Introduction

The 20th century is a particular period in the history because of the development of varied areas of social life. It is a fact that compared with past ages mankind has never had to deal with such fast progress of economy and civilization. These transformations often resulted from scientific initiatives, although they – at the same time – stimulated those initiatives, practically in every sphere of human activity. As a consequence science strode into a new age of research thought, which we regard from today’s perspective as modernity or modernism. The ideas proclaimed by noted scholars of this period not only revolutionised the past century under many aspects, but also influenced current scientific thought.

In that time both environmental mathematical and humanistic social sciences experienced a rise in activity. The effects of exact scientific solutions are – mainly because they impact on comfort and improvement of life quality – clearly noticeable (plane, television, laser etc.). But the results of humanistic and social science research activity stay often enough unnoticed or are ignored. This article will focus precisely upon these humanistic branches of scientific development, with specific reference to educational science.

Contemporary educational scholarship has exactly described concepts and analyzed stances, whose diversity and multitude confirm the renaissance of pedagogical thought and its methodological grounds both in the world and in Poland [1, 2]. Consideration of space forbids discussing all of them. This article will outline two distinct philosophical concepts, which have engendered this novel trend in education. In order to strengthen educational interactions it is recommended to digest the personalistic education with so-called “existential acid” [3]. The synthesis of those major scientific currents has given rise to the personal – existential pedagogy.
Personal – existential education basis

The educational concept under discussion has its basis in personalism. The term personalism, formed on antipodes of naturalistic – materialistical scientism, is supposed to be used for the first time in a positive context in 1799 by Friedrich Daniel Schleiermacher /4/. Formerly, for example in French literature, the appellation le personalisme referred to egocentric attitudes or was used to name a characteristic way of individualism /5/. But a diametrical development of modern personalism occurred first in the 20th century, mainly by the German philosopher – William Stern. Thanks to a progressing fascination with personalistic vision of the human being there have been developed many different variants of this current. The most important are, inter alia, metaphysical, ethical, social – moral, religious, philosophical and theological personalism /6/. Chronologically, the greatest representatives of diverse variants of personalism in the world and in Poland include N. Hartmann, I. Kant, E. Mounier, M. Scheler, K. Barth, R. Guardini, D. Bonhoeffer, M. Buber, R. Ingarden, J. Maritain and F. Sawicki, W. Granat, M. Gogacz, M. A. Krapiec /7/.

The word personalism derives from the Latin term persona (in Greek: prosopon), translated as “form, human entity, subject of actions” /8/. The deeper sense of this term relates to its etymology. The grounds of personal – existential pedagogy are based especially on Christian personalism. Hence, from exactly this perspective it will be tried to point out some of essential traits, which inspired the education process. This philosophical–social direction, steeped with humanism, has been popularized mainly by personalists from France such as Emanuel Mounier and Jacques Maritain.

For Jacques Maritain, a solid and thorough human education had to be based on foundations of Christian vision of human being, because such a concept constitutes „the most genuine concept of a human being” /9/. According to this every human being has its own mind and free will. Owing to this fact he differs from an ordinary physical entity, which is confirmed also by his dualistic nature that manifests itself through the existence of a soul, beyond the material body. The spirit, according to Maritain, constitutes the root of personality. Obviously, as per Christian study, the spirit is the residence of God. A human being – created in God’s image – possesses unalienable dignity and can find the full satisfaction only by striving toward to the absolute values, to the highest divine Absolute. It is worth mentioning that because human dignity is connected with human rights, some of teachings of Jacques Maritain were referenced by the United Nations in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1959 /10/.

In the thoughts of the Thomist Jacques Maritain, it can be assumed that the depicted personalistic anthropology is characterized above all by integral conceptualization of a human being as a person. It has to be pointed out that, what he understood under the term of a person, was “the universe with rational nature gifted with the freedom of will and thereby constituting a world-independent whole” /11/. In the quoted definition it is easy to notice that free choices of a human being are what is essential for his valuable life. But it has to be marked that those choices will be adequate for a human being only then, „if the life of the spirit and the freedom will be dominating in him above the life of passion and senses” /12/.

