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PAEDAGOGIA CHRISTIANA

BEING ALONE TOGETHER IN EDUCATION

1/45 (2020)

Toruń 2020

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Editorial: Being Alone Together in Education

At the time of writing, people around the world are becoming more acquainted with solitude, as a result of a pandemic to which governments have responded with policies that isolate people or households. Education is more solitary too, with schools and universities closed in many countries. Is this new? In troubled times throughout history, people have been separated and have had to live and learn in solitude or in families without institutional support. And even in good times, people have learned more in households, from family and on their own, in the first few years of life than they learn in the rest of their lives in formal education and work. This special edition of *Paedagogia Christiana* explores some of the many ways in which aloneness (solitude, silence and loneliness) interacts with formal and informal education throughout our lives. There are 'good' and 'bad', pleasurable and painful, forms of aloneness, and they can, in many different ways, provide opportunities for learning, just as they can limit or block learning. This special edition of *Paedagogia Christiana* brings together scholarship on solitude, silence and loneliness and their relationship to learning across the lifespan.

The editors of this special issue met several years ago, having realised that we had both researched and written books on solitude and education. To each of us, separately, this seemed like a small, niche, area of research. And yet when we organised the first symposium on the subject, we found interest from around the world and from a very wide range of academic disciplines. This publication is one of the fruits of that symposium. Notwithstanding

the varied interests and disciplines of those who took part, a principle was agreed by the organisers that this should not simply promote solitude and denigrate communality. We were interested in the various forms of aloneness that can be experienced within, as well as outside, communities. Hence the symposium's title: *Alone Together: An International Pandisciplinary Symposium on Solitude in Community*. The phrase 'alone together' was taken from the writings of the Scottish philosopher of community, John Macmurray. Writing in 1956, he said:

> [W]e can be ourselves only in relation to our fellows. Personal relations, moreover, are necessarily direct. We cannot be related personally to people we do not know. We must meet; we must communicate with one another; we must, it would seem, be alone together. (Macmurray, p. 169)

That is, we need other people not least so we can be alone. The psychologist Winnicott said something similar, just two years later in 1958: 'The basis of the capacity to be alone is a paradox; it is the experience of being alone while someone else is present' (Winnicott, 2017, p. 243). That is one of the earliest development features of babies and, as Galanaki says, 'a major sign of emotional maturity' that 'enables the child to simply exist without having to react to external stimuli or act with a purpose'. '[O]nly in this way', she continues, 'can the child discover his or her own personal life – that is, his or her true self' (Galanaki, 2005, p. 129).

Learning is so often done alone, together. I read a book, at home or in school or university, and am absorbed in the book even as other people are around me; I am swallowed up by a Rembrandt self-portrait in the middle of a busy gallery; the ecstatic sadness of Bach's *St Matthew Passion* transforms my understanding, just my understanding, in a hall amongst hundreds of listeners. Even as we learn from another person – a novelist, an artist, a composer – from hundreds of years ago, we may be learning in solitude, however many people we are with. It is easy to mistake the personal and relational character of learning with the need to listen to the teacher, or the need to keep our heads down focusing on a specific task. The obsession with everyone being 'on task' all the time in schools led one educationist to complain:

> So often when a child looks out the window, we say she's off task. … Well, she may be on the biggest task of her life. (Noddings, quoted in Kessler 2000, p. 41)

We would therefore like to commend to you the articles in this issue, each in its own way an exploration of how we might understand the educational significance of aloneness.

Two philosophical accounts, from Christophe Perrin and from Piotr Domeracki, describe how solitude has been understood historically, as a feature – for some, the dominant feature – of human life. Whereas Perrin notes that we may learn more about solitude from imaginative literature than from professional philosophy, Domeracki finds the strands of philosophy that seem to leave us fundamentally alone and proposes a monoseological discourse on the dialectic of solitude and community. The counselling psychologist Richard Cleveland describes the positive value of solitude and one of its most popular contemporary manifestations in the practice of mindfulness. Teresa Olearczyk, as an educationalist, writes of the positive influence of silence on personality development. Learning in solitude is well-represented by the research of Katarzyna Wrońska, an educationalist and philosopher, who describes a history self-instruction in Poland, whilst the negative impact of loneliness is described by social pedagogist Barbara Chojnacka, in her work on children who have caring responsibilities for members of their own families. Young people may *choose* solitude, of course. Sandra Bosacki gives a psychologist's account of how adolescents may use silence in good – and sometimes in not-so-good – ways during this crucial period of their development. Anyone who has met an adolescent will be familiar with the creative use of silence.

It is good to pause for a story. The storyteller and researcher of storytelling, Catherine Heinemeyer, captures all the mystery of a story and of how we understand solitude in and from stories. Learning is rarely so entrancing.

Joanna Król in her history of education tells of the paradox of young people within a politically oppressive regime being pushed into solitudinous creativity. This has echoes of Graham Greene's cynical Harry Lime, in *The Third Man*, who said:

> In Italy for thirty years under the Borgias they had warfare, terror, murder, bloodshed – but they produced Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and the Renaissance. In Switzerland they had brotherly love, 500 years of democracy and peace, and what did that produce? The cuckoo clock. (Greene and Reed, 1949)

This is hardly an advert for oppression: it is, rather, a note on how oppressive regimes tend to separate people, creating all kinds of damaging forms of solitude – which, as a result of people's capacities to be alone, whilst together,

can also trigger a burst of creativity. Religions, too, bring people together. As a theologian, Gillian Simpson's personal account of her learning religion takes us into the community, out of the community, and back in again – aloneness and togetherness in a fascinating lifelong dance. And just as oppression may paradoxically stimulate creativity, caring for people may just as paradoxically create loneliness. Magdalena Leszko, Rafał Iwański and Beata Bugajska write of the loneliness of caregivers, as does Piotr Krakowiak. Both these strands of research provide hope, too, and ways of learning from these situations. A harder experience is described for prisoners, in Aneta Jarzębińska's article on the effects of being taken away from one's family. This is a similar experience to that of the great Roman writer, Ovid, whose exile for the last decade of his life is eloquently analysed by Olga Szynkaruk. Ovid is one of Perrin's key authors, and in such ways these articles – written in solitude – manage to speak to each other. Our final article is Aleksander Cywiński's account of how countries, as much as people, may experience solitude or loneliness – self-imposed isolation, or rejection by other countries – which in turn affects our individual experiences of solitude and togetherness.

