

# *Liberal Education* in Selected Polish Pedagogical Concepts – in Comparison to English-language Concepts – with Particular Reference to the Enlightenment Period (Part 2)<sup>1</sup>

Katarzyna Wrońska

Krakow, Poland

katarzyna.wronska@uj.edu.pl

Keywords: liberal education, education, development, person, liberty, freedom, criticism, culture, knowledge, formation, civility, civil society

## **Liberal education in Poland in comparison with British concepts**

The term is currently translated into Polish in many different ways; the translated texts concerning *liberal education* include terms such as ‘general education’, ‘liberal education’, ‘liberal learning’, ‘free learning’ or ‘free education’<sup>2</sup>. The author believes

<sup>1</sup> This is an extended version of the text entitled *The Idea of Liberal Education in the Selected Polish Pedagogical Concepts of the Enlightenment Period*, submitted for printing to Karolinum Publishing House in the Czech Republic.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the title of M. Nussbaum’s *Cultivating Humanity. A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* translated by A. Męczkowska, *W trosce o człowieczeństwo. Klasyczna obrona reformy kształcenia ogólnego*, then the chapter *The Humanities and Liberal Education* in J. Maritain’s *Education at the Crossroads* discussed by S. Gałkowski as a programme of the so-called ‘liberal education’ where it is stated that “the name as such refers more to *artes liberales* than to liberalism”, (2003), *Rozwój i odpowiedzialność. Antropologiczne podstawy koncepcji wychowania moralnego*, Lublin, p. 83, then the title of the chapter *Liberal Education and Responsibility* from L. Strauss’ *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* translated by P. Maciejko *Wychowanie liberalne i odpowiedzialność* [in:] Strauss L (1998), *Sokratejskie pytania. Eseje wybrane*, Warszawa; then S. Hessen’s (1939),

Katarzyna Wrońska, PhD, Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Faculty of Philosophy, Institute of Education, Department of Culture Education and History of Educational Ideas.

that the reason for this is the poor, non-comprehensive reception of liberalism as a philosophy of freedom in the history of Poland combined with the ambiguity generated by liberalism as such or, rather, its two-track approach to the role that knowledge and education should play in life.<sup>3</sup> The doctrine originated in the late 17th century in England along with John Locke’s political writing and would then be expanded in the 18th century with the economic reflections contained in Adam Smith’s works. Let us consider some selected texts of Polish writers and scholars, who express in their writings the spirit of transformations taking place in the Enlightenment (and in liberalism) in comparison with similar achievements taken from the Anglo-Saxon cultural context. It would be advisable to consider Stanisław Konarski’s (1700–1773) position regarding the reform of the noble youth education as compared with the theory of George Turnbull (1698–1748), (a Scot) and his reflections on the liberal education of a gentleman; then we will juxtapose Grzegorz Piramowicz (1735–1801) and Stefan Garczyński’s (1690–1755) approaches, both supporters of common education available to all children, with the ideas

*O sprzecznościach i jedności wychowania*, Lwów – Warszawa, p. 156–208, translation of *liberal education* as a concept called by the British ‘free education’ or lectures by Cardinal H. Newman published as *The Idea of a University*, in which – in P. Mroczkowski’s translation – the term *liberal education* is translated as ‘free education’, cf. Newman H. (1990), *Idea uniwersytetu*, Warszawa, p. 227–229, 242, 245 (fragments of Lecture VII).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Szacki J. (1994), *Liberalizm po komunizmie*, Kraków – Warszawa, *passim*; Janowski M. (1998), *Polska myśl liberalna do 1918 roku*, Kraków – Warszawa, *passim*. The author further discusses this issue in her book: Wrońska K. (2012), *Pedagogika klasycznego liberalizmu w dwugłosie John Locke i John Stuart Mill*, Kraków, *passim*.

of Adam Smith (1723-1790) concerning the state-financed elementary education of the common people. Yet another approach is the one assumed by Hugo Kołłątaj (1750–1812) who, in the context of the development of *liberal education* in Poland, played a significant role as a reformer of Krakow Academy and whose work entitled *Stan oświecenia w Polsce w ostatnich latach panowania Augusta III (1750–1764)*, one of the few publications to discuss the otherwise often neglected areas of education in 18<sup>th</sup> century Poland, casts a new light on the understanding of the condition of Polish society in terms of knowledge acquisition. They all worked and created in the intellectual climate of the 18th century, thus sharing respect for reason and knowledge, a conviction that the educated elites should play a leading role as promoters of political reforms and social progress and sensitivity to the needs of the lower classes of society along with the desire to improve their condition.