To Emmanuel Mounier, personalism is a kind of spiritual revolution /13/, intended to defend a human being torn apart by the modern world. For the materialistic vision of the world more and more often blots out the transcendental nature of a human being. In order to avoid the immanent shallowness of life it becomes necessary for the people in the age of modernity not to yield to the delusive and shallow temptations of an ordinary day, but to head toward to the whole of humanity, transcending the formulaic schemes. In all spheres of life and above all referring to the intentional and intended process of education, it cannot be forgotten that every human being is unique and one-time. This assumption implies the necessity to considerate the principle of unpredictability of human behavior on our pathways, but also wakes the consciousness of the influence of our own uniqueness towards them.

What kind of sense is added to the education by personalism? Without inquiring into the concept of Christian personalism, not yet addressed here, the most important sense is the subjectness as the main principle relating to the master – student relationship in the process of educa-
tion. As an answer for the above-asked question we can agree with Bogusław Bieszczad that “the sense of education is (...) the personal development of a human being, the essence of which is to lay oneself gradually open to the horizon of the world of values by implementing them and participating in their world” /14/. Personalism in education is therefore understood as an attitude of respect towards a human being, but also as an attitude of giving recognition to rights and responsibilities of a person as well as the concern about his growing on the way of values towards the full autonomy.

The concept of education, as suggested by Fr. Janusz Tarnowski, is based mainly on paradigms of personalistic education. However, its contents are orientated on the educational situation of specific people; therefore it seeks its scientific basis also in dialogue, philosophy and in existentialism /15/. The philosophy of dialogue will be treated in greater detail later; first it will be necessary to discuss the intellectual current called existentialism and its influence on the personal – existential pedagogy.

Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) is often identified as the creator of this modern philosophical current, notwithstanding this existentialism conforms to scientifical goods of the 20th century. Kierkegaard exerted great influence upon existential philosophy, however it flourished especially in the periods before and after WWII. The full development has been achieved about 1930 due to the German philosophers – Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers, they are also credited with the promulgation of this thinking stream /16/.

Two types of existentialism are usually distinguished: theistic and atheistic existentialism. One of the most recognizable representatives of the Christian existentialism is Gabriel Marcel, on the other hand the lay existentialism has been spread mainly by Jean Paul Sartre /17/.

Most important for this article the problem of using some elements of existential philosophy in the elaborated educational concept of the border of the Christian pedagogy. As it turns out, the atheistic character of some sections of this philosophy fails to render it unusable by Fr. Janusz Tarnowski, although his concept is focused upon Christian education.

Contrary to personalism, existentialism is characterized by a pessimistic vision of the human being. A man’s freedom – examined with categories of existentialism – is not, what a human gets, but rather what dooms him to the necessity of making hard decisions. Human existence becomes thereby transitional, exposed to failure, which causes a person’s anxiety, angst, and concern about the correctness of life’s choices. It can be said that drama and tragedy are indivisible attributes of the human existence. It is illustrated with paradoxes, in which a human being (defined sometimes as a “thinking reed”, “animal rationale”, “a saint and a sinner”) seems normally to be involved /18/. The particular paradox, above all in terms of personal – existential pedagogy, is the dual „I“ of a human being. The first one has got an external, mental character, but the second „I“ is the deepest one, which the essence of human existence is expressing itself through. The dramaticity of a human soul consists – according to Fr. Tarnowski – in suppression of the second „I“ with the first one. Owing to this fact, the personal – existential education is that the «essence» of a human being spews out of his subconsciousness and becomes a force that consciously guides the movements of the psychic «I»” (ibidem).