The creation of this special issue of *Paedagogia Christiana* has itself been an experience of bringing people together from many countries, and from many disciplines, to speak with distinctive voices on how we learn alone, together. All the editors and authors would welcome correspondence from readers on a topic that clearly fires the imagination.

Julian Stern and Małgorzata Wałejko
York and Szczecin, March 2020

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Some Notes on the Phenomenon of Solitude

Zapiski o fenomenie samotności

Abstract: In philosophy, the problem of solitude has traditionally been either ignored or treated trivially. And when philosophy tackles solitude, it often relies on two unconvincing presuppositions. The first is that to be alone one has to put oneself first; the second is that solitude can be both good and bad. What ensues from this two-pronged approach to solitude? *Solitary solitude* is both sought-after and happy, and *lonely solitude* both sustained and sad. But once the distinction has been set up, solitude is still not sufficiently described, because neither form of solitude is really solitude. The first one is sheer *aloneness*, and the second refers to *loneliness*, far removed from the phenomenon of *soloist solitude*.

Keywords: Solitude, aloneness, loneliness.

Abstrakt: W filozofii problem samotności był zwykle ignorowany lub traktowany trywialnie. Gdy próbuje jej stawić czoła, często bazuje na dwóch nieprzekonujących presupozycjach. Pierwsza zakłada, iż aby być samemu, trzeba postawić siebie na pierwszym miejscu; druga – że samotność może być dobra i zła. Co wynika z tego dwustronnego podejścia do samotności? Samotnicza samotność, poszukiwana i szczęśliwa, oraz osamotniona samotność, długotrwała i smutna. Jednak gdy

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przedstawiamy owo rozróżnienie, samotność wciąż nie jest wystarczająco opisana, ponieważ obie te formy nie są tak naprawdę samotnością. Pierwsza jest najzwyklejszym „byciem samemu", a druga osamotnieniem, dalekim od fenomenu samotności – „solisty".

Słowa kluczowe: samotność; bycie samemu; osamotnienie.

In philosophy, the issue of solitude usually remains unaddressed, if not radically silenced. Its intrinsic difficulty perhaps partially explains this. In one sense, indeed, speaking of it is impossible, since to evoke it overtly is already to doubt its reality, and perhaps even to concede that it has none. Incapable of not having an interlocutor, I always speak for someone, if only for myself, and I am therefore never alone, not even with myself – the person who is alone, as has been said, is always in good company, no matter how 'bad' it may be (Valéry, 1962, p. 275). As a silent dialogue of the soul with itself, thinking requires alterity – plurality is not necessary, duality suffices. And let us agree that the discussion of ideas which is philosophy always implies a community, and thus the intervention, the mediation, of others in my own reflection – even if only one other, who will be no more alone than I am, which the other stops me from being since I am with them. Thus, as soon as it is pronounced, solipsism denies itself. It is derisory, delirious solipsism that is only the thesis of a 'madman ensconced in an impenetrable blockhouse' (Sartre, 1943, p. 284, quoting Schopenhauer).

Conversely, knowing something of solitude is ultimately to be incapable of recognizing it, for the person who is truly alone is not capable of – or at least not in the mood for – speaking about how things are with her/him, and, consequently, about what solitude is. We have to decide: either this solitude is merely accidental, and I will act once again as if the other were there, even if my voice has an echo only in the air and in stone; or this solitude is original, and it cannot be a matter of a me who, for better or worse, can neither be, nor be what and who I am, without others. Solitude is strange, therefore, in that – like death – it is not there when we exist, and governs as sovereign when we exist no more. As it is beyond experience and incommunicable, strictly speaking, this would justify us in saying nothing of it: about that which we can neither live nor say, we must remain silent.

It has been clear since Antiquity that no person can exist in solitude – no-one can produce and thus suffice unto him/herself – and thus, that no person can be a human being in solitude. Whatever lives outside of the community

is either a beast or a God: the philosopher thinks about no other thing less than s/he thinks about solitude. Philosophy is always a meditation on society, at the very least on sociality, and not on solitude. Whence the silence of the great canonical thinkers on the subject – a silence that is not deafening since it is not even heard as such, with some rare exceptions that do not emerge unscathed from two fundamental aporias that beset any discourse concerning it. For when philosophy comes to treat the question of solitude, from afar or in detail, it relies on two presuppositions whose deconstruction is not easy.

The *first* requires that solitude be determined on the basis of the *ego*, that it be understood as a mode, a passion or volition of the *ego*, whatever its status – transcendental or otherwise – may be. This means that in praising or condemning solitude, it is subject to one and the same condition of possibility, with the presumed thesis that in order to be alone, it is necessary to be – to be in the primary sense – and that is to say, to be as an *ego*.