Writing his *Observation upon Liberal Education* in 1742, Turnbull openly acknowledged Quintilian, Locke and Rollin's influence on his work; certain references to Shaftesbury and Hutcheson can also be found there. Similarly to Locke, he focused on the education of a gentleman; however, he was closer to Quintilian in his views in that he held that the school environment was more beneficial than a home environment in terms of a person's development. He stressed the positive influence of competition and rivalry, which he saw as mutual motivation to achieve better results within a peer group, in acquiring the skills of public speaking, criticism and argumentation for and against a given position, and in presenting one's opinions on particular issues. In the dispute between Quintilian and Lock he offered a compromise as a supporter of small schools, distinguishing them also for their

attention to the moral conduct of pupils by providing educators that were well prepared for the task. As far as subjects are concerned, again he found compromise between Locke and the supporters of classical education, including Rollin; he advocated the need to include within the programme of liberal education the history of one's country, the study of the mother language, mathematics and natural sciences, but also general history, literature and classical languages. Furthermore, following Shaftesbury, Turnbull appreciated and included in his programme art subjects that in contact with nature formed a sense of beauty and sensitivity, which in turn had a positive impact on one's moral development. In general, the programme was to include knowledge from many different areas that reflected in their own specific ways the natural as well as human and moral orders. Thus understood knowledge, presented under the name of *liberal education*, fulfilled its objective, i.e. it harmonised the human mind, emotions and will, strengthened an individual's character and ensured internal freedom or restraint, understood as the ability to control one's desires and whims and to follow reason and conscience in one's life<sup>4</sup>.

The work of Stanisław Konarski in the field of education in the theoretical sense can be regarded as the equivalent of Turnbull's theory: his reformative ideas had as their addressee a nobleman and landowner who was a counterpart of an English gentleman in aristocratic and later also in bourgeois circles. Given the educational reform initiated by Konarski, his contribution seems inestimable. Collegium Nobilium, founded by him, produced numerous worthy graduates who went on to become recognized public affairs activists, eager to improve

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Moore T.O. (2003), *Introduction* [in:] Turnbull G., *Observation upon Liberal Education*, Indianapolis, p. IX–XVII.

Poland's situation. It should be also remembered that education was the main pedagogical concept of the Polish Enlightenment and during the times of educational reforms initiated by the Commission of National Education, although the term covered also a formative aspect of acquired knowledge and skills. Formation was to be achieved through enlightening minds. Konarski emphasised the attributes of free, moral citizens who took responsibility for the future of their country. He believed, as did other reformers of that time, that proper morals and progress within the country were conditional upon the formation of educated and civic-minded citizens<sup>5</sup>. As a token of appreciation for his views and achievements in the area of education, he was awarded the *sapere auso* medal, made in his honour by decision of king Stanislaw August. It is not difficult to recognise the influence that modern European theory and culture exerted on him, as observed in the king's activities and initiatives<sup>6</sup>. Konarski, as the author of *De viro honesto et bono cive ab ineunte aetate formando* (a speech on how to bring up an honest man and a good citizen) and *Ordinationes visitationis apostolicae [...] pro Provincia Polona Clericorum Regularium Pauperum Matris Dei Scholarum Piarum*, known as *Ustawy szkolne*<sup>7</sup> defined the program of education in public schools and in the Warsaw-based school for nobility, the equivalent of a Western academy for nobility. They may well act as a basis for exploring his concept of *liberal education*.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. eg. Bartnicka K. (2004), *Wychowanie obywatela w polskich reformach szkolnych XVIII wieku*, "Horyzonty Wychowania", Vol. 3 (5), p. 63–83.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Butterwick R. (1998), *Poland's Last King and English Culture*, Oxford.

<sup>7</sup> The first work from 1754, translated into Polish by Juliusz Nowak-Dłużewski and published as a whole in 1955, cf., Konarski S. (1955), *Pisma wybrane*, Vol. II, Warszawa, p. 105–158; the second work printed in 1753–1754, translated into Polish by Wanda Germain and published in 1925, Cf. Idem. pp. 161–314.

The first of the texts established the issue of educational priorities as understood by Konarski. Since Poland "needed honest men and good citizens more than prominent orators, poets, mathematicians and philosophers" (whilst recognising them as "beautiful and necessary ornaments of education"), a uniform and primary objective of education was to "form noble youth into honest people and reliable citizens"<sup>8</sup>. As a reformer of the Piarist colleges, his achievements in this regard being discussed in his *Ordinationes*, Konarski modernised both a programme and teaching methods designed for future monks and teachers as well as for secular public schools led by the Piarists. However, what seems to be the best paradigm for drawing comparisons with Turnbull's concept of aristocratic education is Konarski's reformative idea of educating political elites carried out through Collegium Nobilium. What distinguishes them is not a programme (which included such mandatory subjects as Latin, French, German, general and Polish history, geography, rhetoric, mathematics, philosophy and, for an additional fee, Polish and international law, architecture, drawing, Italian, horseback riding, drill, fencing and playing an instrument), but rather a more stressed patriotic approach to educating the students of the Piarist colleges as they were being prepared for important public positions in the service of Poland. Their personal virtues, familiarity with the hardships of life acquired through hardening their bodies and physical exercises, their good manners, courtesy, the spirit of competition and camaraderie were to be the exemplary characteristics of national elites that were expected to utilise personal development and improvement for the benefit and welfare of their country.

