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PHYSICAL EDUCATION AS A MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATING MORAL VALUES

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SUMMARY

Both theory and practice are important in ethical education; it can even be said that those two elements complement and support each other and can constitute a proper subject of ethical education only if they form an integrated unity. Therefore, education understood in such a way concentrates on both theory and action. Thus ethics can constitute a separate subject but its subject matter can also be transmitted through standard exercises, games and activities commonly used in PE lessons to form students' attitudes toward their bodily dimension. PE teachers can therefore communicate moral values directed towards the good of an individual: perseverance, dignity, freedom, tolerance, etc. They can also form in their students values directed at the needs of community, such as justice, responsibility, solidarity, loyalty.

Ethical knowledge not only is a theoretical basis for PE teachers, justifying their work, but also gives them tools that can be used in solving conflicts among students, supporting their balanced development and building civil society. This knowledge enables them to identify the value systems of individual students, defining their needs and the goals of their existence. It relates to the system of values functioning in communities and in society as a whole. Thus PE lessons, enriched by ethical knowledge, complement ethics taught as a separate subject.

Key words: physical education, moral values

The goal of the present article is to justify the thesis that by means of physical education, students can not only be taught a proper attitude to their physicality, but also can be efficiently educated ethically. I shall argue the thesis taking into account several viewpoints. First, I present two basic ways of understanding ethical education, and argue that one of them is especially appropriate to be applied to PE lessons. Secondly, based on the example of ontological assumptions of sport as a part of physical education, I explain that moral values constitute the basis of sporting activities, or can appear simultaneously with them as their goal. Thirdly, and finally, the theory of physical education suggests that each teacher

should be equipped with humanistic knowledge, as well as biological knowledge. In this way, he will be able to justify his pedagogical work by referring to various types of values, e.g. hedonistic, utilitarian, aesthetic, or moral. Additionally, I believe that the ethical education of young people will be especially effective if, in their work, teachers adopt the attitude of trustworthy custodians, not attempting to impose their system of values on the students, but rather deftly coordinating the development of their wards according to their needs and goals, as well as possibilities for self-realisation.

Ethical education is usually considered in either a narrow or a broad understanding. A narrow understanding reduces it to a certain school subject, which acquaints students with ethical theories and norms, and descriptions and evaluations of moral behaviour. A broad understanding, on the other hand, consists in weaving ethical matters into other subjects, such as language arts, literature, maths, biology, physical education, etc. From this point of view, each subject taught at school, apart from imparting scientific knowledge and skills, should also realise a moral good, understood in relation to society and to an individual. Therefore each teacher should be aware of – and scientifically and methodologically prepared towards – the realisation of these moral goals, as included in the teaching programmes. However, some of the subjects, such as literature, maths, history, are oriented mainly towards theoretical considerations and individual work of the students, with limited opportunities for practical activities, whether individual or team ones. For this reason, ethical issues often get dissolved into the theoretical substance of the subject, and students focus only on this material, that ensures them promotion to the next class. Undoubtedly, such a method of teaching ethics only minimally contributes to the increase of ethical consciousness in young people.

Some other subjects, however, such as physical education, dance and drama, assume mostly practical activities of students, both individual and team ones. Hence teachers of such subjects have a good opportunity to shape their wards' moral stances by operating within the sphere of their natural physical activity. This is especially important in the ethical education of those individuals who have difficulties in absorbing theoretical knowledge, yet are interested in physical activities, e.g. sport. Therefore PE lessons are especially fitting for the ethical education of students, as with a necessary minimum of theoretical knowledge they can direct their behaviours towards moral values, understood socially and individually.

In ethical education as it is commonly understood, ethics is often assumed to be identical with morality, suggesting that they constitute a homogeneous entity which can be called by either name (Brunner, Smeltzer, Bare, Hinkle – Cheever, 2009, p. 25). However, such an understanding is unacceptable in the process of education, as ethics and morality constitute separate branches of knowledge, concentrating on different goals. Thus, in subject literature we read that ethics (general, theoretical, normative, particular, social, practical, professional, secular, religious, et al.) is the theory of human behaviour dealing with all the criteria necessary to make it moral (Makrakēs, 1940, p. 609). It refers to subjective, objective and situational criteria. Ethics from this point of view strives to answer several basic questions: (1) What features should a human being have to be moral? (2) What features should behaviour have to be moral? (3) In what kinds of situation is moral reflection possible? (Ingarden, 1989, pp. 120–127). Such considerations should be undertaken on numerous planes: philosophical, psychological, sociological, pedagogical, economic, medical, etc.