The *second* relates to the ambivalence of solitude, which is a blessing for some, but a curse for others. This ambivalence is all the greater for the absence of any initial ambiguity in the word. The solitary person is indeed traditionally seen as either a reprobate or one of the chosen few. And if one wants to decide which it is on the basis of the person concerned, solitude divides itself into *solitary solitude*, the solitude that I chose and that I want in separating myself deliberately from others, and *lonely solitude*, the solitude to which I am subject and that I lament, as separated from my peers against my will. With this distinction in hand, the radical invisibility of solitude is guaranteed, for here we have not two distinct forms, but two different appreciations of it, which in changing give the impression that it is plural.

It is the second of these presuppositions that I would like to discuss here, for at present there are doubtless more psychologists or sociologists than there are metaphysicians, particularly with an interdisciplinary approach to this obviously pressing and paradoxical question in our age of hyper-connectivity. Announced in 2011 as a 'national issue of great importance' in France, in the United Kingdom of 2018 the struggle against solitude became the office of a minister (Prime Minister Teresa May, named Tracey Crouch as Minister for Sport, Civil Society and Loneliness). In democratic societies, solitude is gaining ground, increasing with age (in France, 7% of those in the 15–25 age bracket are counted as isolated, 11% in the 25–39 age bracket, 12% beyond that) as much as it is increasing in time (in France, 5 million people older than 15, i.e. one in ten citizens, only rarely meet and spend time with their family, friends, neighbours or acquaintances, which is a million more people than six years ago). One speaks of 'solitude' in this sort of

inquiry, but after having defined what qualifies as an objective situation of isolation (never physically meeting the members of all one's networks of sociability – family, friends, neighbours, colleagues from work or collective associations – or having only quite episodic contacts with these different networks), it is often admitted that the feeling of solitude does not entirely cover the objective isolation thus defined. Certainly, the subjectivity of the experience affects so much the expression of the feeling of solitude that 38% of people who are objectively isolated declare themselves not to feel alone: nearly one in three people (29%) feel alone often or every day, against 16% who can rely on a number of networks of sociability. In sum, there are solitude and solitudes; in other words, there is solitude and what it is not – *desolation* as well as *isolation*.

The term *desolation* comes from the low Latin *desolare*, which means 'leave alone', from which we also get 'devastate', which is to say transform into solitude by devastation. Thus pillagers desolate the country. Desolation is a calamity, a destruction, a devastation. What is desolate has been abandoned, left to its own devices, without any help or recourse to anything else in the face of danger. Desolation is thus not solitude for two reasons: first, I can be familiar with solitude without being in desolation – the sailor, alone on the sea, in the absence of any imminent peril, is not desolate; second, I can be familiar with desolation without being in solitude – if no-one comes to my aid, I can be desolate among a crowd. We should add that the opposite of desolation is consolation, the consolation that implies the presence of the other in order to relieve pain, to lessen the difficulty experienced.

The term *isolation*, for its part, refers back to the Italian *isolato*, which means 'separate like an island' – *insula* in Latin. Isolation is the state of a thing separated from things that share its nature: distanced, separated, withdrawn. Isolation is not to be confused with solitude either, for the person isolated is separate from the others because the others have separated themselves from the person. The isolated person has been excluded. Isolation is therefore the emotional drama experienced by the conscience that, deep in suffering, would like to entrust itself to and communicate with the other, but is incapable of doing so. This is the case of the person suffering from a contagious disease confined to an isolation ward (Lulu suffering from cholera in Alban Berg's opera), of the prisoner (the Count of Monte Cristo in the Château d'If), the madman (those depicted by Hogarth in *Bedlam*), of the dissident (Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn or Andreï Sakharov, famous opponents of the soviet regime, who were interned in psychiatric hospitals or deported to the Gulag), of the disgraced (that of the superintendent Fouquet, initially

banished and then imprisoned for life in the fortress of Pignerol), of the exiled (Ovid in exile on the edge of the Black Sea or Brecht after the *auto-da-fé* of his works), or of the undesirable (Philoctetes to Lemnos in Sophocles' play or Napoleon on the island of Elba). But isolation, as instantiated by quarantine, seclusion, incarceration or sequestration, is not solitude for, on the one hand, I can be alone without being isolated – I can be alone among my friends, alone in my family – and, on the other hand, I can be isolated without being alone – by being isolated in my prison in sad company.

Once we have clarified this, what we can say positively about solitude? The term *solitude* is originally the state of a place that is deserted, that is uninhabited or distanced from populated places. Solitude is thus a hideout, a retreat, a shelter, a refuge. It is in this sense that Petrarch inherits the image of the port, of the haven, borrowed from an immemorial Latin tradition – from Cicero to Pierre Damien, passing through Ambroise, Jerome, Augustine or Paulin de Nole. But as I've already said, if there exists a whole *litteratura perennis* on solitude, it has no *philosophia*. Being 'happy and calm', solitude is for philosophy

> in truth, a fortified citadel and a port at the heart of all storms. What would the person who flees it be exposed to, if not to being far from a port, to being blown around the ocean of events, to living between the reefs and to die between the waves? (Petrarch, 1346, I, p. iv)

Solitude is thus always the solitude of a place first of all; it describes a place that has been abandoned, marginalized, withdrawn from, but also describes, by extension, its effects.

The term can thus designate a characteristic, an aspect, an atmosphere (we speak in this sense of the solitude of forests, of the solitude of the night) or a feeling. Hence solitude is at once a physical and a psychological state, a state of mind bound to this factual state. The country vista that one sees becomes the image, the reflection of the soul that remains inside the person, in such a way that the place where one lives becomes the mirror of the being that one is. Whence the two senses of the word solitude as it is usually employed: on the one hand, solitude as the situation of someone who, in fact, is alone, in a momentary or durable way, voluntarily or involuntarily; and on the other hand, solitude as a feeling of the person who feels alone with him or herself, in whatever setting he or she finds him or herself: in savage nature, in human society, or in the intimacy of a bedroom.

