilio de Orange, realizado en 529. Se sabe muy poco acerca de la muerte de Pelagio, pero es más o menos seguro que vivió sus últimos tiempos en un monasterio egipcio (Suffert, 2011).

En una de sus obras finales -las *Retractaciones*- Agustín aún discutirá la teología de Pelagio. De hecho, la herejía pelagiana seguirá a través de los siglos, con implicaciones en la filosofía y la metafísica occidental. La creencia de Pelagio en la capacidad del hombre para cumplir sin dificultad los mandamientos, porque -según él- no hay ninguna mancha del pecado original que lo haya inclinando al mal, es una apuesta ciega a una bondad natural del ser humano, lo que refleja, de algún modo, la filosofía de Jean-Jaques Rousseau casi un milenio y medio después (Suffert, 2001). De la misma manera, la enseñanza pelagiana de que el ser humano no debe apelar a Dios en búsqueda de socorro -ni siquiera por medio de oraciones-, pues Dios ya le ha dado todas las condiciones necesarias para vivir en la virtud, también ya tiene algo de la filosofía deísta del siglo XVIII, que niega la revelación y la providencia divina. “[...] Otros admiten que el mundo ha sido hecho por Dios, pero a la manera de un relojero que, una vez hecho, lo habría abandonado a él mismo (deísmo). [...]”. (Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica, 285). Los postulados de Pelagio parecen emerger también en el antropocentrismo y humanismo del Renacimiento, que marca la transición de la Edad Media a la Edad Moderna, pues, así como en la doctrina pelagiana, también se ve en los dogmas renacentistas la misma sonora alabanza al hombre, la misma confianza ciega en los poderes humanos, como si el ser humano no tuviera debilidades y como si sus poderes y capacidades no fueran dones recibidos de Dios de manera gratuita, ya que los utiliza (para el bien y para el mal) pero jamás ha sido autor de cualquiera de estas capacidades y poderes por medio de los cuales actúa en el mundo. A este exagerado optimismo antropocéntrico, San Agustín le contesta de la misma forma como contestó a Pelagio, o sea, citando al apóstol San Pablo cuando, en su primera *Epístola a los Corintios*, dijo: “Pues, ¿en qué te diferencias de los demás?, ¿qué tienes que no hayas recibido?”

Y si lo recibiste, ¿por qué te sientes orgulloso como si no lo hubieras recibido?" (I Corintios 4:7). En el libro IX de las *Confesiones*, a aquellos que quieran enumerar sus propios méritos ante Dios, el obispo de Hipona les pregunta qué podrían enumerar además de los dones que de Dios habían recibido (Agostinho, 1984).

Dichos desdoblamientos filosóficos de la teología pelagiana, coincidiendo con filosofías enemigas de la Iglesia y del cristianismo, tienden a confirmar como justa, aún más, la posición de san Agustín (y de la propia Iglesia al final) de que el pensamiento de Pelagio, aunque fuera cierto en algunos puntos, era sin embargo herético en sus fundamentos últimos. Pero, no obstante haber sido declarada herejía por la ortodoxia católica, la teología pelagiana -precisamente por cuenta de sus equívocos- tuvo el mérito de haber llevado a san Agustín hasta la elaboración completa de la teología de la gracia (Suffert, 2011).

San Agustín desde la perspectiva de los griegos

Además de la influencia platónica en el pensamiento agustiniano, ya mencionada anteriormente, vale la pena desarrollar algunas reflexiones sobre estos posicionamientos de san Agustín a partir de la filosofía griega. A pesar de las diferencias de pensamiento entre Platón y Aristóteles (384–322 a.C.), ambos, así como Sócrates (469/470–399 a.C.), coincidían en el combate filosófico a los sofistas. No habiendo espacio, en el ámbito de este estudio, para investigar en detalle las polémicas de cada uno de estos filósofos con los pensadores sofistas, examinemos, por lo menos, lo que dice Aristóteles en sus *Refutaciones sofísticas*, uno de los seis tratados que componen su monumental *Órganon* sobre la lógica. El Estagirita llama la atención sobre el peligro de alguien o de toda una multitud de creer en el discurso de los sofistas, cuya meta no es la verdad ni la sabiduría, sino simplemente parecer que son verdaderos y sabios, de ahí que sea fundamental que sean desenmascarados, siendo justa esta motivación y el objetivo de su combate a la sofística: desenmascarar a los sofistas.