<sup>8</sup> Konarski S., *De viro honesto*, op. cit., p. 158.

Moving on to the projects of the 18th century which were aimed at educating the common people, let us consider whether that area of education also contained elements of *liberal education* accommodating the ideas of the Enlightenment, in line with the current trends of political and economic liberalism.

Adam Smith addressed the issue of education in the context of necessary expenditure of the state in areas that required public financial support. He drew attention to the fact that public resources should be earmarked not only for the defence of the country against external enemy and for the justice system, but also for the maintenance of institutions that would facilitate trade and, notably, for institutions that educated youth and taught religion; in other words, provided education to people of all ages. In his views he hardly transcended his age, acknowledging divisions into upper and lower social classes and the ensuing differences as far as the need for education was concerned. However, he held that every state should be concerned in providing some degree of education even to the lowest social classes. He asserted that “for a very small expense the public can facilitate, can encourage and can even impose upon almost the whole body of the people a necessity to acquire those most essential parts of education”, meaning the ability to read, write and count and add to them the basics of geometry and mechanics, as the necessary introduction to “the most sublime as well as to the most useful sciences”<sup>9</sup>. This, he claimed, could be achieved through parish schools, frequently established in local communities (which, according to Smith, worked exceptionally well in Scotland, although English parishes also undertook many educational initiatives). The state interventionism advocated here by such a supporter of a free

<sup>9</sup> Smith A. (1776), *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, Vol. II, s. 525–526.

economy and believer in the power of the invisible hand of the market must have been justified by strong arguments. Smith valued the martial spirit in the nation; he believed that the nation’s healthy spirit would lead to happiness whilst an unhealthy spirit would lead to misery<sup>10</sup>. The state should therefore prevent the spread of “that sort of mental mutilation, deformity and wretchedness, which cowardice necessarily involves in it.” This is not enough, however, because even more contemptible than a coward is “a man without the proper use of the intellectual faculties of a man” since his character’s essential element of human nature is “mutilated and deformed”<sup>11</sup>. Even minimal education is able to free people from superstition, ignorance, blindness and irrational enthusiasm and it diminishes the threat of social disorders whilst promoting good manners and discipline among the people. The less unpredictable and more critical and rational society is characteristic of free countries, liberated from despotism. Consequently the state should supervise the education of its citizens to a degree that prevents the demoralisation and degeneration of the people. The state is responsible for this because, in a civilised and economically developed country, along with the progress of the division of labour, there appears a tendency among the body of workers to specialise in a narrow field only, which unavoidably restricts their creativity. The adverse effects of this affect foremost the state of their mind and feelings; they become numb, insipid and devoid of noble and deep sentiment and are rendered susceptible

<sup>10</sup> Smith distinguished here the contribution of ancient Greek and Roman institutions, which stressed the importance of undertaking military and gymnastic exercises by their respective citizens. As for the value of musical education, he said that even though it was effective in Greece, Rome seems to have achieved as much and perhaps even more, without it. *Ibid.*, p. 526–528.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 528–529.

to excessive routine and lack of reflection. This dexterity at a particular trade often seems to be acquired at the expense of one's intellectual, social and martial virtues. Without the interventionism of the state, aimed at preventing intellectual degeneration of the people, the welfare of the whole society would be adversely affected. Therefore, Smith suggests that everyone who wishes to have the right to perform one's learned occupation in a village or a town should be obliged to undergo an examination that would test his basic skills in writing, reading and counting<sup>12</sup>.

In a country divided into social classes, certain social groups have more free time to spare, are wealthier and willing to invest more time and money into the education of their children – after all, they are not burdened with the need to promptly provide their offspring with a craft or occupation that would allow them to manage financially. A greater amount of free time promotes a favourable climate for parents to encourage their children to explore and acquire knowledge and skills which are the ornament of one's life. The rationale behind *liberal education* manifests itself best on this higher level of education, especially for those who are interested in liberated sciences and skills as well as in the acquisition of expertise in a given discipline. The level of interest and motivation of people who are willing to pursue higher education is so high that the state does not need to undertake any activities to strengthen this sector of education. According to Smith, even regular salary received by academics in advance can be discouraging insofar as it compromises the quality of their area of study within a scope of research conducted by them. Consequently, their scientific and didactic work should be financed by students themselves.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 526.