We should underline that these two levels of significance, although they can go together – physical solitude quite often induces psychological, moral or affective solitude, and *vice versa* – they do not always come together. Logically, as well as in reality, there are in fact four possibilities: 1) there is nobody there, and I am and feel alone; 2) there is nobody there, I am alone but I do not feel it; 3) there is somebody there, I am not alone and I do not feel alone; 4) there is somebody there, I am not alone but I feel alone. Of course, it is necessary to briefly evoke several causes of solitude. As physical, it can be caused by a rupture – leaving to go on a voyage, the end of a personal relationship, the death of a loved one; as psychological, by the incomprehension of those around us, the disappointment that this causes in me, our difficulties in communicating, melancholy, boredom, etc. But it is necessary above all to try to ascertain its value. This is the issue of real difficulty, for if the term *solitude* is not in itself ambiguous, the reality to which it refers proves itself to be of a rare ambivalence.

Solitude, indeed, has always been experienced and judged in two opposed ways, and this all the more so in that, like all human experiences, it is bound to social, economic and political structures in which the human being finds itself implicated. Thus, it cannot have the same sense across different epochs. It is still true that, in speaking of solitude, the question remains unchanged over time, the essential issue being that of knowing whether the solitary person is a reprobate or one of the chosen ones. This opposition is not new, since it is present in the Bible itself, where it is written that 'it is not good for a man to be alone' (Gen 2:18), and even that 'misfortune befalls the person who falls alone without someone else to help him up!' (Ecc 4:10); yet Moses is described as being alone when, on Mount Sinai, far from the people whose flight beyond Egypt he has guided, he receives the Tablets of the Law. And the tradition is long that develops this figure of solitude, wherein it is no longer accursed, but a blessing, even holy, for it is a sign of election and greatness. The religious tradition first of all: before isolating himself on the Mount of Olives, Jesus withdraws for forty days to the desert, opening the path to innumerable hermits after him for whom solitude is the necessary condition of asceticism. Then the military tradition: the knight is alone on the eve of combat, like the tactician before the battle. The political tradition also: monarchs are alone, the greats of this world, with or without distraction, in order to lead their peoples.

A blessing, then, or a curse? Victor Hugo made the answer depend on who was in question: 'solitude is good for great souls and bad for small minds', for it 'disturbs the brains of those it doesn't illuminate' (Hugo, 1987,

p. 889). Whence a classic distinction: *solitary solitude* on the one hand, or *aloneness*, the solitude that I choose and that I want in separating myself deliberately from others. In this sense, aloneness is a movement opposed to isolation, whose result is experienced positively. On the other hand, there is *lonely solitude*, *loneliness*, the solitude to which I am subject and that I lament, separated as I am from others against my will – in this sense, loneliness is a genus of which desolation and isolation are species. We should say more about this.[1]

The solitude of the solitary person is an active solitude, a solitude desired by the one who experiences it, who enjoys it and likes it, or the solitude of lovers desiring to love each other without trouble or jealousy; but above all, the solitude of the one who has opted for the life of the hermit, the solitude of the misanthrope or that of the philosopher. Because it enchants the one who lives it, solitude is here celebrated for its blessings. A whole tradition beginning with Petrarch bears witness to this. Here solitude draws its value from the 'intimate and true sweetness' (Petrarch, 1346, I, p. v) that it procures. It offers rest far from the agitation of men, and the peace necessary to meditate on oneself. For 'instead of the din', the *solitarius* has 'quietude, instead of the hubbub, silence, instead of the crowd, his own being. He is his own companion, his own company and does not fear solitude for he is in his own presence' (Petrarch, 1346, I, p. ii). These last words are crucial. Here solitude is not sought because it protects our natural innocence from the world (as Rousseau says in *Discourse on the Origin and the Grounds*

[1] This distinction is not the same as the one proposed by Hannah Arendt, between *loneliness*, *isolation* and *solitude* – the only truly conceptual distinction in philosophy on the subject of solitude. First, during the fifties – in 'Ideology and Terror: A Novel Form of Government' (1953), text that was added as Chapter 13 to the second augmented edition of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Arendt, 1958, pp. 475–477), but also 'The Great Tradition and the Nature of Totalitarianism' (1953) and 'On the Nature of Totalitarianism: An Essay in Understanding' (1953–1954) in Arendt's *Papers* at the Library of Congress. Then, during the sixties – 'Some Questions of Moral Philosophy' (1965) (Arendt, 2003, pp. 97–100). *Loneliness* is by far the worst of these three experiences for Arendt: it is the situation of the one surrounded by people with whom they find it impossible to enter into contact; so much so that, unrecognized and thus unconfirmed in their identity, they lose themselves and their bearings in the world. *Isolation* is the situation of the one stuck in the private sphere and, for that reason, condemned to being politically impotent, since they are deprived of the capacity to act with others. *Solitude* is the situation of the one who, in their own company, can truly reach themselves and, consequently, dialogue with themselves and thus truly think. In my view, isolation is a mode of loneliness and both are ways of experiencing solitude, which as self-companionship is a companionship that is the price to pay for being. I'll come back to this at the end.

of Inequality between Men), nor because it allows us to dream, to walk and contemplate nature, even to collect plants (according to the Rousseau of *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*), nor because it allows us to experience the good fortune of existence (this is the Rousseau of the *Third Letter to M. Malesherbes*). Rather than seeking solitude because it saves us from the hassles of the world and from wasting time within it, solitude is sought because it makes time for our work and our creations, because it offers the leisure to think about those whom one loves, and because it supports spiritual life in making asceticism as well as introspection possible. Petrarch aspires to it in order to be with himself, in order to '*consistere et secum morari*' (Seneca, 64, I, p. ii) as Seneca, and soon after him, a whole monastic tradition, invited us to do. To dwell with oneself. Why?

