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JUSTICE AND MERCY AS A VALUE OF THE EDUCATION AND PEDAGOGY OF MERCY

What is the justice? What is the mercy? – as values of the human existence? What do they mark for education and pedagogy? What does it mean to be a just person? What does it mean to be a merciful person?

I desire to undertake these questions in my paper, to invite to the reflection over them on the ground of the education and pedagogy, being careful, that presented and undertaken problematic will make up the help in our personal analyses in this Year of the Extraordinary Year of the Jubilee of Mercy. In our analysis let's reach especially to the rich in this regard of the Biblical and theological tradition, as for the interpretation of this values.

Since antiquity we have encountered reservations about justice (*summum ius - summa injuria*, i.e. *extreme justice is extreme injustice*), which itself alone does not suffice to rebuild the appropriate interpersonal relations and to overcome existing divisions and disparities.

Justice – one of the most important, if not the most important moral concept that make up the human character, demands the addition of mercy, which provides the humanization of justice.

But the just person is someone without falseness or deceit. The just person makes the Law of God the guiding force of his/her life. The biblical concept of justice was summed up like this by the prophet Micah: "This is what Yahweh asks of you, only this: That you act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with your God" (Mi 6:8). In this words is a worldly justice that modern people can relate to. People are made just by doing what is right.

According to John Paul II, that argumentation does not depreciate justice, but requires it to be embedded in mercy, as the latter is "a more profound source of justice." With our diverse education, our upbringing, our knowledge of reality, we all need mercy, so that justice is not transformed into cruelty.

1. The proclamation of the new *ethos* and the new values in the *Sermon on the Mount* of Jesus Christ

This deeper embedding of justice can be found in Christ's Sermon on the Mount, regarded as a proclamation of new – Christian – ethics, in which Jesus expresses his stance on the ethics of the Old Testament and on the ethics of humankind, while presenting his own position. It is not only, as noted by Romano Guardini, a proclamation of new ethics, but also, in general a proclamation of an ethos¹. The Sermon on the Mount is the proclamation of a new hierarchy of values and a new order in social life, a new moral mentality in relation to the Decalogue, but featuring its fresh interpretation, which includes justice-related issues. While the justice of the Old Testament was understood as not doing unto others more than was done to oneself, according to Christ this was not enough. Remaining in the realm of a fair equivalent does not lead us out of injustice. Compensatory actions always tend to be excessive which result and lead to injustice. And Jesus summed it up in the beatitudes. The things the beatitudes stand for are very beautiful and very precious – things such as peace, goodness, joy; love, gentleness, compassion, mercy, integrity... The beatitudes are the badges of a true disciple of Christ.

If we met a just person in all probability we wouldn't be able to detect any outward signs of holiness. The real just person are hidden, and therefore go unnoticed. At the same time tradition allows that there may be certain moments when we get a sense of having encountered or glimpsed one of these just people. Such an encounter, or even just the possibility of it, can redeem a dark situation. As well as inspiring us, the just person also support us, and their standards and values are pointing in the direction we are to go.

It is necessary to rise above this level and enter the circle of higher values, not so much *self-preservation* – or caring about oneself and selfishness - but *self-denial*, which is not about a type of justice, but about creative freedom. In this way a person can become righteous, while searching for the power to break the vicious circle of iniquity and violence - and that power is love. Therefore, it is not an equivalence of feelings, but a free creative force of the heart that will overcome justice that enables one man to hate another.

Romano Guardini (1885-1968), an Italian-born German Catholic priest, author and academic, one of the most important figures in Catholic intellectual life in the 20th century, gives the impression of having observed very aptly the human anxiety in the quest of reaching a higher level of values and for a higher value of justice, which separates the external and internal aspect

¹ R. Guardini, *Der Herr. Über Leben und Person Jesu Christi*, Paderborn – München – Wien – Zürich, Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh Herder, 1983³, p. 75ss.

of an action. Apparently, only the external action is evil and can cause damage. We pay little attention to internal actions. The teaching of Christ defends the integral perspective of looking at a man, a perspective in which every action has its precursor, every action flows from a spring in the human heart, and tends to occupy a particular stance. The entire man should be good, not only his hand or foot etc.²

Another obstacle is the so called common sense, namely a notion that one should be good, but in a sensible manner. But we do not carry out justice by using sensible measures; we must act using the power of love, which creates freedom.

In general, ethics alone - as the pagans have shown us - are not enough. But a man will refrain from adopting them and human capabilities appear to be inefficient in this regard. Our heart defends itself against such requirements, because we need grace; these are not the ordinary rules of human existence because they challenge us to lead a higher and completely new life in the image of our heavenly Father himself who "sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Mt 5:45), or a life which at some level is above the just and the unjust, and thus we enter the order of supernatural faith, which absorbs human imperfections and even the revelations of the Old Testament.