Furthermore, lectures should not be compulsory, as the number of attendants is, in Smith's view, the best reflection of a lecturers' abilities.

The author believes that the above discussed proposal, derived from Scottish practice and theory, may be compared to the concept presented by Stefan Garczyński in his work entitled *Akademia Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej* (1751). Garczyński criticised the condition of social, economic and political relations in Poland and exposed the negligence in the area of education, particularly among the lowest social classes. Analogically to Smith, he advocated that the common people, living in ignorance and cultural deprivation, should become the concern of the state. Such remarks were directed mainly at nobility and clergy, who should educate (from the pulpit) and finance the establishment of parish schools and the presence of teachers in every village and town as part of their public or church functions<sup>13</sup>. Admittedly, Garczyński's proposals show certain similarities to the ideas advocated earlier by Locke, who placed an emphasis on the moral development of man, especially on restraint, prudence and resourcefulness, and criticised the dependence of the poor on charity and social care, considering work and self-maintenance to be the best remedy for poverty. As he said, "*omnes liberales artes* are needed primarily by nobility, but also by clergy, *pro recreatione anima curis occupati*"<sup>14</sup>. For the middle classes he advocated the learning of a profession, for villagers preparation for work on the land, for paupers and bailiffs spinning yarn, for the elderly

<sup>13</sup> He established a school in Łomnica and renovated and equipped a school in Zbąszyń, as mentioned on the website of the high school in Zbąszyń named after Garczyński (Liceum im. S. Garczyńskiego), cf. [http://www.lozbaszyn.oswiata.org.pl/joomla/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=254&Itemid=129](http://www.lozbaszyn.oswiata.org.pl/joomla/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=254&Itemid=129) [date od access: 22.10.2012].

<sup>14</sup> Garczyński S. (1751), *Anatomia Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, Warszawa, p. 146.

and for children plucking feathers<sup>15</sup>. He further suggested that teachers in villages should take care of children of 3 and 4 years and prepare activities for them that would teach them “modesty and good manners” so that “the common people would not be so uncouth and would not go looking for better places than the ones they were born into”<sup>16</sup>.

This is consistent with the tone of the works of Grzegorz Piramowicz from the time when he acted as secretary of The Association of Elementary Books within the Commission of National Education, as he expressed the need to expand the idea of parish schools and to provide education to all children. In *Powinności nauczyciela* we can find the following statement; “The assignment of studies among schools in villages and towns was performed for a specific purpose [...] namely that education was not to be done for education’s sake, but for the actual benefit of the people in their future lives. Those who thought that the intention was to turn villagers into scholars could not be further from truth. In establishing the programme of studies, the focus was placed upon the following: that neglecting proper education of the common people would be detrimental to the whole state, that the enlightenment of the mind leads to good management at home, that work done in an informed and reasonable manner is more effective, that education teaches the obligations of a good man, of which the common people would not otherwise be aware, in other words, that education of the common people is needed to make them and the entire society truly happy”<sup>17</sup>. Such areas of study included

reading, writing, counting and simple measurements that would be useful in running a household. One of the suggestions concerning the education of children was not to meddle with their minds with futile digressions lest they should “put on airs and graces”; learning was to bring some tangible results (in terms of “health, household and obligations towards God and one’s neighbours”) and at the same time it was to be well considered, therefore “children should be free to ask questions and express doubts and the said questions and doubts should be given proper and considerate attention”<sup>18</sup>.

Garczyński’s progressive (liberal) and reformative thinking also manifested itself in his criticism of nobility and clergy for their failure to properly fulfil their mission; it should be noted, however, that his critical opinions in this regard did not compromise in the quality of either the state of nobility, designed to be the honour and ornament of the state, or clergy, meant to preach the word of God. From his perspective, nobility – or *nobilis* – can be considered in their relation to the lower classes; and so a nobleman is seen as being all the more noble if he takes good care of his subjects, yet is diminished in his nobility if, dressed in expensive clothes, he is found surrounded by poorly dressed, neglected and miserable villagers. Assuming a moralizing tone, Garczyński asserted that indifference of the upper classes to the fate of the common people is not only contemptible but can also be regarded as a sin for which one will have to answer to God<sup>19</sup>. In his references to the clergy, the author of *Anatomia* expressed his regret that the attributes of the Polish faith were “misery and poverty” and he feared that they would spread among the people such tendencies

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 147. It bears similar to Locke’s plan of occupational schools for the poor from 1697, cf. id., *An Essay on the Poor Law* [in:] Goldie M. (ed.) (1997), *Locke. Political Essays*, Cambridge, pp. 182–200.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>17</sup> Piramowicz G. (1959), *Powinności nauczyciela oraz wybór mów i listów*, Mrozowska K. Wrocław – Kraków, p. 72