Morality, on the other hand, is defined as a way of acting. Thus it can be considered from the perspective of the normative, descriptive and evaluative roles that it fulfils. Consequently, morality focuses on certain patterns of behaviour which are beneficial to the society and an individual. It promotes values supporting social order, such as responsibility, justice, solidarity and loyalty, as well as the good of an individual, such as autonomy, dignity and tolerance. The relation between ethics and morality is that ethics provides the theoretical basis, without which the justification of moral stances would be practically impossible. Hence the holistic ethical education of young people should embrace both theory (ethics) and practice (morality). PE lessons, undoubtedly, should focus on practical (moral) aspects of ethical education, whereas its theoretical part (ethics) should be taught in the form of a lecture, among other methods, in special separate lessons (ethical lessons).

The concept of physical education constitutes an integral part of physical culture. Apart from physical education there belong professional sport, mass sport, amateur sport, school sport, sport for the disabled, games and plays, recreational sport, extreme tourism, pilgrimages and recreational forms of tourism. The goal of physical education is to shape the body and to transmit the heritage of physical culture to the next generations in the form of established values and behaviours concerning body therapy and recreation (Rosenbaum, 2010, pp. 152–155). Physical education is basically concerned with the period of pre-school and school education, so it is mainly realised by the institution of the school. Forces that support this process are, among others, family, sports clubs and mass-media. It can be seen, then, that this kind of education functions on at least two planes: technological and axiological (Grabowski, 1999, p. 48). The first plane is responsible for developing the ability to use one's own body and to gather and process information about physical culture.

The second plane is responsible for the development of axiological competence in the students, which conditions their moral choices, desires and goals, constituting both their image of the world and of their own person in the world (*ibid.*). Although the crucial value in this axiology is the body, it appears in such a wide context that it significantly exceeds its typically physical understanding, as it enters into a number of relationships, influences and mutual dependencies with other types of values, e.g. aesthetic, cognitive, social, religious or moral (Pezdek, 2011, p. 284–290). In the system of values of a student it can occupy a central or a peripheral position. It can also constitute both autotelic and instrumental values. Central values constitute the focus of interest and actions of particular individuals, so they shape their stances in a considerable degree as well as they set the direction of their development. Peripheral values do not influence greatly lives of individuals as they do not have effect on the main stream of their everyday life. Autotelic values constitute a goal in themselves and instrumental ones are a tool used to realise the goal. Naturally, defining what is a final (autotelic) and what an instrumental value is relative and depends on a given situation (*ibid.*, p. 285; Pezdek, Doliński, 2010, p. 61). The dynamics of value systems assumes that the body can appear in different cognitive perspectives, e.g. physiological, economic, aesthetic and religious, as well as moral. Whilst it can be assumed that physical education directly realises the values of physical culture, broadly understood, it should nevertheless, as a desirable side-effect, help to shape values of other types, e.g. moral. Hence, PE teachers should take a significant responsibility for the ethical education of children and young people.

Undoubtedly, sport is the essential element of physical education. It is often believed that popularising sport among young people contributes not only to the improvement of health condition of society but also to the growth in the ethical awareness of citizens. One should, however, pay attention to at least two ontological stances describing the way in which moral values exist in sport. Among the researchers occupying themselves with these problems the most widespread stance is that moral values constitute the axiological basis of sport. Some of the researchers supporting this view are, among others, American scientists David Shields and Brenda Bredemeier, who claim that “sport is a moral practice because the moral concepts of fairness and freedom undergird its very foundations” (Shields, Bredemeier, 1995, p. 22). According to this view, moral values in sport exist, among other things, as a factor motivating the actions of an individual. Thence their realisation is a process determined in space and in time, being the joint result of experience of both society and an individual (*ibid.*, pp. 14–17).