While making efforts to individualize the existential traits characteristic of Fr. Tarnowski’s thought /19/, a special attention has to be given above all to the following aspects. Primarily the aspect of a “person” has been more fully activated by putting his existence (which is characterized by variability – is transitional) in the foreground. Further, thanks to a individualized approach to a human being, which has been hardly emphasized in the existential philosophy, personal – existential pedagogy is far from an abstract perception of the subjects of education – it is centered upon exactly existing people. Moreover, basing on existential beliefs concerning the apersonal life (according to Fr. Tarnowski’s thesis a human being, despite his ability to a personal life, can not necessarily „live his life to the fullest”, relegating himself to a superficial existence as the result of yielding an anonymous opinion or fashion) a particular significance for the personal – existential pedagogy gets the task of an authentic development of the personal life. Also, every human person in the perspective of the suggested education concept has his own and unique „place, date, family, character” – in other words, his uniquely characteristic educational situation. Also significant is
the existential involvement, which becomes – by making a being guided only by his own choices – a necessary challenge in order to fulfill his ambitions, to actualize his development. But the free choice, according to the assumptions of existentialism, constitutes a particular characteristic, which discerns the human being from the whole world. Finally the last (but not least) aspect taken from existentialism – the dialogue as a constitutive quality of a human person.

Three of these aspects, which characterize existential thought, can be used for the means of education. They can be accepted as pedagogical categories and will be described in the next part of this article.

**Educational concept by Fr. Janusz Tarnowski**

The personal – existential pedagogy, also called Christian existential pedagogy, is classified as a contemporary educational current. Fr. Prof. Janusz Tarnowski (1919-2012) is considered to be the forerunner and most noteworthy representative of this pedagogical concept in Poland. He proclaims that it happens in the modern society that certain activities are sometimes classified as education, despite having nothing to do in fact with the educational process. As an example of such antinomies he mentions training, administrating, coaching, moralizing and personality formation /20/. In opposition to those activities he reminds us what an education really is, offering at the same time an innovative educational concept. The question of why these certain activities have nothing in common with education in the exact meaning will be answered a bit further; in the meantime let us outline fundamental foundations of the personal – existential educational system.

From the personal – existential perspective education is understood as „a totality of ways and processes that help the human being, especially through the interaction, to actualize and develop its humanity” /21/. The definition above (which is a modification of a well-known definition suggested by the German professor Klaus Schaller) emphasizes some crucial aspects that fall in line with the personalistic education thought. Firstly, if the aim of education is thought to be actualizing and growing in one’s humanity, it is easy to notice an analogy to the Christian anthropologists, who for this reason, emphasized the fully humane dignity of every human being. It means that the education, as an activity with a humane mien, obligates the educator to respect the student without regard for the differences (intellectual differences, age etc.) between them. Considering this people who pretend to be educators should avoid preponderating attitudes towards their charges. Moreover, they should even avoid treating them like children. Janusz Korczak wrote: „It is one of the most mischievous mistakes to think that pedagogy is a science of a child. There are no children – there are people, but with a different range of concepts, a different experience, different desires, different game of feelings” /22/.

Secondly, in the modified definition of Fr. Tarnowski, “manners and processes” that help a person to actualize his humanity happen mainly (but not only) on the way of interaction. Education is thereby treated as a meeting of subjects, who participate in it – a teacher and a student. This introduced educational relation has a clearly dialogic character. Both of them (teacher and student) have an affect on each other, hence, it can be even assumed that they educate one another /23/.

To the consciousness of this mutual influence of the education subjects, meaningful since the subjects achieve their highest level of humanity, there is added an educating – educational action, which is focused on oneself. The expression „particularly through interaction”, which has been used by Fr. Tarnowski does not actually exclude the self-education. It means for the teachers that they have to develop themselves constantly through self-improvement of their own scientifical-didactic expertise, and for the students that they have to aim to the readiness to take over the rudders of the responsibility for their own future and development.