Above justice, rises the free opening of the heart in its goodness. While justice satisfies the things that already exist, integrity creates something new. In justice we follow a certain order, while in integrity we enter into the joy of creative life (hence, "there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents"). Woe to the man and the world, if they prefer to only follow justice in life.

There is, however, genuine justice, which is regarded as the foundation of the throne (and therefore the governance) of God. It consists of behaving with righteousness unto every man according to one's essence, which becomes possible when we look at others through the eyes of love, when we reach a higher level of understanding of justice, represented by God himself, who is not so much the subject of justice, but who is Justice.

Our human justice is usually covered by a mask, which most often conceals completely different motives, hence human justice is always very suspect. We should strive to attain it, but we should not rely solely on it.

² Ibidem, pp. 85-93.

Perhaps we will acquire the essence of the proposal for a new approach to justice, found in the New Testament, when we approvingly quote Guardini "justice is placed not at the beginning, but at the end"³; this justice – let's call it ordinary or human, which we pretentiously try to place as the foundation of our way of thinking, is always something ambiguous and unclear. True, authentic justice results from goodness and it is only with freedom that it becomes creative. Only when a person learns, in the school of God's love, to really see the other person in accordance with his/her essence and responds to his/her in a proper way, and additionally learns to look at oneself from this perspective, only then does a person become capable of authentic justice. "In order to be just, you have to learn to love"⁴.

2. Mercy as a school and the way of upbringing leading to authentic justice

The teachings of Christ place mercy into this way of learning. The parables present a certain attitude, which a person grows up with and which is an expression of looking beyond justice and above the law – this is mercy, or actually the school of reaching love.

One of the manifestations of this mercy is forgiveness which is an existential moment where matters of spiritual development and a superior life project come to the fore. Forgiveness does not defeat the requirements of justice, aiming to right a wrong, or a scandal, or compensate for the injustice or does it redress wrongs.

Forgiveness can be seen primarily in relation to our sins, and them being forgiven by God; in Christianity it is in fact closely associated with the form of forgiveness which we ourselves give or refuse to give to our neighbour who wronged us. The question arises, however, about the amount of our "forgiveness" as Peter asked: "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times? "Jesus said to him: "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times" (Mt 18:22)

Forgiveness is not a contingent, or occasional notion, but a permanent part of existence, a constantly updated attitude of one person towards another person. In order to make listeners aware of this even more clearly, Jesus tells the parable of a king who settles with one of his people: the books suggest that one of his servants owes him a large sum of money, so the king

³ R. Guardini, *Der Herr...*, p. 309.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 305-306.

orders that he be sold along with his possessions, in order to cover the debt. When the man begs for mercy, his master forgives him the debt. When the pardoned man returns home, he meets another servant who owes him a much smaller amount than he owed the king. He confronts him and ruthlessly uses the law regarding debtors. When the king hears what happened, he becomes angry and applies to his debtor the measure that the debtor applied to his debtor. The conclusion is: "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from the heart" (Mt 18:35)⁵.

If someone has done us harm and admits his/her wrongdoing, we forgive him/her. But what to do if the person who caused the harm does not see it and does not want to admit it? According to the teaching of Jesus we should take heed of him. Wrong, once done, must not be treated as an opportunity to show moral superiority, but an opportunity to try to make this person realise the mistake and put it right. If we want to fulfill Christ's instructions we must first overcome the way our own heart responds to the wrong we suffered – the way of anger and the desire to enforce our rights – and only then will we become truly free.

In order to understand this, however, one needs a natural altruism, and a certain character, and certain quality. If we know people of this disposition, we can observe that this disposition might also have some negative attributes: weakness, leaving oneself to the mercy of others, not seeing things that should be seen, betrayal of truth and rulings, and even unpredictable outbursts of vindictiveness and cruelty. Others claim that the will of justice is in fact a lack of freedom and that one who forgives, frees oneself from the subjection to the harm caused to one by another person. In order to fully understand this, one needs to have a certain healthy distance from oneself and from others. This coin also has another side – a tendency to ignore the dignity and rights of a person all together⁶.

The act of forgiveness has a certain nobility – a value that is awoken and represented by a generous disposition. But the New Testament goes even further.

Christ does not base his admonition on social, ethical or worldly motives, but connects man's forgiveness with the one given by God. God is the first and the real Forgiver, man is a child of God. Therefore the source of forgiveness is the Heavenly Father.

⁵ C. Floristán, C. Duquoc (Edd.), *Il perdono*, "Concilium" 2 (22), 1986, p. 2-28.

⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 24-25.