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 229.

as negligence, complaining, cursing, disorder and vindictiveness; all of which he believed to be frowned upon by God<sup>20</sup>. He did not wish to promote what he described as “greediness for wealth”, but merely stressed the importance of honesty and decency in line with one’s social standing and vocation; he also feared that poverty may pull one away from reflections on eternity whilst earthly possessions may be used to exercise one’s detachment from them<sup>21</sup>. He was also critical of low quality sermons, of negligence in duly admonishing people, especially parents in relation to their obligations to take care of and educate their children, of failure to teach catechism to parish children, prepare them for participation in the church service and encourage them to participate in the life of their local churches so that they would feel appreciated, loved and distinguished. He criticised the splendour of churches and numerous markets and fairs organised at the expense of sermons that hardly ever provided a strong incentive to cultivate virtues or a moment of reflection, frequently remaining just a superficially performed ritual<sup>22</sup>.

Similarly strong criticism of the condition of liberated sciences and skills in different sectors of education, as well as in the public life of Poland in the 18th century, can be found in Hugo

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 226 and 228.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 227.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 215. Strong critical opinions related to the Catholic Church in Poland that were scattered throughout *Anatomia* were censored in the second edition prepared by Józef Załuski in 1752. One could wonder whether such a tone of the work did not make the reception of the work and popularisation of the ideas it contained (pro-bourgeoisie, rooted in the Enlightenment and critical of *liberum veto*, extensive privileges of the nobility, self-seeking aggrandizement and anarchy against the king, treated as though he was an imposed, rather than a chosen by the nation, monarch) more difficult. The issues of the criticism of *liberum veto* and wrongly understood concepts of freedom of nobility and false patriotism, were also present in the works of Kołłątaj (*Stan oświecenia*, p. 158, 164), Konarski (*O skutecznym rad sposobie*) and Leszczyński (*Głos wolny*).

Kołłątaj’s (1750–1812) writings. In the context of the issue of *liberal education* being discussed, it is worth mentioning his work entitled *Stan oświecenia w Polsce w ostatnich latach panowania Augusta III (1750–1764)* as well as his reform of the Krakow Academy in line with the educational ideas of the Enlightenment. Following its reform in 1783, it became the main school (university) divided into two colleges (physical and moral) supervising other schools within the Crown territories. The Academy housed a botanical garden, a clinic, an observatory and rooms equipped for natural and physical research. It also established its own medical and literature faculties<sup>23</sup>. As far as lower levels of education were concerned, Kołłątaj appreciated the input provided by Konarski in terms of reforming monastic schools whilst he remained highly critical of the Jesuit education. In his opinion, Konarski’s reforms were torpedoed by “the stupidity and fanaticism” of the backward circles of the Polish gentry during regional diets and even by the conservative part of the Piarist Order, openly criticizing the new philosophy (the so-called *philosophia recentiorum*; the views of the supporters of Descartes, Leibniz or Locke) and experimental sciences. They were painfully conscious of Konarski’s criticism manifested in his recognition of the extent of damage caused by “neglecting the Polish language and bad taste in literature” and his drawing attention to the fact that “Poland was far behind other European countries in terms of skills, having neglected the old studies and having failed to implement, or even recognise, the novel and improved ones”<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. eg. Markiewicz M. (2002), *Historia Polski 1492–1795*, Kraków, p. 201.

<sup>24</sup> Kołłątaj H. (1953), *Stan oświecenia w Polsce w ostatnich latach panowania Augusta III (1750–1764)*, Hulewicz J., Wrocław, p. 16.

Whilst emphasising the merits of the Piarists in reforming education in Poland, Kołłątaj remained sceptical of the educational model developed by the Jesuits. He wrote that “they showed a truly remarkable skill in taking control of religious bigots and weak-minded people, so far unmatched by other orders,”<sup>25</sup> and pointed out that even though the Jesuits had a much greater scope for activity, they started to improve the quality of their schools only after the reforms conducted by the Piarists. Apparently the mediocrity of education must have been particularly visible at the common school level, which was not supervised by the state. Whilst academic schools became modernised following the reforms initiated by the Piarist and Jesuit orders, common schools remained neglected. To quote Kołłątaj, “Poland did not lack school education, but it lacked a good school education”<sup>26</sup>. A “school-educated mind” was generally understood as a mind that was “unfledged and not prepared for social and civic life” and “school education was a laughing stock”<sup>27</sup>. The quality of liberated sciences and skills in monastic schools was very poor, which manifested itself in neglecting the command of the Polish language and “incomprehension of grammatical rules and dry concepts in rhetoric”<sup>28</sup>. Kołłątaj was convinced that the education of youth in Poland was met with indifference, the consequence of which being that education remained under the control of religious orders rather than the state which was something he disapproved of<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 45–48. Kołłątaj’s views have a strong Enlightenment accent here – awaiting central decisions (here regulating educational