Because it is in confronting onself that a person discovers others and encounters God. In embracing solitude, a person does not so much die to the world as be enabled to understand it better. The distance taken, the step back, offers one first of all the occasion to experience oneself, and thus to know oneself better. Are we not ignorant of ourselves, we who 'live most often not according to our own judgement but to that of the crowd', we who 'let ourselves be taken on so many diversions, following in darkness the steps of others, … that we have become anything before being able to look around and examine what we want to be'? (Petrarch, 1346, I, p. iv). But there is more. Solitude 'simulates or dissimulates nothing, hides nothing, invents nothing' (Petrarch, 1346, I, p. iv); it lets things appear as they are and, in phenomenalizing the world, opens up the possibility of knowing it; it makes us grasp it as a creation of a being that is superior to it. Solitude proves itself to be 'the means of rising towards the place to which our soul aspires' (Petrarch, 1346, I, p. iv).

Consequently, solitude presents itself for many as the condition of knowledge, and even, since it is a practical as well as theoretical question, as the condition of wisdom. And because it not only procures wisdom, but also 'conserves and favours it to the highest degree' (Petrarch, 1346, I, p. iii), it is in the figure of study and work that solitude appears to thinkers; it is structured by 'divine eulogies, literature, the discovery of new things or remembrance of old ones, the necessity of rest and honest diversions' (Petrarch, 1346, I, p. ii). Thus, it is not without 'culture', without which it would be 'a certain exile, a prison, a bed of torture' (Petrarch, 1346, I, p. iii). Allowing, on the contrary, one 'to devote oneself to reading and writing', ready to 'relieve the fatigue produced by one with the other' (Petrarch, 1346, I, p. vi), solitude must be devoted to such activities. It is destined for 'no-

ble occupations of which one cannot imagine that there exist others whose company was more useful and more savoured' (Petrarch, 1346, II, p. xiv), delighted by the contemplation of nature and comforted by the frequent visits of friends, so as not to become 'extreme and inhuman solitude' (Petrarch, 1346, I, p. vii). What does that mean?

This is the lonely solitude mentioned above, a passive solitude, one submitted to and not sought after. Solitude is thus experienced as a poison because of the evils that it can occasion: boredom, of course, in the strong sense of the Latin *in odio esse* (hatred), and fear, due to the fact that in losing contact with humanity, we lose certain essential faculties (the Robinson of Michel Tournier in *Friday, or, The Other Island*, no longer knows how to smile). It can produce the metaphysical anguish of dereliction (thus Christ's complaint at Golgotha: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?', Mk 15:34) but also an unhealthy exaltation that can adopt different accents: pride, egocentrism, persecution complexes, illusions, false ideas, an unreal life, etc. Thus experienced, solitude is the difficult and painful feeling of the one who suffers from the absence of others or, rather, from a certain absence of themselves, for that proves irreducible to their physical absence – I can easily feel alone and suffer from it, while the other can be there, there where I am, in flesh and blood. How is it then that solitude can be a matter of great suffering, a fact ignored by the theorists of solitary life, for whom, as an essential condition of the work of thought, it is a necessary discipline and expresses a deliberate choice?

To be sure, the other must have a particular importance to me for their absence to hurt me. The other thus proves to be quite ambivalent: needed by the lonely person, the other is inopportune for the solitary person; the latter sees the other's existence as limited by their own, but without the other, the former does not exist. Whence two contradictory aspirations in the person, whose antagonism is formulated by Kant as a sociable insociability: a need for solitude, on the one hand, since others trouble me and the world turns me away from myself; and, on the other hand, the necessity of a relation to the other, for it is the other who makes me be and makes me be me. Between the two, of course, the heart swings, and it is therefore understandable that, in order to avoid discomfort as well as dissatisfaction, Petrarch, grappling with this alternative, did not want to decide. He was ready to push the paradox to the point of promoting a solitude open to the other in such a way as no longer to be one. 'It is in solitude also that I welcome friends … without whom, I say, life is mutilated, stripped of interest and almost plunged into darkness', declares Petrarch, at the end of *De vita solitaria*. He insists on

the fact that 'no solitude is so absolute, no house so small, no door so closed that it excludes a friend' (Petrarch, 1346, II, p. xiv). This surprising figure of a friendly solitude made of encounters and exchanges, perhaps of a friendship between solitary people where each, alone with her/himself, is never completely alone, is decisive in many ways.

It suggests first of all that the call of the desert can be heard only in the heart of the crowd. If one withdraws when one is loved and supported, this is because fleeing from the other is possible only after having lived with the other. Thus, our existence being always already co-existence, solitude appears essentially as undergoing the presence of the absence of the other. In this way, it is not a disappearance of all ties to others, but always a relation with them, even when it is lived in a deficient mode: that of chosen privation (whence the lack of company that defines the state of solitude), or of the lack submitted to (whence the sensation of lack that defines the feeling of solitude).

