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HOW TO EDUCATE IN THE GLOBALIZING WORLD OF CONSUMPTION The Upbringing Today in the Light of Documents of the Evangelical Church of Germany

The globalized, postmodern world of the consumption becomes more and more difficult place of involvement for different institutions of education. Lots of „ordinary” challenges appears to be multiplied by the new channels of communication which spread new cosmopolitan, non-endemic patterns of culture. The researches on the societies, related in particular to the fields of the upbringing, cause the questions of how to educate in today's world. This world which features are the prevailing crisis of the family, the lack of the authorities and the lack of the confidence in the state institution and in the churches, the world where mass-media pass on different values and norms provided by and created in the exterritorial cultural centres and the world where the rules of free market economy were introduced into upbringing and education. Young people are taught of what is profitable, and rather: of what we assume will be profitable in their occupational life.

John Paul II wrote about the anthropological error of the totalitarian system which negates the truth of the human person. Now Christian theology has to highlight another error that lies in the ground of the today's civilization of the globalized society of consumption. Interpersonal, intersocial and international relations seems to be determined by the economic calculations and the economy as such appears to be ground for the central value system. Social and cultural trends help to spread these values and make them more and more prevailing. „When, as in modern society, a more unified economic system, political demo-

cracy, urbanization and education have brought the different sections of the population into more frequent contact with each other and created even greater mutual awareness, the central value system has found a wider acceptance than in other periods of the history of society (...) The old gods have fallen, religious faith has become such more attenuated in the educated classes and suspicion of authority is much more overt than it has ever been. None the less the central value system has gone much more deeply into the heart of their members than it has ever succeeded in doing in any earlier society”¹.

Christian theology, in view of its confessional differences, has to face the challenges referred to the issues of upbringing. As an example one could consider reflections on the subject held by the Evangelical Church of Germany (Die Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland – “EKD”).

1. A theological outline

From the very beginning, the Evangelical Church was deeply involved in the upbringing. The first catechisms, the Small and the Large Catechism, have been written by Luther in order to clarify the key content of the Christian revelation to the ordinary people. To the ground principles of the Protestant Reformation belonged the rule of *Sola Scriptura* (only the Bible) and the rule of the universal priesthood of the baptized, both reflected the conviction that the individual Christians are able to communicate with God directly through prayer and the lecture of the Scripture. Philip Melancton, the closest collaborator of Luther and the author of the *Augsburg Confession* was also an influential designer of the system of education and has engaged very strongly in the establishing of universities in the area of North Germany. Owing to his impact on the scholar system in Germany he deserved the title of *Praeceptor Germaniae* (the Teacher of Germany).

Lutheran theology is sometimes declared to be the teaching about human salvation and expresses itself in the best way through the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Very important perspective of its teaching is, that the justification does not mean that a person should escape from the world but one has to experience his/her faith as an individual and as a member of the Christian community in the worldly reality. Christians have to be able to communicate with other man in order to maintain this community and pass on the others and the world the truth of Christ. That's why Christianity needs the set of social, ethical and intellectual competences of its faithful.

¹ E. SHILS, *Centre and Periphery*, in: *Modern Sociology*, ed. P. WORSLEY, Harmondsworth 1970, 423.

Upbringing was the key issue of the social teaching of the Protestant Reformation, in particular in its Lutheran dimension. Luther's doctrine of two regiments (*geistliches und weltliches Regiment Gottes*) assumes that God uses both, the Church as the spiritual regiment and the state as the worldly regiment as his tools in the fight with the evil. The first one was appointed to be defence in the spiritual dimension. It works by the faith, makes a human being to be able to love his neighbour and gives the hope for the coming of God Kingdom. The second one has to fight with the evil in the physical dimension. To its specific tasks belong to protect the external freedom, external peace and human life and health². According to Luther, the upbringing of the child is the main task of marriage which was sometimes described as the third regiment (*Home Regiment, Hausstand*). „But the greatest good in married life, that which makes all suffering and labour worthwhile, is that God grants offspring and commands that they be brought up to worship and serve him. In all the world this is the noblest and most precious work, because to God there can be nothing dearer than the salvation of souls. Now since we are all duty bound to suffer death, if need be, that we might bring a single soul to God, you can see how rich the estate of marriage is in good works. God has entrusted to its bosom souls begotten of its own body, on whom it can lavish all manner of Christian works. Most certainly father and mother are apostles, bishops, and priests to their children, for it is they who make them acquainted with the gospel. In short, there is no greater or nobler authority on earth than that of parents over their children, for this authority is both spiritual and temporal. whoever teaches the gospel to another is truly his apostle and bishop. Mitre and staff and great estates indeed produce idols, but teaching the gospel produces apostles and bishops”³. This long quotation of the *Sermon vom ehelichen Stand* displays how Luther's thinking about upbringing was of fundamental importance for whole social teaching, and after all, for the salvation of the world.

