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Care activities as an educative factor in partitioned Poland

Introduction

Caring about the well-being of others has been manifested since ancient times in taking care of their biological and material needs as well as in preparing well him or her to function properly in society. Care-oriented upbringing has been the most natural¹. In the early stages of human life, these tasks were carried out by relatives, usually the family, and then following the principle of subsidiarity, parishes, municipalities, local institutions, social organizations and various bodies of state administration aided families in their duties of providing care and upbringing.

The author discusses here the correlation between care and upbringing in the tough for Polish nation period of the Partitions. The Poles did their best to educate and bring up their children as patriots responsible for their fatherland despite of being deprived of their independent homeland, Poland and many opportunities to do that. Care and charitable activities served as good examples also of a significant educative impact.

The origin of care activities in the Polish lands

For centuries, all kinds of care initiatives were typically religious and stemmed from the idea of charity taught by Judaism and Christianity. The idea of Christian mercy was brought to the Polish lands by religious orders. Initially,

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¹ Z. Dąbrowski, *Terminologia pedagogiki opiekuńczej*, in: *Pedagogika opiekuńcza. Przeszłość – teraźniejszość – przyszłość*, eds. E. Jundziłł, R. Pawłowska, Gdańsk 2008, pp. 467-468

these were Benedictines and Cistercians and since the turn of the 13th century religious orders that run hospitals, for example the Order of the Holy Spirit, Knights of the Holy Sepulcher or Knights of Malta². Strengthened Christianity, the extended network of parishes and the growing importance of cities resulted in the creation and development of various forms of care, both institutional and non-institutional. There were founded hospital-poorhouses (run by orders, municipal authorities as provosty hospitals) and charitable brotherhoods, and various forms of alms became increasingly common. The Council of Trent (1545-1563) was fundamental for care activities then as it not only subjected all charitable institutions to the Church but also initiated poorhouses called parish hospitals which were totally unknown in Poland. All types of hospitals basically functioned as shelters for the aged and disabled, orphans and the poor deprived of care and their livelihoods. Generally, the idea of caring for others before the Partitions stemmed from Christian mercy and was mainly carried out by the Church³. It was not only the way to implement evangelical commandments but also to teach the whole society about them and make it sensitive to others' needs. Over time, lay people were clearly more and more eager to help others.

Christian charity which was a main impetus of care activities before the Partitions began to lose its importance in the 19th century, and lay people began to be more and more active and engaged. The Church, especially the Fatebenefratelli and the Daughters of Charity still realized its vocation to serve the poor and needy through being engaged in managing parish poorhouses and shelters, but it could not meet the needs of a growing number of the poor⁴. The loss of independence by Poland and significant restrictions imposed by the *partitioning authorities* on Church's activities made *lay people take more* responsibility for a part of the society in need and poverty. A secular dimension of care was gaining importance also thanks to the ideas of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. The ideas of solidarity, equality and social justice were spreading out. Not only was it taught that everyone has the right to education and social welfare, but also that society owes maintenance to *unfortunate* citizens, either in procuring work for them or in providing the means of existence for those who

² M. Surdacki, *Ustrój polskich szpitali potrydenckich*, Roczniki Humanistyczne, 2000, 48, no. 2, p. 543.

³ More on the Church's charity, cf. T. Glemma, *Z dziejów miłosierdzia chrześcijańskiego w Polsce*, Kraków 1947; F. Śmidoda, *Szpitalnictwo Polski przedrozbiorowej w opiece Kościoła*, „Caritas”, 1948, no. 4, pp. 94-97; W. Wójcik, *Z dziejów kościelnego szpitalnictwa*. Archidiakoniat sandomierski, Ateneum Kapłańskie, 1949, 41, no. 51, pp. 265-274; K. Dola, *Szpitala w średniowiecznej Polsce pod zarządem kościelnym*, in: *Studia i Materiały*, Rzym 1972, pp. 173-212; K. Dola, *Opieka społeczna Kościoła*, in: *Historia Kościoła w Polsce*, eds. B. Kumor, Z. Obertyński, vol. II, part 1, Poznań-Warszawa 1979, pp. 343-345, 699-712.

⁴ H. Markiewiczowa, *Charytatywna działalność duchowieństwa na ziemiach polskich pod zaborami*, Problemy Opiekuńczo-Wychowawcze, 2005, no. 7, pp. 51-55.

are unable to labor (Article 21 of The Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen of 24 June 1793)⁵. Accordingly, secular philanthropists and reformers became more and more involved in charity so the 19th century is known as a century of philanthropists⁶. Philanthropy as a secular form of charity stems from the Enlightenment and humanitarianism⁷. The word *philanthropy* entered common usage for good and replaced concepts like charity and mercy⁸. Philanthropy, or human love attempted to solve problems due to material and moral shortcomings. Educating the poor and disseminating culture among them were important elements of philanthropists' activities⁹.