Thus, let God forgive us, as we want to forgive those who have wronged us. If you are preparing for prayer and you remember that you have something against your neighbor, forgive him. Otherwise, that which you did not forgive him will come between you and the Father and make Him deaf to your supplication. God's forgiveness is grace and not something you earn.

Forgiveness - is mentioned in the penultimate petition in the Our Father prayer. This sentence applies to forgiveness: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us" (Mt 6:12). In Mark we find the following: "And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins" (Mk 11:25). Referring to the Lord's Prayer, Matthew notes: For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. (Mt 6:14)⁷.

Matthew (Mt 18:15) goes even further: "If your brother sins, go and point out his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won him over". Note that the one who has sinned, does not want to be forgiven, but is hardened in his wrongdoing. A person that has the biggest grudge against the victim is the one who harmed the victim. So, if you discover that someone has wronged you, you should not let bitterness form in you - go to that person and try to make him/her realise that he/she committed evil; only then forgiveness can come about. Forgiveness is therefore a part of something greater – love. Love takes the shape of forgiveness, when faced with a grievance. We ought to forgive, because we ought to love. Therefore, forgiveness is an exceptionally independent act. It flows out of itself, with participation in God's forgiveness. It is purely creative⁸.

A forgiving man – as well as one who loves his enemy is like the Father who makes "the sun rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Mt 5: 45). If you do so, your neighbor will understand that he caused harm, you forgive him and you "gain a brother in him." The relation of brotherhood is restored with the other man, a person who thinks this way becomes worthy. He realises that he has committed evil, he suffers, just like God when man falls from Him because of sin. A man who acts that way wants his neighbor, who wronged him, to admit to the evil he committed and thus to return to the community.

⁷ J. Orzeszyna, *Jan Paweł II. Pojednanie z Bogiem i pojednanie między ludźmi*, W: *Wielka Encyklopedia Nauczania Jana Pawła II*, Polskie Wydawnictwo Encyklopedyczne, Radom, 2014, p. 11.

⁸ C. Floristán, C. Duquoc (Edd.), *Il perdono*, "Concilium" 2 (22), 1986, p. 2-28.

Christ gives us an example of such forgiveness, forgiving those who mock and hurt Him - Father, forgive them (Luk 23:24). He is completely free. He had raised justice to an exceptionally higher level of grace.

Therefore God's forgiveness is not mere forgiveness, but atonement. He did not erase the guilt, but restored real "justice" – opening our perspective of life to salvation.

3. Towards the pedagogy of mercy and forgiveness

Given the fact that the attitude and the ability to forgive is not innate, but is formed as a result of the adoption of certain values – while showing concern, as indicated above, for their proper understanding, one can analyse and show how it develops in a person. Such analysis should refer in particular to the theory of relations with certain values. This appears to be adequate and provides useful counsel on this subject, as well as showing where and when we begin to encounter difficulties while forgiving, practicing justice and mercy as values.

We find important indications concerning this matter in religious literature, eg. St. Augustine in his *Confessions*, or the Confession of Leo N. Tolstoy, or in the work of other artists, as the painting by Rembrandt – *Return of the Prodigal Son*.

Pedagogy in its most mature version is called up to explore existential experiences crucial in human development, which can be symbolised in the parables (eg. the parable of the prodigal son), in paintings (*Return of the Prodigal Son*), in literary works (Leo Tolstoy's *Confession*), where the sample presentation will help to discover specific values, the opportunities and the need for practicing the pedagogy of mercy⁹.

Abstract

JUSTICE AND MERCY AS A VALUE OF THE EDUCATION AND PEDAGOGY OF MERCY

Justice – one of the most important, and conceivably the most essential moral notion belonging to man's propriety demands, supplemented by mercy which is the humanisation of justice. Since ancient times we meet reservations concerning justice (*summum ius summa iniuria*), which itself

⁹ K. Maliszewski, *Pedagogika na pograniczu światów*, Katowice, Uniwersytet Śląski, 2015, pp. 153ecc.

is not enough to rebuild appropriate relationships and to overcome existing divisions and disparities.

According to John Paul II, this does not invalidate justice, but requires a place in mercy as "a deeper source of Justice." Education, our upbringing, the discernment of reality, we also need mercy to form justice against cruelty.

One of the manifestations of mercy is forgiveness, which is an existential moment, in which matters of spiritual development and the project of a good life come to the fore. Forgiveness does not offset the requirements of justice designed to remedy evil, mischief, or compensate for harm or is compensation for any damage.

Pedagogy in its most mature versions is qualified to explore the neuralgic and critical moment of the development of man's existential experiences that can be found in the parables (such as *the parable of the prodigal son*), in painted images (image: *the return of the prodigal son*), literary work (Leo Tolstoy, *Confession*), which this short sample presentation will help us to explore specific and concrete opportunities and the need for education and the pedagogy of mercy.

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