2. Evangelical perspective of social and cultural changes of today

In order to be intelligible and credible for the world, theology has to update its categories referring to the relations, phenomena and challenges of the societies. That's why theology hugely needs of the sociological scrutiny held within a Church and on the ground of the theological axiology. Examples of the theological researches on society questions are provided also by the Evangelical Church in Germany.

² E. RÖHM, J. THIERFELDER, *Kirche-Staat-Politik. Zum Öffentlichkeitsauftrag der Kirche*, Stuttgart 1979, 12.

³ *Luther's work: Christian in Society*, ed. H. LEHMAN, Concordia Publishing House 1986, 8-10.

In the documents of the Evangelical Church in Germany one could enumerate a number of social, economic and cultural trends which impact present civilization of the West. Thus, methodologically, it is to distinguish among those which have a direct influence on the faith and theology and those which effect indirectly and create a context of today's social life. The second group of factors have an economic and social dimension and refers to the free market capitalism and various processes of globalization. Here is to mention the decline of a welfare state, the birth of the global economy, which is defined by M. Castells as „a network of financial transactions, production sites, markets, and labour pools on a planetary scale”⁴, the birth of a network society: „the society characterized by networked communications technologies and information processing”⁵; and further: the urbanization⁶ and the emergence of „the global village” described by Marshall McLuhan, the changes related to the model of family like an expansion of the new forms of inter-human relationships: so called „patchwork family” and the same-sex marriages⁷, and the migration processes. The globalization and the free market capitalism are strictly connected with the first group of factors constituted by a number of cultural processes, such as the spread of the pop culture, secularization and dechristianization, the emergence of the exterritorial cultural centres and finally the birth of the consumer society as the final result of the concurrence of factors mentioned above.

The consumer society (*die Wegwerfgesellschaft*) is declared to be an image which displays the most accurately state of today's social reality. Similarly to other social trends⁸, it is variously described and defined. The term was coined by Jean Baudrillard and released for the first time in his book *La société de consommation* (The Consumer Society). In the foreword to the English edition of

⁴ M. CASTELLS, *Spoleczeństwo sieci*, Warszawa 2007, 107.

⁵ *Ibidem*, 39.

⁶ EVANGELISCHE KIRCHE IN DEUTSCHLAND, *Gott in der Stadt. Perspektiven evangelischer Kirche in der Stadt*, EKD-Texte 93, 2007. The document has presented different impacts of urbanization on the religiosity of today's societies.

⁷ The issue of the same sex marriage and the changes related to the model of family was described in the following documents of the EVANGELISCHE KIRCHE IN DEUTSCHLAND: *Mit Spannungen leben. Eine Orientierungshilfe des Rates der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland zum Thema "Homosexualität und Kirche"*, EKD-Texte 57, Hannover 1996; *Theologische, staatskirchenrechtliche und dienstrechtliche Aspekte zum kirchlichen Umgang mit den rechtlichen Folgen der Eintragung gleichgeschlechtlicher Lebenspartnerschaften nach dem Lebenspartnerschaftsgesetz*, Hannover: EKD-Texte 2002; *Verlässlichkeit und Verantwortung stärken. Eine Stellungnahme des Kirchenamtes der EKD zur Verbesserung des Rechtsschutzes für gleichgeschlechtliche Lebenspartnerschaften und zur besonderen Bedeutung und Stellung der Ehe*, Hannover: EKD-Texte 2000.