Another important concept shaped in the 19th century and stemmed also from a different perception of another human being was altruism. This word was first used around 1830 by Auguste Comte, French philosopher, who proclaimed the concept of "living for others"¹⁰. Living a life for others was manifested by sacrificing the stronger for the weaker. Given that the whole social welfare system in the former Poland was rooted in Christianity, altruism can also be defined as love to your neighbor¹¹. Altruism and philanthropy in general became virtually synonyms. However, certain differences can be specified, i.e. philanthropy is a form of altruism though in financial terms, while altruism is an extreme form of philanthropy when an individual dedicates not only his or her material resources but all himself or herself, his or her time, abilities, and even health and life for others. Therefore, a secular ideology is still accompanied by a religion with its commandment of love to the neighbor continued to be a key factor in shaping altruistic or philanthropic attitudes. In the 19th century, a significant group of philanthropists supported a variety of charitable initiatives or initiated new ones by financing them; others got involved in various functions for the well-being of others so they spent their own time and offered their abilities. There were also those who only or even could give themselves by serving the poor, caring for orphans and educationally neglected children or caring for the sick. Often these were cases of total sacrificing, i.e. death, particularly in times

⁵ M. Senkowa-Gluck, *Życie po rewolucji. Przemiany mentalności i obyczajów w napoleońskiej Francji*, Wrocław-Warszawa 1994, p. 199 and further.

⁶ J. Radwan-Prąglowski, K. Frysztański, *Spoleczne dzieje pomocy człowiekowi: od filantropii greckiej do pracy socjalnej*, Katowice 1998, p. 197; E. Barnaś-Baran, *Dobroczynny nurt opieki, wychowania i kształcenia dzieci i młodzieży w Galicji – stan badań*, in: *Galicja 1772-1918. Problemy metodologiczne, stan i potrzeby badań*, eds. A. Kawalec, W. Wierzbieniec, L. Zaskilniak, vol. 1, Rzeszów 2011, p. 278.

⁷ A. Zych, *Dobroczynność*, in: *Elementarne pojęcia pedagogiki społecznej i pracy socjalnej*, eds. D. Łalak, T. Pilch, Warszawa 1999, p. 55.

⁸ B. Geremek, *Litość i szubienica. Dzieje nędzy i miłosierdzia*, Warszawa 1989, p. 213.

⁹ E. Barnaś-Baran, *Dobroczynny nurt opieki...*, p. 278.

¹⁰ M. Łobocki, *Altruizm a wychowanie*, Lublin 2004, p. 9.

¹¹ Łobocki wskazuje zarówno na różnice i podobieństwa między altruizmem i miłością bliźniego, cf. M. Łobocki, *Altruizm...*, pp. 59-64.

of epidemic diseases. Many doctors, lower hospital staff or caregivers in various institutions who stayed with their patients in predicament faced such a fate. It was not important what factors, secular or religious, were behind caring activities¹². The mere fact of care giving was important as well as its educative impact on not only the young generation but the entire society.

Poland's loss of independence could not stop many people's engagement in charity and remained significant for bringing up young Poles with a sense of service to others. In the 19th century, the sick but poor were often helped by gentry, which was a sign of their religious belief and sense of responsibility for others as well as the upbringing ideal they followed. The case from the middle of the 19th century supports such an attitude: the sick and poor from villages and towns according to the ancient tradition of Christian obligation can find all kind of help from land-owners, especially their wives who rescue on their own people on their lands settled from less serious weaknesses thanks to their own experience or from more serious illnesses by calling a doctor at their own cost and effort¹³.

This case also shows the vital role of women in the mission of helping the needy. Throughout history, magnates' wives especially were engaged in their family life as well as patronized churches and worked for charity¹⁴. In the 19th century, women from the gentry and municipal officers' wives constituted an influential group of philanthropists to be initiators and founders of many initiatives or activists, e.g. nannies, fund-raisers, etc.