On the other hand, the supporters of the opposite stance consider sport a basically amoral phenomenon. It must be admitted that this stance is less widespread among the scientists. Jerzy Kosiewicz must be counted among its most ardent supporters. He goes as far as to claim: “sport is – and should be – an amoral phenomenon (what should not be confused with an immoral one); that is, it is completely independent from ethics” (Kosiewicz, 2010b, p. 23). Although he allows for elements of deontological ethics as being present in sport, he still treats them as a set of obligations regulating relations between a competitor and a coach, sports activists, managers, etc. Those relations, according to Kosiewicz, are defined by legal regulations, not moral norms, whereas legal regulations do not contain moral norms in them and can be at the most their abstract, irrational and not fully defined basis (*ibid.*).

It is worthwhile to confront those two stances with the phenomenological conception of reality proposed by a Polish philosopher Roman Ingarden, who would claim that no moral values are contained in an unconscious physical human activity, as it is a natural action, and moral values are of phenomenological nature (Ingarden, 1987, pp. 13–18). Nevertheless, any conscious physical activity constitutes a carrier of values which give sense to nature and human existence, as it gives each conscious human being both goals and also the means of their realisation. As he says: “All richness of various values is then presented to their eyes and obliges them to various actions towards other humans, towards their friends and enemies. Their life starts to have some sense and meaning which it would not have in Nature in its primal state” (Ingarden, 1987, p. 15). It follows that a conscious individual, endowing physical activity with phenomenological values, creates the world of culture, the quality of which is entirely different from the quality of primal (unconscious) nature.

Thus, the sense and meaning of sport were created on the basis of values through which each person (i.e. rational, self-conscious and autonomous human being) sets his or her goals and takes decisions. Those goals can be competitive in nature (agonistic values), can concern body care (aesthetic values), signing a contract with a football club (utilitarian values), pleasure (hedonistic values), worshipping God (religious values) or becoming a good person (moral values). Taking into consideration the above presented understanding of values, it is hard to disagree with the convictions of Shields and Bredemeier that moral values constitute the basis of sport, which should, however, be unfolded to students’ eyes through ethical education.

From the perspective of the considerations above it would be hard to agree with Kosiewicz who claims that sport in itself does not have any moral values. One of the consequences of such an approach would be to negate sport as a part of physical education as each kind of education is related to some values, moral ones among others. On the basis of those values, appropriate educational programmes are created which are later realised by competent (as far as ethics is concerned) teachers and coaches. It is, however, worth remembering that sport in the phenomenological approach can be a carrier of both good and bad stances. It depends solely on those particular individuals who give meaning to it, and sometimes on whole societies. Consequently, it is quite possible that young people practising sport under the guidance of ethically incompetent teachers and coaches will become bad people who will corrupt, cheat or hurt other individuals in order to achieve success. This is clearly what happened to athletes in the “stable” of the convicted Canadian coach Charlie Francis, one member of which was the notorious doping cheat Ben Johnson. We also know of cases where a totalitarian regime (like communists in the USSR or fascists in Germany) took full control of physical education and sport in order to realise their extremist policy towards their own nation or other nations. As Michel Foucault puts it, in such a situation “whole populations are trained to exterminate each other in the name of their absolute necessities” (Foucault, 2010, p. 94). Perfecting physical ability, and exercising endurance and obedience, are then treated as an element of anatomo-political power of the state over an individual (*ibid.*, p. 95).

In the theory of physical education two directions are dominant – biotechnical and humanistic (Grabowski, 1999, pp. 57–67). In the first case physical education is conducted through training the body, and the desired purpose is to train a dexterous person, careful about his or her physical condition, which complements intellectual, moral and aesthetic education. On this approach, physical education focuses on supporting the development of an individual through training and exercising the body (*ibid.*, p. 61). In the second case, proper attitudes of students towards the body are shaped, and their interest in sport is awakened, but the method of achieving these goals is above all in supporting the personal development of students. On this approach teachers strive mainly to influence the personality of an individual which is responsible for developing appropriate attitudes to the body.