⁸ E.g. N.R.F. AL-RODHAN in his comparative study (*Definitions of Globalization: A Comprehensive Overview and a Proposed Definition*, Geneva: Geneva Center for the Security Policy 2006) has enumerated 113 definitions of globalization which had been coined by different authors and used by various institutions.

the book, the keyword of consumption has been described as „a new tribal myth”, which „has become the morality of our present world. It is currently destroying the foundations of the human being, that is to say, the balance which European thought has maintained since the Greeks between our mythological roots and the world of the logos”⁹. Zygmunt Bauman, Polish sociologist and a leading interpreter of contemporary social conditions and practices, includes a description of the consumer society into his studies on postmodernism. After him, to the intrinsic quality of the consumer society belongs temporary and transitory character of consumption: any desire can be considered as fully satisfied¹⁰. As a result, consumption destroys social relations which are constrained to the casual contacts. People are not living „with” but „next to”. The structures of the society organized around the consumption and by the market, have an enormous impact on its members. One's identity is not determined by beliefs or functions within society but becomes an image creating. Thus, individuals must be always „updating”, following the fashion trends. Reality appears as a global stage of distraction, more and more fast, and more and more seeming and illusory.

In the perspective of the upbringing the all described phenomena are of higher importance. According to the Evangelical Church in Germany, it is to distinguish a combined set of factors which seem to be particularly actual referring to the issue of upbringing and education. In the document *Kirche und Bildung – Herausforderungen, Grundsätze und Perspektiven Evangelischer Bildungsverantwortung und Kirchlichen Bildungshandelns*¹¹, one enumerates factors of changes in the social, economic and cultural context of education. Thus, as the first of them has been presented the change in the model of the religiosity. Apart from the secularization processes, personally internalized Christianity becomes more and more often a mixture of the dogmatic assertions and subjective religious judgments. This mixture is then passed on the children in the process of upbringing. The second one has been constituted by the demographic changes including the aging of society and the low birth rate. The third is financing troubles reflected different economic changes referring to the Church. The fourth, the processes of migration resulted in what was described by the authors of the documents as the heterogeneity which becomes a norm, and is no longer an exception. The fifth factor has been referred to the changes in the culture. Here is to mention the transformations of the model of family, the changes of the world view which seems to be still shaped in the struggle between faith and science and

⁹ J. GAILLARDE, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, London 1998, 10

¹⁰ *Bauman o popkulturze*, ed. M. HALAWA, P. WRÓBEL, Warszawa 2008, 89.

¹¹ EVANGELISCHE KIRCHE IN DEUTSCHLAND, *Kirche und Bildung – Herausforderungen, Grundsätze und Perspektiven Evangelischer Bildungsverantwortung und Kirchlichen Bildungshandelns*, Eine Orientierungshilfe des Rates der EKD, Gütersloh 2010, 14-31.

finally the changes in communication processes. Communication in today's society is acting through the mass-media which spread the images and words produced by the entertainment industry. This results in various value judgments and norms which appear to be the obstacle for the evangelical profile of upbringing. Finally, the factors made by the world of the risk society¹²: individuals are aware of a number of global dangers such as the global warming, migrations, the economic gap between rich and poor countries, unemployment and the decline of the welfare state. Education system in the risk society plays ambiguous role by helping to petrify the social divisions.

The document *Gestaltung und Kritik. Zum Verhältnis von Protestantismus und Kultur im neuen Jahrhundert*¹³ make a theological scrutiny of the relation between faith and culture. For the upbringing questions important is the remark, that in the globalizing world of consumption the identity of the young people is often created by the shopping and journals that spread the patterns of the pop culture. Following next generations are described as belonging to reality of the mass-media and consumption. As a result it becomes more and more difficult to reach young people. That's why for the authors of evangelical documents on issue of upbringing and education the main aim is to give the youngsters the Gospel in the accurate forms and to create properly their identity¹⁴.

3. The evangelical profile of upbringing

In answer on the challenges effected by the society of where the anthropological grounds are established by the free market philosophy, the Evangelical Church in Germany has described a number of the pastoral works in order to restore proper anthropological perspective. Education and upbringing are declared to be here the main way. It is realizing through both, the evangelical educational system and through the impact on the global pedagogic discourse. In the documents released in the last twenty years by the EKD one can find the features of the evangelical profile of upbringing. For the methodological reason, they had been organized in four groups:

1. Education in the evangelical perspective must make society able to maintain the peace, to support social solidarity, to respect the democratic order, to care about life and to understand people of other cultures and religions.