Care versus upbringing

Taking care of others and being engaged in the process of their upbringing chiefly stemmed from religious commandment as well as cultural conditions. Christianity was a breakthrough in the history of the world as it totally has changed the way how, for example weak and suffering people are perceived. People by all means attempted to make a reality of the commandment of love by helping all in need. The commandment of doing good was, as it were, inscribed in the canon of good Christian education. Brotherly love, or *caritas* meant both God's love to

¹² More on terminology and sources of the 19th cent. philanthropy in M. Piotrowska-Marchewa, *Nędzarze i filantropi. Problem ubóstwa w polskiej opinii publicznej w latach 1815-1863*, Toruń 2004, pp. 73-83.

¹³ Archiwum Państwowe in Lublin, Kancelaria Marszałka Szlachty Guberni Lubelskiej, ref. no. 35, *Akta dotyczące się zaprowadzenia i budowy szpitala w Hrubieszowie 1849-1858*, p. 35

¹⁴ M. Bogucka, *Białogłowa w dawnej Polsce. Kobieta w społeczeństwie polskim XVI-XVIII wieku na tle porównawczym*, Warszawa 1998, pp. 103-104.

people as well as people's love to God and other people¹⁵. From the Middle Ages, knight's education emphasized not only to serve God, a liege lord and women but also to care for widows and orphans¹⁶. In the Old Poland, much attention was paid to bringing up the young generation of Poles in a sense of serving to others and taking care of them. The concepts of pedagogy in the Old Poland emphasized a lot moral education which included religious, civil and tradition aspects¹⁷. Relatives and ideals cultivated at home serve great educative examples¹⁸. *Ars bene moriendi* books from the 17th and 18th centuries recommended to share worldly possessions with the needy for the glory of God¹⁹. This was the way to shape people's sensitivity to societal and others' needs as well as their attitude of willingness to help short-term or long-term by means of specially founded institutions. When the young generation of Poles started their adult life and public activities (political, economic, pastoral), they could benefit from the patterns inherited from the previous generations. Representatives of many noble and magnate families gave examples of how to deal with subjects and how to support the needy. They founded numerous charitable, hospital, scholarship, dowry foundations, etc. not only to bring relief and help many people in predicament, but to educate younger generations how to treat people who often helped built these families' fortunes²⁰. Leading by example was undoubtedly an important contribution to the upbringing of younger generations in a spirit of sensitivity to others' needs.

Although the Church was substantially weakened in the 19th century due to the policy of the partitioning authorities, including the dissolution of monasteries, episcopal vacancies, its landed wealth seized, it remained a key institution that managed to shape moral, social or patriotic attitudes. The Church and its values gave people hope, especially in the tough period of intensive Germanization or Russification and repression after the fall of the national uprisings. The parish with its institutions and organizations became a place where Poles could speak Polish, cultivate Polish national traditions, care for religious and moral attitudes and, finally, be supported spiritually and materially²¹. A major

¹⁵ M. Łobocki, *Altruizm...*, p. 53.

¹⁶ S. Litak, *Historia wychowania*, Kraków 2005, pp. 77-78.

¹⁷ D. Żołądź-Strzelczyk, *Wychowanie dziecka w świetle staropolskiej teorii pedagogicznej*, in: *Od narodzin do wieku dojrzałego. Dzieci i młodzież w Polsce*, part 1: *Od średniowiecza do wieku XVIII*, eds. M. Dąbrowska, A. Klonder, Warszawa 2002, p. 98.

¹⁸ Ł. Kurdybacha, *Staropolski ideał wychowawczy*, Lwów 1938, p. 68.

¹⁹ G. Huszał, *Przygotowanie do śmierci w XVII w.*, „Roczniki Humanistyczne”, 1983, 31, no. 2, pp. 123, 125.

²⁰ See: W. Partyka, *Opieka społeczna w Ordynacji Zamojskiej w XVII-XVIII wieku*, Lublin 2008, pp. 15-26 and further.

²¹ E. Horoch, A. Koprukowniak, R. Szczygieł, *Dzieje Parczewa 1401-2001*, Parczew-Lublin 2001, pp. 157-158.

contribution towards shaping such a role of the parish was made both by clergy and lay people who joined various devotional or charitable organizations. Brotherhoods or charity associations consisted of townspeople and landowners, including prominent people performing important functions for society like teachers, entrepreneurs, officials, etc. Religion was important then as it promoted a stable and reliable system of values and became a synonym and sign of Polish identity²². Welfare institutions conducted by the Church were also involved both in providing livelihood and teaching children ethics and patriotism. The partitioning authorities found social activities, sermons, religious services and prayers politically dangerous to the partitioning governments so they used in reverse many tools of repression. For example, in the Russian Partition, Polish nuns and secular staff in hospitals were replaced by Russian ones; Russian officers were introduced to many institutions to control them; or even the Russian authorities cancelled any types of activities if recognized as dangerous.