A clearly outstanding aspect of understanding education, from the personal – existential perspective, as a meeting, is transcendence. Beyond the meeting in a horizontal dimension, i.e. between the educator and the student, there is – according to Fr. Tarnowski – one more type of a specific meeting. It takes place in a vertical dimension and applies to the Absolute alone, i.e. to God. It is indeed exactly him, who allows the student to have a chance – as Janusz Tarnowski wrote – to touch „the core of own existence” . In
other words, with the transgression it is assumed that a human being is capable of overstepping himself and effacing the border between the superficial “I” and the deep “I”.

As mentioned earlier, education is concerned with releasing the authentic „I” from the superficiality of the subconscious “I”. But to many people the true “I” rooted in the real depth of humanity seems to be eclipsed by the external character, which constitutes a kind of a mask. That mask is nothing but delusions, thoughts or feelings – sources of anxiety, angst or joy, which hinder this particular person from discovering the essence of a human existence. The mask that covers the real person is made of simulated projections, which can result from many factors. But usually they happen as a result of alienating processes, which emerge of other peoples’ opinions, particularly of the officiously mapped aspirations of other people (for example parents’ ambitions transferred to the children; these ambitions can apply both to the choice of the future profession and of the hobbies – which are not uncommonly imputed to the “little people”). A human being, who falls into a paradox of the dual “I”, has gotten rid of the authenticity of his own image in favour of sham attitudes, which are allegedly a guarantee of making a good impression on others. Due to the pressures of environment his development fades into the background, and even becomes unsafe. In order to avoid reification, objectification or an absolute alienation it is necessary to disengage oneself from the mask, in other words to finish with the delusive life and to begin a life that is based on absolute values. Fr. Tarnowski notices that the moment of tearing off the student’s mask is a peculiar way of waking up the person to an authentic existence. As we remember, for the author of “Wprowadzenie do egzystencjalizmów” (“Introduction to existentialism”) education does not consist of fabricating, but precisely in waking up the student.

Acknowledging the terminology of a personalist from France, we will ask a question: how can we head for awakening of students? In the words of Father Tarnowski: *we should start with a belief that in every human being exists the real, deepest “I”. So the aim of education is to arouse that place inside – using dialogue, authenticity. For example in the seminaries – it is not about seminary students to achieve a kind of a tinsel, an external gloss and to stay innerly unchanged. As long as we won’t help a human being to awaken his inside, it will be just an empty declaration, beautiful words. The art of education consist first of all in “awakening” the inside in oneself and then to help by releasing the deepest “I” in other people.* /24/. Therefore, the aspect of involvement should be added to the already mentioned dialogue and authenticity. The pointed out properties form the quintessence, which results of fusion of personalism and existentialism for the needs of an innovative current in pedagogy. According to the assumptions of personal – existential pedagogy the effectiveness of education is conditioned inter alia by those three pedagogical categories: authenticity, dialogue and involvement.

Authenticity is on of the conditions that enable to release oneself of delusive and apparent educational effects, illustrated by a metaphoric mask, which covers the real inside of a person. Because a relation between two human beings is clearly noticeable in Fr. Tarnowski’s definition, it is demanded for the authenticity to be mutual, i.e. to characterize both student and educator. Due to this, a teacher should not achieve his goals via rigid schemes. In that way he would be relegated to play a role as an actor in the theatre. By avoiding the projections, which are delusive and incompatible with his image of himself, his task is to constantly aim at making his own image always appropriate to the reality. First then it is possible to “tear off the mask” of the student, i.e. to awaken his person to an authentic existence /25/.

