Thinking in Terms of Cosmopolitanism. The Implications for the Education

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Abstract

Myšlení z hlediska kosmopolitanismu. Důsledky pro vzdělání. – Reflektujíc dvě koncepce společenského života a referujíc o myšlence některých významných filosofů, studie se zaměřuje na zodpovězení otázky: jaké jsou vzdělávací důsledky přijetí Appiahovy teze, která předpokládá, že žití v harmonii s ostatními nevyžaduje shodu na základních hodnotách?

Keywords: polis, cosmopolis, cosmopolitanism, national state, universalism

Klíčová slova: polis, kosmopolis, kosmopolitismus, národní stat, univerzalismus

In the book entitled *Myślenie polityczne. Odwieczne pytania*, (Tinder 1995: 51) Glenn Tinder wonders if all human beings should be united as one global society. An American political scientist touches a very old issue of the conflict between two concepts of social life that have often been conceived of as the opposite ones. According to the first concept that was supported by the ancient Greeks it is only small states that are able to ensure genuinely human life conditions. Tinder holds that Greek people living in the time of Socrates and Plato believed that a political system that was as big reach one as it was in the nation states contemporary with them was not compatible with a truly human life. (*Ibid.*) Tinder refers to Aristotle. Aristotle believed that human beings were united by what was universal in their very essence but it was only a small state – *polis* that was able to ensure the realization of that essence. Tinder stresses that the above idea is still up to date in our times.

He adds that the more intensively people are looking for new ways to get free of the impersonal and inhuman character of industrial civilization, the more often that idea appears. (Tinder 1995: 52) Trying to complement Tinder's thought I would like to add that a modern society that is often called information society and the modes of which – as John Naisbitt has it – were to ensure the way from hierarchical structures to networking, from centralization to decentralization, from representative democracy to participatory democracy did not manage to stand up to attempts at realizing the principle *High Tech/High Touch.* (Naisbitt 1984: 40) According to that principle – as Naisbitt holds – we must not forget that the more technology we have in our lives, the more watchful we should be in order to save a personal character of social life. Naisbitt adds: "We must learn to balance the material wonders of technology with the spiritual demands of our human nature." (*Ibid.*)

The second concept of social life is based on belief in the ancient ideal of *cosmopolis* or *world state.* All human beings or all rational beings belong to *cosmopolis* by definition and they should tend to develop it in spite of obstacles of any kind resulting from local conditions. (Scruton 2002: 178) In the theory of Stoics *polis* was replaced by *cosmopolis* or – as Tinder holds – *common polis.* It is worth reminding that the idea of uniting people within the borders of one global state was developed after the city-states had been incorporated into the empires.

(Tinder 1995: 52) Tinder adds that stoicism that saw the whole universe as God's order existing within the laws perceptible by reason became the main philosophy of those who governed the Roman Empire and established Roman Law. According to Professor of Philosophy in Princeton University Kwame Anthony Appiah the beginnings of thinking in terms of cosmopolitanism should be connected with philosophical views of Cynics for whom being a citizen of cosmos meant being skeptical about customs and tradition. (Appiah 2006: XIV)

Appiah holds that while every citizen belonged to *polis* and his duty was to be loyal cosmos referred to the world that was not the Earth but the universe. (*Ibid.*) People who supported the idea of cosmopolitanism did reject the view that each civilized person belonged to the community among communities. (*Ibid.*) Appiah holds that the idea of cosmopolitanism was adopted by Stoics – Cicero, Seneca, Epictet and Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius were the most famous among them. One must not forget that a cosmopolitan approach to life were accepted by many Christian intellectuals when Christianity became the religion of Roman Empire. (*Ibid.*) According to Tinder's thesis Christian thinkers were the most universal because they saw humankind in terms of unity not only on the strength of a nature law but also in the power of God's plan of salvation. (Tinder 1995: 53)

The religion has always played an important part in that universalism. A German philosopher and culture expert Hans-Georg Pott refers to Max Weber who holds that the God was necessary for people to avoid the situation in which unions and associations would be dominated only by a personal dominion of one man. It was the God that could ensure the *real union*. (Pott 2007: 28)

One of the very important issues appearing in the context of considerations on cosmopolitanism is the issue of national state. The concept of a national state is a serious alternative to global society. Nevertheless the thesis that a national state is too big to take personal relations and the bonds of friendship into account and too small to ensure the peace all over the world (Tinder 1995: 53) seems to be true. A state is impersonal because – as German philosopher and pedagogue Johann Friedrich Herbart holds – it needs only soldiers, farmers, craftsmen, officials etc. The state is not able to take care of persons and their inner development. (Murzyn 2004: 33) If the state is not able to ensure a genuine personal development with its citizens, it is not able not only to ensure but also to support the development of a personal community. National states – as Tinder holds – ensure impersonality that is also ensured by a global state but they are not able – like a global state – ensure safety and peace. (Tinder 1995: 54)