In the 19th century, the partitioning authorities significantly restricted or even banned educational, cultural or political organizations and associations because they treated them a threat to their position and a possible source of independence movement. In addition, any efforts by Poles to fight for independence were weakened by destroying their moral and cultural roots and making them break with Polish tradition and history. Virtually, the only organizations that could legally work, of course, strictly controlled by the partitioning authorities, were charitable and care organizations. Their members of different backgrounds besides fulfilling statutory objectives tried to expand their scope of activity by, e.g. educational activities, preserving Polish identity by teaching and cultivating national tradition, teaching a Polish language and Polish history. Often, care activities became even patriotic ones²³. Special attention, first and foremost, should be paid to charity societies. These were secular social and charity organizations which basically fought against poverty and begging as well as took care of children, especially those deprived of general care, education and health care²⁴.

As the partitioning authorities saw that Poles were involved in care activities and that a sense of community and responsibility for others grew, they desperately attempted by all means to restrict care activities. After the fall of the January uprising, Congress Poland lost its local autonomy and government; a Russian language was compulsory in documents used by care institutions and hospitals as well as from 1869 in Bishop's all correspondence with the secular authorities to bring pressure on the Church. This policy became even severe from 1894

²² A. Przeglasiński, *Spoleczna dzialalnosc ziemianstwa lubelskiego w latach 1864-1914*, Lublin 2009, pp. 297.

²³ M. Piotrowska-Marchewa, *Nędzarze i filantropi...*, p. 46.

²⁴ On the activities of charitable societies, see: C. Kępski, *Lubelskie Towarzystwo Dobroczynności (1815-1952)*, Lublin 1990; *Towarzystwa dobroczynności w Królestwie Polskim (1815-1914)*, Lublin 1993.

when the Tsar's order of December 16, 1893 clearly specified that clergy's correspondence, including that of the bishop with clergy and congregation needed to be in Russian only, instead of Polish as previously²⁵. All institutions were directly controlled by the Russian authorities in St. Petersburg, which significantly hampered their functioning. All of these activities aimed at suppressing any attempts that could help reorganize and strengthen the Polish society. The changes in care for the ill in the 19th century, and, above all, modern medical care were also educationally significant. Poor hygiene and lifestyle, often difficult living conditions, poor medical knowledge resulted in many epidemic diseases and high mortality, especially among the poorest. The transformation of the existing hospital-shelters into infirmaries and new medical institutions not only improved the level of care, but also initiated health education²⁶. Outpatient facilities founded there were indispensable in overcoming people's fear of doctors and hospitals. Local press encouraged people to use this form of assistance, the more it was free of charge²⁷. Accordingly, a fear of hospitals was slowly fading and hospitals stopped being treated as the last stage before death. In the early 19th century, dozens of people per year benefited from outpatient treatment, and in the late 19th, it was already often several thousands of the sick or in a need of medical advice. This form of activity helped learn, especially the poorest certain aspects of health care. Moreover, many people, apart from being simply helped or advised, could get free medicines. The evolution of healthy attitudes like maintaining good hygiene, preventing venereal diseases, paying attention to moral, spiritual or intellectual progress had a significant impact not only on creating strong community bonds, but also on the overall good condition of Polish society that managed to preserve its national identity and tradition for more than a century of foreign rule. B. Russel claims that societies deprived of civic morality die but deprived of personal morality do not deserve to survive²⁸.

In the 19th century, a new social class, i.e. the bourgeoisie consisting of officials, doctors, teachers, entrepreneurs increasingly became a leading group in a society, also in charity. Just its members initiated many philanthropic initiatives, financed them mostly and were personally engaged in them as chairpersons, protectors or administrators. Closely cooperating with landowners, they managed to found many charitable institutions and infirmaries. Actually, the state authorities had no initiative at all to create new institutions but strictly controlled any new one.

²⁵ K. Lewalski, *Kościół rzymskokatolicki a władze carskie w Królestwie Polskim na przełomie XIX i XX wieku*, Gdańsk 2008, p. 106.

²⁶ E. Mazur, *Zmiana funkcji szpitala w XIX wieku (na przykładzie szpitali warszawskich)*, in: *Szpitalnictwo w dawnej Polsce*, eds. M. Dąbrowska, J. Kruppé, Warszawa 1998; and *Szpitala w Królestwie Polskim w XIX wieku*, Warszawa 2008.