This suggests that physical education teachers need to possess both biological and humanistic knowledge. They should know the theoretical basis of the physical development of man, as well as humanistic theories concerning the shaping of attitudes and mechanisms responsible for their changes (*ibid.*, p. 66). Additionally, they should know the social and cultural context within which the changes occur. Only then would they be in possession of the fundamental knowledge about the systems of values, social mechanisms and most general rules and norms functioning in particular communities and societies. Without this basis it is impossible to consciously and purposefully relate to the values directed towards the good of both the community and an individual, not to mention the complex relations between those types of values, which often make it difficult to decide whether in a given situation a teacher should turn to community values and reprehend the student’s selfish pursuit of success, or, conversely, whether he should encourage the individual work and devotion of an individual instead of the good of the community. Contemporary teachers increasingly often face such moral dilemmas, and the relativisation of values demands from them interpersonal knowledge and skills, facilitating proper

evaluation of students' needs and aspirations, as well as situations in which a given problem should be considered.

The behaviour of a physical education teacher is not appropriate, then, if he or she focuses only on the physiological sphere of the functioning of his wards. Obviously, he or she should above all pay attention to the attitude of students towards the body and to the proper application of rules in games and play, and to correct their ways of doing exercises and. However, it should be done while taking into account a broader context of, among other things, the attitudes and moral norms of an individual. Thus, for example, a football match should be played according to the functioning rules, but a teacher should also pay attention to the principle of fair play, which constitutes the moral basis of sport. However, to attain the full range of functioning of the principle of fair play, a teacher has to relate to other values as well, which coexist with it, such as, among others, justice and responsibility (Shields – Bredemeier, 1995, p. 21; Weinberg – Could, 2007, p. 550). For it is justice that regulates the behaviour of an individual towards other people, but also rules the behaviour of a community towards an individual, relating to norms in their moral understanding. Hence justice establishes the limits of responsibility. Without it, a student would not know in which situations he or she is held responsible, undertakes responsibility or acts responsibly (Ingarden, 1987, pp. 73–97; Pezdek, 2010, pp. 72–76). Also, they would not know in which circumstances they are responsible for themselves and in which ones for another person, school, sports club, community, etc. A teacher should therefore explain to students that the borders of responsibility are set in society by tradition, customs, but above all by law. Without taking responsibility for their own deeds, an individual cannot act fairly towards themselves or towards other people. It is hard to be fair without being responsible. By referring to the principle of fair play, a teacher naturally refers to a broader context, set by the axio-normative limits functioning in society.

However, a physical education teacher, in motivating his students, can deftly use various values, depending on the needs and goals of a student but also depending on the axiological system functioning in the society. So, if a student wants to become a professional football player, a teacher can encourage him to a greater involvement in game, unfolding a vision of a career in a prestigious football club (utilitarian values). If he or she wants to improve their appearance, a teacher in motivating them can use aesthetic values. If by sport a student wants to strengthen his or her faith in God, the most proper values to motivate him or her to a greater effort seem religious ones.

It is not hard to notice that team plays and games can be good carriers of moral values, directed above all towards strengthening community bonds. I mean not only responsibility and justice but also solidarity, loyalty, friendship, altruism, empathy, etc. A teacher has an opportunity to present these values naturally and place them within appropriate theory, as well as in tradition and customs. In turn, individual exercises can be a good natural carrier for moral values directed towards many-sided individual development. Here we can obviously include the right to self-realisation, autonomy, tolerance, etc. A teacher can show the functional boundaries of these values. When, for example, students humiliate their classmate because he is less physically fit than them, then, apart from the well-earned reprimand, a teacher can explain to the students that dignity ascribes to each person a maximum autonomy, the limit of which is unconditional respect towards other people, independently of their social status, education, health, etc. So, if anybody witnesses another person being

hurt, he or she should come to this person's defence. In turn, without dignity it would be hard to promote tolerance and freedom in a responsible way, show their merits and limits. However, one should remember that both community values and the ones directed towards the good of an individual do not constitute separate axiological systems; they build one system of values, to which each conscious human being relates while setting their life goals or justifying the decisions they take. Thus teachers should show the young people how to identify values in this system and how to function smoothly within it.