It suggests also that friendship is the privileged relation aspired to by the person disappointed either by solitude or by society. As a modality of living together, indeed, solitude is waiting for the presence of the other. If I am alone (whether I deplore or desire the fact), this is because the other is not there, either because physically absent or because, though physically present, the person is emotionally, morally or intellectually distant; too far for me to be able to access the person and for an exchange to be possible between us. In solitude, I who think about the other and who behave accordingly suffer from a relation to the other, from a fully satisfying relationship with the other. Here we see that solitude is desired and/or is felt each time that I cannot find in the other this availability allowing me to be myself. Thus, when I miss the other, when the other is not present, it is above all I who am not present to myself. Such would be, in the end, solitude: not the absence of the other, but the absence of my self to myself. The suffering involved in solitude would derive thus from the impossibility of really being myself, or from the impossibility of being recognized by the other as being this self that I am, which amounts to the same thing. This suffering perhaps comes to annul the authentic friendship described by Aristotle, in which, as a perfect *alter ego*, the friend makes possible a relation of exchange and, by re-establishing the vital ties of dialogue, saves the person from despair and madness – without, for all that, disturbing the person's retreat, since the friend does not essentially distinguish the two selves. Hence, Petrarch could declare to Philippe de Cabassole (his bishop friend from Cavaillon, dedicatee of the *De vita solitaria*), after having exhorted him to 'give himself to the solitary life':

> you will not only be my aid in rest, in order to express in a certain way my feelings, you will be my rest itself. You will not only be the relief of my solitude, but, in a certain sense, you will be my solitude (Petrarch, 1346, II, p. xiv).

To conclude, if solitude is desired and promoted by an ancient literary tradition – that to which Petrarch belongs, which remains the only tradition to have thematized the issue – this is insofar as it stands as a condition of solitary life, which is itself the condition of a happy life. While this, the *vita solitaria*, is what is sought, the former, *solitudo*, is barely defined. We have just done so in defining it as the absence of and to oneself. However, in attending closely to the text, one passage of *On the Solitary Life* seems tacitly to point towards another sense of the happy life, without the author having signalled it explicitly. After having admitted his long familiarity with solitude, Petrarch states: 'wherever I go my soul follows me into the heart of forests just as it did in the cities. It is my soul that I have to abandon before anything else' (Petrarch, 1346, I, p. v). Curiously, Petrarch does not describe here the solitude that is his own as an absence to oneself, and thus as a lack of my self to myself, but, on the contrary, as an excess of the self in myself, an abundance of the presence of myself to myself, the 'heart' symbolizing here the very ground of being.

Petrarch perhaps puts his finger on what a few thinkers after him, thinkers closer to us, have attempted to elucidate, and which still remains for us to grasp. Henri-Frédéric Amiel suggests in this sense that 'one tires of being in one's own company after forty years; one ends up becoming bored with oneself and dragging oneself around like a ball and chain' (Amiel, 1976, p. 578). And not without reason: solitude proves to be the condition of any awareness of oneself, as a monad closed in on itself in order to be what it is. Consequently, each of us *is* a solitude in such a way that, metaphysically speaking, the proposition 'man is alone' appears as a postulate, at least as an observation, since it describes what grounds the very reality of individual existence. Thus, I can be with others and desire to drown my sorrows, to lose myself with, by or in them, but I remain alone in relation to myself. This is well known: it is amongst others, in the noise and confusion of a party, that we can feel, cruelly, that, in truth, we are alone, that we live and die alone. Here we see that being-with is not yet being-together, if only because, in order to be, it is necessary to be alone in being oneself, and thus to be alone with oneself. I *am* alone because *I* am. From the second presupposition with which I began, we thus return to the first, from which we would have to start everything all over again. For only by putting to one side solitary solitude,

or aloneness, and lonely solitude, or loneliness, could we finally examine *the* solitude that is *soloist solitude*.

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Three Rival Versions of a Correlation Between Solitude and Communitiveness in a Monoseological Discourse

Trzy konkurencyjne warianty korelacji samotności i wspólnotowości w dyskursie monoseologicznym

Abstract: As the title states, this article focuses on a controversial topic: the lack of satisfactory solutions to the problem of the limits of the phenomena of solitude and communitiveness. It is based on the idea that monoseological discourse is intrinsic to this discourse. The term 'monoseology' is derived from two combined ancient Greek words: 'monosé', which means 'solitude'; and 'logos', translated etymologically as 'a rational, critical thinking', and more specifically as 'a science', 'a theory'. Hence, monoseology, in its wider meaning, is used to designate all sciences interested in analysing and conducting systematic research on solitude; in a narrower sense, the term 'monoseology' means simply the philosophy of solitude. It is quite commonly agreed that solitude in itself only consists of negative aspects, but communitiveness on the contrary has only positive ones. Therefore, solitude deserves clear and firm criticism, while communitiveness is assessed in a univocally positive way. This, in turn, translates to an unquestioning preference for ideas,

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feelings, motives and acts which are of community character and use. On the other hand, loneliness is recognized as a reason for our pain, suffering, fears, sadness and horrible despair. The result is the assumption that our key ambition, need and aim is to avoid and prevent each form of loneliness in our private and social life, at all costs. However, this causes many further problems – not only theoretical, but unfortunately also practical – which some researchers and ordinary people must face. This kind of unilateral and unambiguous interpretation of both solitude and communitiveness is called in the article 'monolectical'. In addition, it is shown here that the 'monolectics' of communitiveness or solitude is insufficient to provide an objective and complete picture of the two. In consequence, it is argued that monoseological discourse can succeed and develop itself only by turning to the dialectical method of explaining. The fundamental thesis and belief of this approach, expressed based on the dialectic of solitude and communitiveness, is that solitude and communitiveness are not at all isolated but strongly complementary. A practical conclusion arises from this statement: that each of us should intertwine in his or her life some periods of communitiveness and then some episodes of solitude.