Porém, visto que aos olhos de algumas pessoas vale mais parecer sábio do que ser sábio sem o parecer (uma vez que a arte do sofista consiste na sabedoria aparente e não na real, e o sofista é aquele que ganha dinheiro graças a uma sabedoria aparente e não real), está claro que para estas pessoas é essencial *parecer exercer* a função do sábio, em lugar de realmente exercê-la sem parecer que o fazem¹⁰. (Aristóteles, 2016, p.580)

Ante el tribunal de Atenas, Sócrates, durante el juicio que lo condenaría a la muerte, se refiere a un cierto político ateniense como a una persona que se hacía pasar por sabio, pero que no lo era. Sócrates habla de él en los siguientes términos:

Então, ao examinar esse homem -não há necessidade para mim de indicar seu nome- trata-se de um de nosso políticos, minha experiência foi, homens de Atenas, algo assim: após conversar com ele pareceu-me julgar-se sábio a muitas pessoas e especialmente a si mesmo, mas não era. Procurei em seguida mostrar-lhe que ele se julgava sábio, mas que não era. O resultado foi ele passar a não gostar de mim, bem como muitos dos presentes¹¹. (Platão, 2008, p. 142)

Como se puede ver, tanto Aristóteles como Sócrates, según el testimonio de Platón, nos advierten acerca del peligro proveniente de personas que afirman ser algo que no son, alardeando una sabiduría que no

¹⁰ Sin embargo, como a los ojos de algunas personas vale más parecer sabio que serlo sin parecerlo (ya que el arte del sofista consiste en la sabiduría aparente y no en la real, y el sofista es el que gana dinero gracias a una sabiduría aparente y no real), está claro que para estas personas es fundamental aparentar que se ejerce la función del sabio, en lugar de ejercerla realmente sin aparentarlo.

¹¹ Así que, al examinar a este hombre -no hace falta que dé su nombre- que es uno de nuestros políticos, mi experiencia fue, hombres de Atenas, algo así: después de hablar con él, parecía pensar que mucha gente y especialmente él mismo se consideraba sabio, pero no lo era. Intenté demostrarle que se creía sabio, pero que no lo era. El resultado fue que empecé a caerle mal, al igual que a muchos de los presentes.

poseen y, si no la poseen, evidentemente no la practican, no la viven. Es decir, la posición de los tres grandes filósofos griegos es de fuerte y contundente denuncia en contra de la falta de coherencia entre lo que se afirma y lo que se practica. Denuncia esta que, en gran medida, es exactamente la misma que vemos en san Agustín cuando él nos alerta acerca de la hipocresía que consiste en alardear -de manera firme y con aparente sinceridad- de una determinada fe, pero sin practicarla, a través de obras concretas que la comprueben como siendo realmente buena. Así que, a partir de esta analogía entre Agustín y la filosofía griega clásica, se percibe que los fieles que no honran, mediante buenas obras y buenas acciones, la fe que profesan, son vistos por el Doctor de la Iglesia del mismo modo como Sócrates, Platón y Aristóteles veían a los sofistas. Tal vez de forma mucho más rigurosa, puesto que dichos fieles de fe muerta -porque sin obras- serían sofistas no tanto por el uso de la palabra y de la argumentación dialéctica, sino sofistas, sí, por cuenta de la conducta ética y moral. Tanto en la conducta externa, ante los demás seres humanos, como en la conducta interior, ante la propia conciencia y ante Dios.

Conclusiones

A partir de todo lo que fue discutido a lo largo del texto, la relevancia y la actualidad del pensamiento agustiniano quedan evidentes, en tres sentidos a la vez. Antes de todo, en el propio aspecto religioso, aún más teniendo en cuenta que, en una época bastante secularizada, como es la contemporaneidad, el cristianismo sigue siendo una fuerza muy viva e influyente en muchas sociedades en todo el mundo, no solo por su inmenso número de adeptos sino también por su legado cultural en la civilización. De ahí la importancia de que sea siempre estudiado el pensamiento de aquel que es una de las soberanas referencias para la religión cristiana.