In the realisation of the above-mentioned goals, a physical education teacher should adopt the stance of a trustworthy custodian, who concentrates mainly on supporting the development of a student, empathising with his needs. As Tadeusz Kotarbiński writes: "A custodian is trustworthy, when one can rightly trust his care, certain that he will not fail, he will do all that he is responsible for, will stand by his ward in danger and generally will be a reliable support in difficult circumstances" (Kotarbiński, 1987, p. 378). He or she should be a friendly, kind-hearted, helpful person (*ibid.*). However, it is not only one's personal traits that are at issue. Equally important is the essential preparation of a trustworthy custodian who, in his actions, should relate to some model of a decent person functioning within the society. However, it is difficult to understand such models fully without some prior humanistic preparation (philosophical, ethical, sociological, psychological, pedagogical, etc.). In the institutional education of young people, a common understanding of moral values is not enough. A teacher should be conscious of the current state of knowledge about man and society. He should know about philosophical conceptions of man, basic ethical theories, moral norms, psychological conditioning of human behaviour and social and cultural mechanisms responsible for creating models of a decent person. A trustworthy custodian should also possess an ability to impart this knowledge to the students in a way that is simple, understandable and above all does not insult their dignity. Only then can he gain their trust, which is the basis of appropriate and productive relations between a teacher and a young person. Thus a modern physical education teacher is a person who should possess certain personality traits, but who above all should be educated in the fields of both biology and humanistic sciences.

In this paper I have tried to argue that physical education can be a carrier of moral values. Hence a teacher, through team games and individual exercises, can successfully shape the moral attitudes of young people, justifying them by appropriate ethical theory. In turn, the ethical competence of the teacher endows him with additional tools which can be used not only in solving conflicts among students but above all in supporting the balanced development of his wards and in building civil society. This knowledge allows him to identify the value systems of individual students, as it relates to the value systems functioning within society.

Physical education lessons, enriched with ethical knowledge (and a broad understanding of ethical education) should complement ethics taught as a separate subject (which is a narrow understanding of ethical education). Ethical education will then become even more integrated, which promises to translate into the better functioning of society in the future. In the realisation of the above-mentioned goals, the adoption of the stance of a trustworthy custodian will certainly be helpful since, in adopting such a stance, teachers demonstrate that in their work the most important issue is the student, and not their own good, or the good of the school.

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TĚLESNÁ VÝCHOVA JAKO PPROSTŘEDEK PŘEDÁVÁNÍ MORÁLNÍCH HODNOT

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SOUHRN

Pro etickou výchovu je důležitá teorie i praxe; lze dokonce říci, že tyto dva elementy se vzájemně doplňují a podporují a že mohou tvořit řádnou etickou výchovu, pouze jsou-li oba integrovány v jednotě. Toto porozumění výchově se zaměřuje na obojí, teorii i jednání. Etika může tvořit samostatný předmět, ale její obsah může být předáván i skrze standardní cvičení, hry a aktivity běžně užívané v hodinách tělesné výchovy s cílem formování postojů studentů ke své tělesné dimenzi. Učitelé tělesné výchovy mohou předávat morální hodnoty zaměřené směrem k individuálnímu dobru: vytrvalost/houževnatost, důstojnost, svoboda, tolerance atd. Mohou také formovat hodnoty studentů zaměřené na potřeby společnosti, mezi něž patří spravedlnost, zodpovědnost, solidarita, věrnost. Etické vědění není jen teoretickým základem pro učitele tělesné výchovy, který ospravedlňuje jejich práci, ale dává jim také nástroje, jež mohou být použitelné při řešení konfliktů mezi studenty, při podpoře jejich harmonického rozvoje a v rámci rozvoje občanské společnosti. Toto vědění jim umožňuje identifikovat hodnotový systém jednotlivých studentů, definovat jejich potřeby a cíle existence. Vztahuje se k hodnotovému systému, který funguje v komunitách i v celé společnosti. Hodiny tělesné výchovy, které jsou obohaceny etickým věděním, tedy doplňují etiku jakožto samostatný předmět.

Klíčová slova: tělesná výchova, morální hodnoty

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