Keywords: solitude, communitiveness, philosophy of solitude, monoseology, vita separata, vita mixta, vita paradoxa.

Streszczenie: W moim przedłożeniu koncentruję się na budzącym kontrowersje, złożonym i zróżnicowanym problemie granic fenomenu samotności i wspólnotowości. Rozpatruję go na gruncie dyskursu monoseologicznego. W szerszym rozumieniu termin monoseologia odnosi się do wszystkich nauk zainteresowanych analizą oraz systematycznymi badaniami nad samotnością; w węższym znaczeniu termin ten oznacza filozofię samotności. Istnieje dosyć powszechne przekonanie, że samotność posiada jedynie złe strony, wspólnotowość zaś przeciwnie, wyłącznie dobre. To z kolei przekłada się na preferowanie uczuć, motywów oraz czynów, które mają charakter wspólnotowy lub wspólnototwórczy. Można wręcz mówić o swego rodzaju fetyszyzacji wspólnotowości i wspólnotowych form życia. Samotność postrzegana jako kontradyktoryczna wobec wspólnoty forma życia, uznawana za jej [tej wspólnoty] negację, zagrożenie i zwyrodnienie (degenerację), jest przeto – nader jednostronnie, tendencyjnie i płasko – identyfikowana jako jeden z podstawowych predyktorów, a równocześnie jeden z najbardziej niebezpiecznych czynników ryzyka odpowiadających za powstanie, stymulowanie, utrwalanie bądź pogłębianie różnego rodzaju deficytów, patologii i anomalii w obszarze ludzkiej egzystencji (które w ogólności można określić mianem stanów patoegzystencjalnych, takich na przykład, jak cierpienie, lęk, smutek, tęsknota, nostalgia, rozpacz, apatia, depresja *etc.*). Na tej podstawie wyprowadzany jest cokolwiek podejrzany – by nie powie-

dzieć fałszywy – wniosek, że podstawowym zadaniem każdego człowieka jest taka organizacja systemu życia (zarówno indywidualnego, jak i społecznego), która wyklucza, eliminuje bądź zapobiega wszelkim przejawom samotności. Tego rodzaju upraszczające i jednostronne podejście do zagadnienia nazywam monolektycznym. W swoim artykule zamierzam wykazać, że ta głęboko zakorzeniona w filozofii, etyce i kulturze łacińskiej monolektyczna wykładnia i aksjologia samotności i wspólnotowości jest nie tylko wątpliwa poznawczo i niewystarczająca eksplanacyjnie, ale nadto, że domaga się ona znaczącej korekty (co odnosi się także do konieczności przeformułowania istniejącego od czasów greckiej πόλις paradygmatu kulturowego oraz strategii edukacyjnych i oddziaływań wychowawczych w kluczu edukacji do samotności). W związku z tym przedstawiam argumenty i racje obligujące do zastąpienia w dyskursie monoseologicznym (samotnościowym) narracji monolektycznej – dialektyczną. Zabieg ten, w zamyśle, pozwoli uzyskać możliwie pełny, sensowny i bardziej adekwatny obraz obu tych, traktowanych jako komplementarne, fenomenów – samotności i wspólnotowości. Podstawową tezą, jakiej zamierzam bronić, jest stwierdzenie, że samotność i wspólnotowość, rozpatrywane w porządku dialektycznym, nie występują w separacji, lecz w istotny sposób wzajemnie się warunkują i dopełniają. Stwierdzenie to prowadzi do praktycznej w swej wymowie konkluzji, że każdy z nas może i powinien radzić sobie z wyzwaniami samotności oraz bycia we wspólnocie, przeplatając i łącząc w swoim życiu periody wspólnotowości z równie inspirującymi epizodami samotności.

Słowa kluczowe: samotność; wspólnotowość; filozofia samotności; monoseologia; vita separata; vita mixta; vita paradoxa.

> Nevertheless we ought to mix up these two things,
> and to pass our lives alternately in solitude and among throngs of people (Seneca, 1989, pp. 661–662).
>
> Loneliness always presupposes the need of community,
> longing for community (Berdyaev, 2002, p. 54).

1. *Vita separata*: The dissonance between solitude and communitiveness

During the history and development of Western philosophy, various schools, currents, directions, concepts and positions, have led (although rel-

atively late) to the emergence of a discourse which I call 'monoseological'[1]. It is a part of and contributes to the philosophy of solitude – a field which was called so as late as in the 20th century by Nikolai Berdyaev (2002) and Emmanuel Lévinas (1999), who independently coined this expression. The *differentia specifica* of monoseological discourse is, as indicated by its very name, the thematization and articulation of the phenomenon of solitude in the aspect of the ontological, functional and conceptual 'density' (to use Ricoeur's term [1989, p. 224]) of the reality that it constitutes.

Of course, monoseological discourse extends beyond the area of philosophy alone, into multiple disciplines of knowledge[2]. In recent years it seems to have experienced a dynamic growth also outside science. This is evidenced, for instance, by the significant and constantly growing number of publications, starting with articles appearing in periodicals[3] (in particular, popular science and opinion-forming ones) and ending with serious scientific dissertations (Howard, 1975; Lynch, 1977, 1985, 2000; Mijuskovic, 2012, 2015, 2019; Moustakas, 1961, 1972, 1974, 1975; McGraw, 2010, 2012; Hojat & Crandall, 1987; Peplau, Perlman, 1982; Stern, 2012; Turkle, 2013; Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008; Kmiecik-Baran, 1988, 1992, 1993; Dołęga, 2003; Dubas, 2000; Domeracki & Tyburski, 2006; Domeracki, 2016, 2018; Dybeł, 2009; Pawłowska & Jundziłł, 2000, 2006; Twardowska-Rajewska, 2005; Szeliga & Żółkiewska, 2010; Mółka, 2012; Sobstyl, 2013; Kuklińska, 2013; Grzybek, 2013).