To conclude the presentation of the Polish conceptions of the time of the Enlightenment, one cannot fail to mention the utilitarian trend, best represented in the 18th century by Stanisław Staszic (1755–1826). If we attribute to Locke, within the context of liberalism, the advocacy of education understood in the categories of utility and benefit in terms of primary goals of education (related to a moral character and existential vocation of individuals), then we may consider Staszic’s writing to constitute a continuation of this trend in Poland although his standpoint is more republican than liberal. This tendency manifested itself in his focus upon the supremacy of knowledge related to the sustenance of life, with other areas of knowledge regarded as secondary to it in importance<sup>30</sup>. Clearly critical of metaphysics, though certainly not of philosophy as such, and enthusiastic about natural sciences, Staszic did not see room for reflections that were not based on experience within general education, believing them to be reserved for intellectuals. Primary schools were to focus on moral education, promoting the virtue of hard work in accordance with the laws of the state and educating in the areas of history and geography of the country, religion, arithmetic and geometry, which served practical purposes, whereas secondary schools, along with occupational schools, were to teach

practice) from the highest authority: an enlightened monarch or his agenda. S. Wołoszyn mentions the results of research conducted by a German scholar, Emil Waschinsky (in: *Das Kirchliche Bildungswesen in Ermland, Westpreussen und Posen*, Breslau 1928, vol. 1), according to whom the indifference of clergy and their unwillingness to allocate at least some part of huge revenues for educational purposes were the major impediment to the development of parish schools in Poland, op. cit.: *Źródła do dziejów wychowania i myśli pedagogicznej* (1995), vol. 1, Wołoszyn. S. (ed.), Kielce, p. 546. This is concurrent with the criticism of clergy by Garczyński.

<sup>30</sup> As he said, “the time allotted to acquire more interesting things than necessary information will be used for strengthening body, formation and gaining agility” Staszic S. (1926), *Uwagi nad życiem Jana Zamoyskiego*, Kraków, p. 31.

how to increase wealth in the state and improve its achievements; the main school, however, was in Staszic's view to be accessible by a select few students only, chosen for "a high level of imagination and sense of humour required"<sup>31</sup>. His belief in reason and its emanation in the form of statutory law led Staszic to entrust educational issues, along with home education, to the national commission of education; in this his position differed from the concepts of Locke and Smith. The commission's prerogatives were to be so far-reaching that even the issue of departure of the youth abroad to study at foreign universities was conditional upon its consent; as for women, they could go abroad only after they had brought up good citizens for Poland<sup>32</sup>. Such a view on education, with a primary focus placed on knowledge based on experience and related to biological human needs and to the wealth of the nation, distances it from the idea of *liberal education* - at least in those of its elements that accentuate the scope and extensiveness of knowledge, therefore including the humanities and emphasise its diversity in terms of methods of studying reality, which need not necessarily be experimental and measurable. Even if Locke can be criticised for not appreciating the value of arts, or even rhetoric, logic and Greek in the education of a gentleman, his ideology remains nonetheless in line with the idea of *liberal education* in that it places knowledge among values that guarantee the fulfilment of the aim of human desires - that is happiness (alongside health, good reputation, good conduct and the anticipation of eternal happiness), and construes methodology in accordance with

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 23 and 26. He was critical of metaphysics, claiming that „a metaphysician will not turn a common person into an intellectual, but rather into a bigot” and he suggested that theology be limited to clerical seminaries. Ibid. p. 27–28.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 39.

students' interests, based on their curiosity and self-motivated willingness to learn, as opposed to coercion<sup>33</sup>. In Staszic's case, an equivalent of Locke's rejection to give weight to the humanities in forming the concept of education can be found in his political and economic ideas; introducing the representatives of the bourgeoisie in the Sejm or granting personal freedom to peasants, developing trade and craft and the related cooperative movement.