²⁷ *Gazeta Lubelska*, 1876, no. 8, p. 3.

²⁸ Following: M. Łobocki, *Altruizm...*, p. 98.

Therefore, charitable institutions and hospitals functioned even until the World War I thanks to private initiatives²⁹. The most distinguished philanthropists were Polish landowners and officials. The landowners by cultivating the tradition of their ancestors were trying to help both residents of their land properties and also financially supported newly founded or existing charitable facilities. The different officials from local governments or being heads of various ministries or lower-rank offices created, on the one hand, good conditions for charity, and often they became heads of many institutions as their chairpersons or members of care-providing councils. Next to these two groups, a lot of other people of varied backgrounds contributed much to develop and manage care and medical institutions. These were, for example, teachers, cultural personalities as well as ordinary people. It is their involvement in such activities that enabled the model of the citizen-social activist emerge. These people very often regarded the good of mankind as the good of the entire nation. Barbara Smolinska-Theiss clearly said that “mercy and help offered your neighbor in need”³⁰ was one of the sources of social work.

Summary

Care activities developed in the Polish lands from the Middle Ages were always closely associated with upbringing. By taking care of orphans or abandoned children, Poles attempted not only to create conditions for a normal life, but also to educate and prepare them to live on their own in the society. A key role played here the Church beside a contribution, especially financial of local authorities and lay people. The engagement of the entire society in public charity, coming both from a religion, but also straight from the heart was very inspiring. This was a method to create a sense of solidarity with and responsibility for another human being. During the period of the Partitions, such attitudes not only helped the weakest and dependent people survive, but, above all, allowed for keeping our Polish identity and upbringing the young Poles in a sense of service to others.

Due to the universal nature of philanthropy and altruism, they should be promoted now in educational work with children and young people³¹. According to the saying that words teach, but examples attract, if you want to bring up the young generation in a spirit of sensitivity to others and their needs, you should not only set yourself a good example, but also look for and indicate good examples

²⁹ B. Urbanek, *Idea opieki nad chorymi na ziemiach polskich w latach 1809-1914*, Wrocław 2001, p. 189.

³⁰ B. Smolińska-Theiss, *Źródła do pracy socjalnej. Od chrześcijańskiego miłosierdzia do liberalnej demokracji*, Problemy Opiekuńczo-Wychowawcze, 1994, no. 5, s. 3.

³¹ M. Łobocki, *Altruizm...*, p. 35.

from history to follow. The importance of good practices to follow is pointed out by different environments, especially psychologists and educators, who call it a method of modeling, learning by observation or an alternate learning³². Great individuals like St. Albert Chmielowski, Janusz Korczak or Mother Teresa can and should be pointed to as good examples to follow but less famous people or social groups who conditioned the existence of their communities according to certain values and traditions also need to be remembered by all means.

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³² B. Arska-Kryłowska, *Kształtowanie zachowań prospołecznych u dzieci za pomocą modelowania*, Warszawa 1982, p. 11 and further.

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Summary

Caring for others stems from the natural law and is one of the fundamental social functions. For centuries, the Church has been engaged in providing care rooted in the evangelical commandment to love your neighbor as yourself. Over time, lay people influenced by the Enlightenment ideals got increasingly involved in it. During the Partitions, health care organizations not only cared for people in need, but also had a much broader mission. Caring activities significantly shaped upbringing and built a moral value-based sense of community and responsibility for others to create social solidarity and bring up the young as people sensitive to others' needs.

Keywords: social care, upbringing, Partitions.

Działalność opiekuńcza jako czynnik wychowawczy na ziemiach polskich pod zaborami

Streszczenie

Opieka nad drugim człowiekiem zawarta jest w prawie naturalnym i należy do elementarnych funkcji społecznych. Przez stulecia działalność opiekuńcza prowadzona była przez Kościół i opierała się na ewangelicznym nakazie miłości bliźniego. Z czasem pod wpływem idei oświeceniowych, zaczęła w coraz większym stopniu angażować ludzi świeckich. W okresie rozbiorów organizacje opiekuńcze nie tylko zapewniały pomoc ludziom w potrzebie, ale miały również dużo szersze znaczenie. Działalność opiekuńcza miała znaczący wpływ na wychowanie oraz budowała poczucie wspólnoty i odpowiedzialności za innych w oparciu o pewien system wartości. Budowano w ten sposób solidarność społeczną i wychowywano młode pokolenie w duchu wrażliwości na potrzeby drugiego człowieka.

Słowa kluczowe: opieka społeczna, wychowanie, rozbiory.