¹² S. COTTLE, *Ulrich Beck – 'Risk Society' and the Media. A Catastrophic View?* "European Journal of Communication" 13(1), 6.

¹³ EVANGELISCHE KIRCHE IN DEUTSCHLAND, *Gestaltung und Kritik. Zum Verhältnis von Protestantismus und Kultur im neuen Jahrhundert*, EKD-Texte 64, 1999.

¹⁴ EVANGELISCHE KIRCHE IN DEUTSCHLAND, *Theologisch-Religionspädagogische Kompetenz – Professionelle Kompetenzen und Standards für die Religionslehrerbildung Empfehlungen der Gemischten Kommission zur Reform des Theologiestudiums*, EKD-Texte 96, 2009, 7.

2. Education must respect the development of any personality in its individual biography in order to support the intergenerational relations and to be able to adopt a critical attitude towards historical transmissions.

3. Evangelical education must form an attitude of cooperation with God in his work of introducing the Kingdom of Heaven. Christians must see every human life as a God's gift and must be able to take care about the natural environment. As the members of the Church, Christians have to work in the hope, responsibility and liberating power of Jesus Christ, in order to improve the relations and structures of societies.

4. Evangelical profile of education must be referred to all people in all social dimension, including religious and cultural differences. The rules of evangelical upbringing have to be applied without any exception.

In order to shape the individuals who are able to live their Christianity in the liquid categories of the globalizing consumption, it is necessary to acquire the competencies to make a judgment. That's why to the core assumptions of the evangelical upbringing is, that education cannot be reduced to the passing on the information and technical competencies but it must enable each one to the communication and interpretation processes. The commodification of the social relation which seems to shape our societies, have an enormous impact on the educational system in order to prepare individuals to be the workers and consumers only. According to the Lutheran theologians, it results in the wrong, incoherent attitude towards the upbringing. The human being is more than a useful member of society. Individuals must be seen in their integrity and autonomy so must knowledge be passed on in its complexity and comprehensiveness. Finally, to the content of upbringing belongs coherently the knowledge about norms and values. Yet, individuals are not able to appeal to their experiences only while they take their ethical decision. The education without the norms and the upbringing neutral toward the values do mutually deny themselves.

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The features of the evangelical profile of upbringing contain theological and anthropological principles of the Lutheran theology. It is to extract here the principle of *Solus Christus*, the rules of the social teaching of Luther, and the anthropological image of *simul iustus et simul peccator*. Different aspects of education in the evangelical perspective have their core in the Gospel. For the Christian faith, the upbringing must reflect the relation to the loving God in Jesus Christ. In the world of consumption, in the societies of the crisis of identity, in the described by Bauman 'liquid modernity' and in the perceived fading of

norms and values, the evangelical education must create the identity derived from the interpretation of the reality in the light of the Gospel.

**Jak kształcić w globalizującym się świecie konsumpcji.
Wychowanie dzisiaj w świetle dokumentów Kościoła Ewangelickiego
w Niemczech**

Streszczenie

Edukacja i wychowanie w świecie globalizacji i konsumpcji coraz bardziej ogranicza się do przygotowania do pełnienia społecznych ról konsumenta i pracownika. Kościół Ewangelicki w Niemczech, zgodnie ze swą misją interpretowania zjawisk społecznych w świetle zasad Ewangelii, formułuje model edukacji, którym posługuje się tak w prowadzonych przez siebie placówkach edukacyjnych, a który prezentuje w ogólnym dyskursie pedagogicznym. Model ten opiera się na teologicznej interpretacji społeczeństwa i zawiera w sobie przekonanie, że tak jak człowiek nie może być sprowadzony jedynie do użytecznego członka społeczeństwa, tak edukacja i wychowanie nie mogą ograniczać się do przekazywania informacji i technicznych kompetencji. Ostatecznym celem edukacji ma być formacja tożsamości w oparciu o chrześcijańskie założenia antropologiczne.