Summing up, the Enlightenment in Poland from the perspective of its educational concepts and the idea of *liberal education* reflected in them, it could be said that the spirit of Enlightenment manifested itself in the form of a belief in reason, the improvement of the condition of Poland thanks to the national programme of system transformations and educational reforms, with the national commission of education taking control over it. Liberal views in favour of the rights of the bourgeoisie and the development of cities, along with critical opinions as to *liberum veto*, the subjection of peasants, the pursuance of private interests by the gentry, lack of appropriate concern about the condition and education of the common people on the part of the Church and the authority's dependence on the clergy, were all censored and therefore could not be heard well enough. It also failed to prove effective enough to introduce a stronger tone in favour of liberal education, even for the elites. Private education, as a motto of classic liberalism, proved to be successful in Britain; in Poland, giving publicity to the issue of education had better perspectives and so the option of state education, as part of the national

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Locke J., *Thus I Think* [in:] Goldie M. (ed.), op. cit. pp. 296–297 and Locke J. (2002), *Myśli o wychowaniu*, translated by Heitzman M., Warszawa, pp. 150–212.

cause, prevailed. However, even if considered in terms of civilisational achievements that placed Poland at the forefront of the accomplishments of the 18th century Europe, this route was ultimately doomed in the light of the facts that sealed the partition of Poland. Accordingly, the chances of the development of *liberal education* in Poland notably diminished, particularly in comparison with the Anglo-Saxon culture.

Whilst England in the 19th century witnessed further developments of the idea, thanks to the works and activities of Cardinal Henry Newman and John Stuart Mill, which provided strong counterpoise to the scientism developed by conservative liberal Herbert Spencer, in Poland their equivalents seemed to be polemical articles raising objections to Spencer's interpretation of education, with the voices directly in favour of *liberal education* considerably less prominent. This issue, only hinted at here, requires a more thorough analysis, but perhaps the liberal views, provided that they were connected with anticlericalism, once again had no chance of being popularised<sup>34</sup>. Among the critical statements against scientism those written by Jan Władysław Dawid and Iza Moszczeńska and published in "Przegląd Pedagogiczny" at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, seem particularly noteworthy. They provide valuable argumentation in defence of classical and humanistic education. To provide an example, J.W. Dawid in his work entitled *O klasycyzm* stressed the importance of a pedagogical purpose of education, which could not be attained based only on occupational teaching. As he stated, it is wrong to assume that "the knowledge of certain facts and

human or social rights would in itself lead a man to act in accordance with those facts and rights; that the knowledge of hygiene would produce people who live in moderation, take care of their health, or that the knowledge of civic rights and obligations would form good citizens, capable of fulfilling their obligations and reasonably use their rights"<sup>35</sup>. What is needed is the development of a moral character, understood as giving "the will a steady and good direction [...] by implementing certain notions that would be in line with ethical goals, by developing certain feelings and by consolidating certain habits and behaviours"<sup>36</sup>. Dawid believed that, at an educational level, this task could be carried out indirectly through contact with culture, learning languages and the history of humankind, and by awakening and preserving "extensive intellectual interest" or "human view of the world" instead of a narrow, mechanical and utilitarian one. Only this kind of preparation, described by Dawid as general, providing "simple elements of knowledge, i.e. particles constituting our thinking in any direction" can be used as a basis for specialist education in any given area<sup>37</sup>. Viewed from this perspective, *liberal education* could perhaps be replaced by the term *general education*, since a focus is on a comprehensive, general dimension of education, with no references made to freedom. In her work entitled *Pożyteczne i niepożyteczne nauki* I. Moszczeńska reflects upon the meaning of particular areas of knowledge in human life and subsequently supports comprehensive education at a higher level, providing additional arguments in favour of this

<sup>34</sup> The Polish version of the 19th century liberalism was more clearly associated with positivist ideas; it would seem that the ideas of a liberal humanist J.S. Mill failed to get much response or continuation in liberal circles.

<sup>35</sup> Dawid J.W. (1890), *O klasycyzm*, „Przegląd Pedagogiczny” IX, Vol. 5, p. 50.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 50 and 51.

option. Starting from the definition of the basic goal of a school, which is to “make an individual capable of self-improvement, provide a basis for self-study and indicate the ways of acquiring this education”, she argued that schools should teach in a way that would “comprehensively develop students’ skills [...] and absolutely abandon any claims to let out into the world fully prepared and complete individuals”<sup>38</sup>. This reminds one of the Enlightenment principle of being governed by one’s reason as well as a classically liberal rule of turning this governance into the condition of being a free, self-governed man, a master of one’s life. She believed that practical subjects (including learning languages) should be taught based on thus formulated goal of education, so that their acquisition would require minimal intellectual effort and would be as easy as possible, with more effort devoted to studies that are only directly practical, but instead teach the skills of logical reasoning and critical assessment, develop a sense of orientation and the ability to interpret current events in broader historical, cultural or social contexts; in other words, those which, to quote the author, make us “people in the broadest meaning of the word”<sup>39</sup>.