The issue of a national state has been discussed by a famous philosopher Roger Scruton. Scruton is very skeptical about British policy and reforms. In his opinion those reforms concentrate on private rights rather than on public order and private commitments that do ensure the private rights. (Scruton 2002: 255–256) The philosopher holds that a national state is the one that is extremely aware of itself, it has its own territory, language, population and sometimes even its own Church. (Scruton 2002: 254–255) The people feel attached to what they consider to be their own so passionately – as Scruton has it – that societies are able to survive invasion, occupation and the attempts at denationalization. (Scruton 2002: 255)

Defending the idea of a national state English philosopher deplores the disappearance of national identity which results in the intensive growth of state regulations. He added that the very essence of a national state is founded on the principle that its law arises from the inside and thus becomes an expression of solidarity and common loyalty. It is only in the national state that the awareness of limits of law and strong attachment to freedom. (*Ibid.*) In Scruton's opinion postwar elites used to discredit the idea of nationality because they believed that nations brought on wars. That is why a system of supranational regulations was created. That system was not based on national loyalties and was imposed as a law although it did not have a moral power of law. It resulted in a bureaucracy that aimed at breaking national loyalties dividing the continent into the regions instead of nations. This way local loyalties are sure to be cut off from legal sovereighnity and the laws will be imposed on nations from the outside. (*Ibid.*)

In Scruton's view the European Union is just a system of supranational regulations. In the epilogue of his book entitled *On hunting* the philosopher puts the following thesis: "The idea of Europe now occupies the vacuum left by the socialist millennium and thousand-year Reich. And the balance of nature has been a victim of this newest folly." (Scruton 1998: 155) I think Scruton would share Czesław Bartnik's opinion that if Europe is not based on national states, it is not able to be the Europe of persons. A Polish personalist thinker holds that the Europe of persons is the Europe founded on the law conditioned by the whole human person. (Bartnik 2001: 336) The author of the book *Fenomen Europy* adds that if Europe is not a country of personal community, it will become the victim of politicians, capitalists and officials of any kind. Ortega y Gasset stresses that one must not forget about a common history space in which all the people of the West felt at home. (Ortega y Gasset 2006: 26)

A Spanish thinker adds that common history space corresponds to the physical space called by geographers Europe. It is the common history space that is the mother of customs, language, law and political power. One of the biggest mistakes made by modern thinkers – as Ortega y Gasset has it – was to ignore the fact that a society conceived of as human coexistence should be assumed in advance because it is the foundation of any agreement. That mistake brought about a concept of society conceived of as an association based on an agreement – association of legal nature. (*Ibid.*)

Ortega y Gasset adds that a law should be seen as a spontaneous product of society. According to the above thesis the misconception of law means that the law refers to the persons who had not already coexisted within a real society. (*Ibid.*) Although European people have been always united by a nationwide idea of humanism (nationwide does not mean worldwide), creating any organizations on a global scale is unjustified. According to Ortega y Gasset nations are impervious to each other and they will not be able to understand each other and create an organization that would represent all of them. (*Ibid.*)

The issue of the relation of the state to the nation is also discussed by one of the greatest philosophers in the history of human thought Immanuel Kant. In his work *O wiecznym pokoju. Zarys filozoficzny* Kant holds that nations as states can be treated just like individual people because already in their natural conditions (independent of external laws) they consolidate just through being next to each other and thus for the sake of their own safety each of them can and should try to reach agreement of civil nature with the other. That agreement should be fortified by the law ensuring rights for each. (Kant 2001: 149–183)

According to Kant respect for law results from moral potential of every man. It is through that moral potential that man tries to overcome the bad principle according to which law is treated as it came from the outside. In Kant's view nations are considered to be as the states created by themselves and thus they have already their own constitution which means that they are totally independent of any external regulations that would aim at imposing a constitutional order on them.

The law on nations conceived of as external one turns out to be the law of war because that law is based on the unilateral maxims defining the law by means of force. Political communities that are restricted by territories are necessary because it is through them that people can become reasonable persons. In the state of nature – as Kant has it – it is impossible to realize the principles of practical reason. (*Ibid.*) Scruton stresses that Kant was the greatest supporter of the idea of cosmopolitanism and he held that the power of states should be reduced for the purpose of aiming at *eternal peace*. That is why Kant was for creating an international government that was to be in accordance with the concept of the kingdom of ends existing originally in every moral subject's mind. (Scruton 2002)

One must not forget that Kantian idea of federalism that was to be realized by all states is founded on the union of a specific nature. That union does not aim at gaining any power in the state, it is only the protection of freedom for the state and the other allied states that it aims at. What is more, it does not put any pressure on the states to subordinate to public laws and coercion. (Kant 2001)