Two major stages (initial and fundamental) are key to achieving full authenticity /26/. In the first of them authenticity has a negative sense and it expresses itself in tearing off that mask, so it assumes replacing the falsified identity for an objective image. The second stage reflects the positive meaning of authenticity, it consists in being “fully oneself”. This stage is usually related an action, which reflects the thoughts, feelings and will of a person. However it has to be mentioned that – similarly as in the case of Jacques Maritain – this action is not giving in to the mood or succumbing to temptations, because it has to express itself in a free choice that emphasizes the adhesion to the chosen Highest Values, i.e. in the fidelity to the deepest “I”. This kind of freedom in education from the personal point of view characterizes – as Franciszek Adamski has correctly noticed – “not the lawlessness, inability to take on
any obligations, but (...) the ability to choose good and fulfill it: continual searching for what has already been learned and recognized as worthy of our pursuit – for this is the way of our personal improvement” /27/.

As it has already been mentioned, the educational relation is a purely dialogic relation. Taking this fact into consideration, Fr. Tarnowski has dedicated great attention to defining the essence of a true dialogue, often appealing to that unquestioned authority in the philosophy of dialogue – Martin Buber. On the basis of Buber’s postulate – that a human is a purely dialogic being – a fundamental meaning gets the ability of making an authentic dialogue, especially in the process of education.

According to some of the interpretations, a dialogue can be also an ordinary conversation or discussion. Meanwhile, to Fr. Tarnowski, this conception has a much brighter meaning. A conversation means rather an ordinary exchange of thoughts, while a discussion consists in portraying the own attitude without any special concern for understanding and for any cooperation with the discussing people /28/. Both conversation and discussion can be just a sham dialogue. That is the reason why those two communication forms cannot be fully associated with an authentic dialogue. In order to study the essence of the real dialogue, personal – existential pedagogy explains its forms and types.

The forms of dialogue, distinguished by the forerunner of personal – existential pedagogy, are composed of three components. These are: method, process and attitude. Method of dialogue means in other words the way how should be held the communication between the subjects of education to guarantee them a mutual understanding (intellectual aspect), closer acquaintance (emotional aspect) and cooperation (volitional – praxeological aspect). Therefore dialogue includes the whole human, the sphere of his thoughts, feelings and actions. The process of dialogue takes place, when at least one of the elements thus outlined exists between the dialogue partners. But the readiness to actualize those elements, i.e. opening to understand the other person, making a closer acquaintance to him and cooperating with him tells of the attitude of dialogue.

Among the types of dialogues Fr. Tarnowski pays attention to three meaningful ones. First of them is factual dialogue, which includes the whole reality that surrounds people. It occurs, when dialogue partners are aiming, through the exchange of their observations, at the value of TRUTH. This cognition is the more objective, the more multidimensional will be the attitude of each dialogue participant. The second one is personal dialogue, to make it happen required is a mutual opening to the other man, externalizing of one’s deepest “I”. Showing inner experiences to the partner is intended to aim at the values of GOOD and BEAUTY. However it is worth remembering that this type of dialogue is based on freedom, wherefore revealing to another person one’s innermost feelings, penchants, moments of rapture but also falls should occur voluntarily. Finally the third type, which is existential dialogue. Its proper objective is defining the value of LOVE, which allows to dedicate one’s own life to another person. Since it is assumed that the expression of this type of dialogue should consist in dedicating oneself to the disposition of the partner, achieving it depends upon getting rid of egotism, pride and the sense of superiority.

The implementation of Fr. Tarnowski’s approach to education begins at the moment of meeting, when the teacher enters the world of the student. It is crucial to learn and understand the student’s unique existence in an attitude of respect and kindness towards him. Yet, first of all the educator has to determine the factors that condition the actual situation, in which the student’s existence stands and to verify his needs: his aspirations, concerns, anxieties. The described pedagogical activity is indeed the engagement (involvement). This term derives from a French word engage, which initially described a soldier, who has voluntarily undertaken military service (as opposed to a conscript soldier). Involvement thus means, in the personal – existential pedagogy, a voluntary and selfless dedication to a case or a person.