Al mismo tiempo, como demuestra la analogía con los griegos de la Era Clásica, se constata que el libro *La fe y las obras* de san Agustín,

aunque haya sido dirigido originalmente a un público católico, es de interés hasta para quien no tenga ningún vínculo con la religión católica o siquiera cristiana. El libro demuestra este alcance universal en la medida en que, al impugnar la fe que no se comprueba mediante obras, denuncia, por consecuencia, cualquier falta de coherencia entre lo que se profesa y lo que se lleva a la práctica, tanto en la vida privada como en la vida pública, y en todos los segmentos de la actividad humana y las relaciones sociales. Es decir, diagnostica una enfermedad que parece estar en la propia condición humana, siendo por lo tanto una cuestión absolutamente atemporal, especialmente en áreas como la política, en la que los escándalos de corrupción revelan justamente este abismo ético-moral entre el discurso de los políticos y su real procedimiento cuando tienen el poder en las manos. En lo que respecta al gran debate entre san Agustín y Pelagio, entre las muchas enseñanzas que creyentes y no creyentes podemos sacar de tan fascinante polémica, tal vez una de las más relevantes sea que es importante, por supuesto, que el hombre tenga autoconfianza -conforme nos apunta Pelagio-, pero hay que mantenerse atento y vigilante para que esta confianza en sí mismo no se transforme en orgullo, vanidad y soberbia — conforme nos advierte san Agustín. Otro mensaje que queda claro es acerca de la salvación del hombre, puesto que, si para Pelagio el ser humano sería capaz de subir a los cielos sin escaleras para apoyarse, es decir, de salvarse solamente por su propio esfuerzo, san Agustín, en cambio, afirma que el hombre no sube a los cielos sin la gracia de Dios, que es quien le lanza la escalera necesaria para subir, o sea, para salvarse. Por lo que se puede concluir que, creyendo en Dios o no, en el concepto de salvación o no, en los cielos o no, la autoconfianza es fundamental, pero tiende a la prepotencia si no se equilibra con la virtud de la humildad, no menos imprescindible. Un tercer aspecto por el cual Agustín, todavía hoy, nos abastece de luces, y que parece una síntesis entre los dos anteriores, dice respecto a la búsqueda por saludables relaciones entre la razón y la fe, puesto que, en lo que concierne a su discurso sobre la fe, las obras y la gracia, aunque invoque la autoridad de las Escrituras, su argumentación sigue siempre una línea rigurosamente lógica y racional, identificando como alegóricos o metafóricos ciertos

pasajes bíblicos que, si fueran tomados en sentido literal, se revelarían en choque con la sana razón. Por lo que, tanto en perspectiva religiosa como en perspectiva laica y secular, las ideas de San Agustín aquí analizadas son una elocuente demostración de cuanto su obra y su pensamiento siguen útiles para los debates públicos del mundo contemporáneo.

De este modo, todo el itinerario intelectual y espiritual de san Agustín constituye un modelo válido también hoy en la relación entre fe y razón, tema no sólo para hombres creyentes, sino también para todo hombre que busca la verdad, tema central para el equilibrio y el destino de todo ser humano. Estas dos dimensiones, fe y razón, no deben separarse ni contraponerse, sino que deben estar siempre unidas. Como escribió san Agustín tras su conversión, fe y razón son “las dos fuerzas que nos llevan a conocer” [...]. (Benedictus XVI, 2008)

En lo que concierne especialmente a la educación, también se revelan de suma importancia los aspectos del pensamiento agustiniano examinados aquí, pues es menester que los estudiantes, de cualquier grado de la trayectoria escolar, reciban una formación que consolide en ellos, como un valor fundamental para la vida, la noción de coherencia entre la fe y las obras y la gracia, tanto en el sentido de que la honestidad y el honor dependen de que la conducta práctica del individuo (las obras) compruebe ante el mundo sus convicciones (su fe), como en el sentido de que, para que pueda evolucionarse como estudiante y luego como profesional, el que es hoy alumno debe convertir sus propósitos (su fe) en esfuerzo y dedicación (en obras). Asimismo, la noción de la gracia se revela también esencial en su formación, justamente para que el éxito de sus esfuerzos no lo conduzca a una equivocada certidumbre de que es autosuficiente. Al mismo tiempo, la noción de la gracia tiende a otorgarle resiliencia y a impedirle desistir cuando sus esfuerzos no hayan sido coronados de triunfo.

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