The basic question that appears in the context of consideratons on the iedea of cosmopolitanism is the one put by Appiah: "A citizen of the world: how far can we take that idea." (Appiah 2006: XV) The above-mentioned thinker wonders if one is to lay down any local unions and loyalties in the name of such abstraction as mankind. He gave some examples of supporters of that abstract mankind. One of them was Marquis de Mirabeau who was labelled by Thomas Carlyle as peoples friend and an enemy of every individual man. Marquis de Mirabeau worked on his treatise *L'Amis des homes* when he was not busy keeping his own son prisoner. (Appiah 2006: XVI) The other example given by Appiah is the one of a famous philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau who was labeled by Edmund Burke as a person who loved his kind but hated his kindred. Rousseau handed his five children to an orphanage. (*Ibid.*)

The cases described by Appiah are extreme ones but it may be the only way of warning people of pernicious consequences resulting from the tendency to think in terms of abstract mankind. Instead of living for that abstract mankind, one should concentrate on a real person or – as Popper would say – combat the real evil that threatens the real person instead of living for the abstract good. There are other supporters of cosmopolitanism who are their enemies rather than their friends. Viginia Woolf and Leo Tolstoy belong to them. Wirginia Woolf – as Appiah has it – advocated for the principle of freedom from what she used to call *unreal loyalties*. Among those *unreal loyalties* there were: nation, sex, school and neighborhood. (*Ibid.*) Leo Tolstoy talked on patriotism and called it stupidity. In Tolstoy's opinion destroying patriotism meant destroying war. (*Ibid.*) Tolstoy expressed the above opinion in his essay in 1896. It took place a couple of decades before the tsar was swept away by a revolution in the name of the international working class. (Appiah 2006: XVI)

Appiah stresses that there are some contemporary philosophers who consider boundaries of nations to be morally irrelevant. I believe Appiah would share Leszek Kołakowski's opinion that there is no *incurable contradiction* between the cosmopolitan attitude and devotion to one's nation and its heritage. (Kołakowski 2009: 158) It is worth paying attention to Kołakowski's considerations on the relation of Christian cosmopolitanism to nationalism. Kołakowski holds that treating those two issues as opposite ones is a terrible simplification.

He says: "Wiemy wszyscy, że przywiązanie do Kościoła było jedną z najważniejszych sił, które utrzymały i przechowały identyczność narodową Polaków w epoce zaborów" (We all know that devotion to Church was one of the most important forces that sustained and preserved national identity of Polish people in the time of Partitions of Poland, Kołakowski 2009: 158). Admitting that ethnic and national pecularities are the richness of our world Kołakowski regrets that cosmopolitan principles (universal ones) and ethnic principles have always been on bad terms with each other. The only solution is – as Kołakowski expresses it – creating "(…) potężnych sił duchowych kosmopolitycznych, które w możliwie znacznym stopniu narzucałyby wędzidło etnicznym zaślepieniom". (Kołakowski 2009: 159)

In Appiah's opinion the most dangerous enemies of comopolitanism are the people such as Hitler and Stalin for whom "(…) anti-cosmopolitanism was often just a euphenism for anti-Semitism". (Appiah 2009: XVI) Why did they both consider cosmopolitanism to be their enemy? Appiah says: "For they both required a kind of loyalty to one portion of humanity – a nation, a class – that ruled out loyalty to all of humanity." (*Ibid.*) The supporters of cosmopolitanism shared at least one important principle – no local loyalty can be treated as justification for forgetting about responsibility to the other people. Appiah holds that those who understand the essence of cosmopolitanism reject both zealous nationalists who completely ignore foreigners as well as hard-core cosmopolitans who do not care for their friends and fellow citizens at all. (Appiah 2009: XVII)

According to Appiah the notion of cosmopolitanism comprises two concepts that intertwine: "One is the idea that we have obligations to others, obligations that stretch beyond those to whom we are related by the ties of kith and kind, or even the more formal ties of a shared citizenship. The other is that we take seriously the value not just of human life but of particular human lives, which means taking an interest in the practices and beliefs that lend them significance." (*Ibid.*) Since these two attitudes seem to have often been in conflict, one should have in mind what is stressed by Appiah – cosmopolitanism is the name of the challenge rather than of the solution.

I believe that if we want to give the above – discussed cosmopolitan attitude much deeper meaning we should complement it by Amos Comenius's thought. There is much to be said for the thesis that the reality in which we live and that was called by Comenius *the labyrinth of the world* (Prázný 2009: 252) is becoming bigger and bigger today. That labyrinth "(…) symbolses outer crisis, i.e. the lack of clarity and vagrancy of the world". (*Ibid.*) In order to overcome that crisis – as Comenius has it – it is not enough to escape from the external crisis situation just through an external declaration but through striving toward *the paradise of the heart.* (*Ibid.*)

What is the meaning of Comenius's message today? Modern people who seem to be lost in the labyrinth of scientific – technical civilization should treat that message as an incentive to do as much as possible to preserve the personal dimension of man in order not to be overwhelmed by the ideology of progressivism that promise people Paradise on Earth. (*Ibid.*) One should also have in mind that – as Palouš says – humankind is a component of the whole world but "(…) the whole and holy and holiness have common etymological roots". (*Ibid.*) Palouš adds that it means taking the position of humility. It is this position – as I believe – that make thinking in terms of cosmopolitanism much more constructive.

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