**Conclusion**

Without a doubt the 20th century was the heyday of educational science. Already existing pedagogical trends have been intensively developed and many innovative currents have been formed. Even so, this multitude of educational concepts does not yet guarantee a comprehensive
and accurate conceptualization of what exactly the educational process is. It can be said that education includes a multidimensional interaction, which – since it is oriented on a person – requires nicety. It is therefore unsurprising that no definition proves completely satisfying to everyone. However it shall be assumed that all attempts of interpreting the subject of pedagogical studies, which aim at achieving the development of a human being, are admissible, provided that those studies tending toward pseudo-education are not tolerated. Based on this premise it is not hard to notice that the personal – existential educational concept stands clearly in opposition to all treatments, which have nothing in common with education.

Coming back to the educational antinomies, let us again recall the activities of Fr. Tarnowski, which are sometimes – in spite of having very few in common with education and acting often actually in opposition to education – identified with this process.

An exemplary reflection of such activities is included in the postulate of the „formation of personality“. If we speak about affecting the student by formation of his attitudes, we restrict ourselves to an unilateral acceptance of the activity by teacher. Meanwhile, as it has been shown, the pedagogical process has an interactive character, so it would be a mistake to degrade the person of a student into a role of a passive object.

Similarly, we can talk about an educational antinomy by referring to the concept of „coaching“, which is sometimes by mistake used as a synonym with education. No amount of this activity can be substituted equally for the educational process. Moreover, coaching allows to improve a specific sphere of a person only in the technical dimension and it will never impact on the whole personality. In opposition to such superficial interactions, personal – existential pedagogy emphasizes in its assumptions the integral development of a man.

Also, the act of continually evaluating, i.e. exercising an inordinate control, continuous verification of a person (called more often as an entity…), has little in common with an actual education. Formalized relations are not conducive to an atmosphere of kindness, what makes it more difficult to achieve the educational goal. Besides, the goal alone seems to be malformed. Education should aim at good effects, oriented on a person. But in the case of administrating it is not effects, what matters, it is rather a restrictive abiding by certain norms, basing on which some specific external goals should be achieved. Considering the guidelines, brought out of personalism in this elaboration, it would be something impermissible to act influenced by the motto “to trample over people to achieve the aim“. Assuming that a person is the subject of all educational actions, personal – existential pedagogy always puts the human in the center of it’s researches and activities.

Training has been discredited by the originator of personal – existential pedagogy as an extreme type of actions that should be in fact purported to be pseudoeducation, as it basically consists of imposing certain behaviors by punishments and rewards. Whatever positive results it might achieve rarely last very long.. Also a training is deprived of anz humanism and it’s impingement is associated with animals. This pejorative connotation clearly disqualifies treating training as any sort of education.

Training is a massively different approach from that of Fr. Tarnowski. Some people called Fr. Janusz Tarnowski “Korczak in a cassock“. Analogically to the “Mały Przegląd” (a weekly edited with children) that has been initiated by the Old Doctor (Korczak), Fr. Tarnowski has initiated an editorial series entitled: “Dzieci i ryby głosu nie mają?” (“Children should be seen and not heard?”). According to Korczak, the publications encourage the intellectual activity of children and youth in age of 5-15 through answering many questions on many themes. This and many other initiatives of Fr. Tarnowski certify his longstanding pedagogical activity basing on the educational dialogue, which is outlined in this elaboration. Almost to the end of his life, Father Tarnowski remained devoted to the improvement and refinement of his pedagogical theories, thereby reinforcing the permanence of the education process by his own example. The task of a human is to continuously head towards to transcend himself. Therefore stands to reason that – since the human development should have no ending – the educational activity should be never reduced to any certain stage of his life. In fact, education should not be confined within any temporal frames. This special and particular process should be developed throughout the entirety of a learner’s life.
Notes


/13/ Mounier, E. (1960): Co to jest personalizm? Kraków: Społeczny Instytut Wydawniczy „Znak”.


/21/ Tarnowski, J. (1993b): Jak wychowywać?, Wydawnictwo ATK.