The two concepts, voiced in the hard times of Poland’s bondage are the manifestation of ever present humanistic trend in Polish tradition of educational theory; its Enlightenment-rooted dimension with references to the culture of reason does not disappear, its classical dimension in terms of a general nature of knowledge is stressed and there is even a hint of its connection to individual skills and a thirst for knowledge and

<sup>38</sup> Moszczeńska I. (1899), *Pożyteczne i niepożyteczne nauki*, „Przegląd Pedagogiczny”, Vol. 18, No. 11, p. 103.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

self-development as the motives behind the acquisition of comprehensive education and the basis for self-education. Their continuation in the interwar period is the theory of the pedagogues of culture. In Bogdan Nawroczyński’s texts we can find arguments in favour of the concept of the selection of pedagogues and mixed schools and against the model of uniform schools (i.e. the same schools for all children, with a uniform educational programme). The author advocated a model that would be able to recognise and acknowledge different skills possessed by children and so it would be also able to educate the elite (aristocracy) of a democratic society, the characteristic features of which would be “intelligence, talent, genius, nobility, strong character and profound and extensive knowledge”<sup>40</sup>. In turn, Sergiusz Hessen, drawing mainly on German humanities understood as the study of the spirit, developed a concept of general education, combining its modern meaning with W. Humboldt’s neo-humanism and extensively justifying the need for its renewal in contemporary pedagogy<sup>41</sup>. After the ideologically barren period of the Polish People’s Republic, the ideas of the pedagogy of culture have reappeared, finding continuators among scholars and practising educators. Along with its heritage, the concept of *liberal education* is being implemented in pedagogic discourse, with its meaning semantically formed in the interwar period as general rather than liberal education, yet related to the concepts of the autonomy of formation and the notion of education as an inclusion of an individual in the world of culture.

<sup>40</sup> Nawroczyński B. (1987), *Uczeń i klasa* [in:] idem, *Dzieła wybrane*, vol. 1, Mońka-Stanikowa A. (wybór), Warszawa, p. 232.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. in more detail, Hessen S. (1939), *O sprzecznościach i jedności wychowania*, Lwów – Warszawa, p. 156–208.

## Summary

It seems that it would be more appropriate to refer to the foregoing overview of *liberal education* in Poland as a general education. "Liberal education" still remains a niche term, which supposedly results from the limited reception of Anglosaxon theories, including British liberalism. In Polish history, patriotic ideas were given precedence at the expense of liberal ones and a similar propensity was also reflected in education. Regardless of the established practice of using the term, but bearing in mind its Anglosaxon equivalent along with its "liberal" sense, this form of education can be promoted and appreciated for at least three reasons. Firstly as an antidote to consumptionism. Secondly, as knowledge associated with freedom of choice, criticism, pluralism and tolerance rather than constraint and aimed at reaching the balance between the "general" and the "liberal" dimension of education. Thirdly, bearing in mind how disappointed today's students are with university programs which they consider as tickets to good jobs and stability that often turn out to be unsuccessful and result in a significant rate of unemployment among graduates; as the model of education which provides guarantees only in terms of inner values or self-actualization, comprehensive development and improved self-esteem, with only prospective gains in terms of external values related to social status, financial benefits or fame. If any of these reasons convince the young generation of Poles, it means that we have come across something other than just the reception of *liberal education* in Poland; that Polish theories do contribute to the contemporary understanding of the concept of *liberal education*.

**Katarzyna Wrońska**

Krakow, Poland

katarzyna.wronska@uj.edu.pl

Keywords: liberal education, education, development, person, liberty, freedom, criticism, culture, knowledge, formation, civility, civil society

## Liberal Education in Selected Polish Pedagogical Concepts – in Comparison to English-language Concepts – with Particular Reference to the Enlightenment Period

### Abstract

In the English language, although the term liberal education has multiple semantic meanings, it may still be interpreted in the new sense of the meaning. The idea refers to an ancient and medieval model of education within the liberal arts (*artes liberales*), developed in the era of Enlightenment philosophers' theory to promote knowledge, self-dependent and critical thinking as a path to individual freedom, political and civil liberty and social progress. It seems that this is one of the ideas that could build the European identity. What is its perception and understanding in Polish philosophical and pedagogical theory? In Poland, this term, if it is translated directly as "edukacja liberalna", directly evokes liberalism as political and social doctrine. Thus, "kształcenie ogólne" is more often used but fails to reflect the meaning of liberal education in its entirety. It ignores in fact the relation between knowledge, understanding and freedom/liberty, critical attitude, openness to the plurality of reasons, independence, tolerance for diversity of views and models of good life. The main objective of this presentation is to trace selected Polish educational concepts and the presence of elements of Anglo-Saxon tradition of liberal education in them, with particular reference to the Enlightenment.

Katarzyna Wrońska, PhD, Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Faculty of Philosophy, Institute of Education, Department of Culture Education and History of Educational Ideas