In recent years, the particular strand of thought concerning the problem of community and community-forming aspirations, which I refer to as 'communitiveness', has been developing in an increasingly expansive way. In terms of the 20th century, we may even speak of an explosion of interest in such phenomena. It is enough to mention the various directions of thinking, such as socialism, communitarianism, discoursivism, philosophy of dialogue, or personalism. Also, in the past years of the present century,

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[1] The term 'monoseology' I derive from the old Greek language, from the words 'monosé' ('solitude') and 'logos' ('science'). I use this term to refer in general to all scientific disciplines interested in analysing and conducting systematic research on solitude in an interdisciplinary manner. More narrowly, I utilize the term 'monoseology' to refer only to the 'philosophy of solitude', and I treat both expressions as synonyms.

[2] Among them, is it first necessary to enumerate psychology, sociology, pedagogy, ethnology and theology.

[3] As examples I can mention such Polish journals as *Charaktery*, *Przegląd*, *Wysokie Obcasy Extra*, Jesuit *Szum z Nieba*.

a tendency to scientifically elaborate on the issue of communitiveness and community (Sierocka, 2007) was retained, increasingly often manifesting itself in individual, albeit important, approaches. For example, we should mention at least the works by Helmuth Plessner (2008) and Zygmunt Bauman (2008).

In terms of importance, although the subject of solitude began to gain significance from the second half of the 20th century onwards, gradually becoming autonomous, it was understandably unable to match, and even less so to outstrip, the level of interest in and advancement of research on the phenomenon of communitiveness. Many authors point to and emphasize the central, dominant position of this problem; not only in the field of philosophy, but also in the humanities and social sciences in general. Some even speak of an obsession with communitiveness. For instance, Plessner (2008, p. 27) unceremoniously states that the community has become the 'idol of this age':

> The idol of community exercises its fascination on the weak: it is to be understood as the ideology of the excluded, the disappointed, and the stalling of the proletariat, of the impoverished and of youth, a generation that has only just become aware of the chains that bind it; it is justified as the protest of those suffering under the modern metropolis, the machine age and social uprootedness. Under its motto entire armies came into being and thousands of people were ready to die. (ibidem, p. 28)

And later, slightly ironically, Plessner notes:

> As compensation for the hardness and staleness of our life, this idea [of community – added by P. D.] has compressed all sweetness into mawkishness, tenderness into weakness, and flexibility into the loss of dignity. … An immeasurable chilling of human relationships by mechanical, commercial, and political abstractions conditions an immeasurable reaction in the ideal of a shimmering community overflowing through all of its supporters. Calculation and brutal pursuit of business is countered with the image of happiness arising from spontaneous self-giving, distrustful division into armoured states – the world alliance of nations to establish eternal peace. (ibidem, p. 27)

Plessner (ibidem, p. 27) derives from this an extremely important conclusion for our deliberations. Namely, he states that 'For this reason the law of distance no longer applies, loneliness has lost its charm'.

Similarly to Plessner, Zygmunt Bauman also points out the 'sweetness' of community turning into 'sentimentality', by saying:

> The 'community' sounds good: whatever it means, it is good to 'have a community', to 'be in a community'. ...Companionship or a society may be bad; but not a community. We have a sense that community is always something good. (Bauman, 2008, p. 5)

The late lamented Anthony Storr (died in 2001), an English psychiatrist and writer, in his excellent book from 1988 entitled *Solitude: a Return to the Self*, which has only recently been published in Poland (2010), repeatedly indicates that a conviction – by no means a new one, if I may add a side note – emerged in the general consciousness of people. John Bowlby is the most outstanding mouthpiece for this conviction in the field of psychoanalysis, which the closest to Storr's profession; he expresses this in the three-volume treatise titled *Attachment and Loss*, according to which

> the primary need of human beings – from infancy onward – is for supportive and rewarding relationships with other human beings. These relationships are the source of support and satisfaction, and the universal need for 'attachment' extends far beyond the need for sexual fulfilment (Bowlby, 1969, cf. Storr, 2010, p. 27).

As Storr notes regarding the topic of community and communitiveness, despite its prominent position, an

> …emphasis upon intimate interpersonal relationships as the touchstone of health and happiness is a comparatively recent phenomenon. Earlier generations would not have rated human relationships so highly; believing, perhaps, that the daily round, the common task, should furnish all we need to ask; or, alternatively, being too preoccupied with merely keeping alive and earning a living to have much time to devote to the subtleties of personal relations. (Storr, 2010, p. 17; idem, 2005, 1)

According to Ernest Gellner, whose authority is invoked by Storr,

> …our present preoccupation with, and anxiety about, human relationships has replaced former anxieties about the unpredictability and precariousness of the

> natural world. …In modern affluent societies – as Gellner claims – most of us are protected from disease, poverty, hunger, and natural catastrophes to an extent undreamed of by previous generations. (ibidem, p. 17; idem, 2005, 1)

The same is true of science. Beata Sierocka, for example, reminds us that 'Philosophy, and with it the humanities and social sciences, needed a surprisingly long time to incorporate the notions of community into their categorical structures' (Sierocka, 2007, p. 5). We can add that in this respect, both phenomena – solitude and communitiveness – shared the same fate. If we were to agree with Sierocka,

> There were basically no projects until the German classics (especially until the Hegelian system) in which it would be even possible to anticipate the problem of community. Not to mention the possibility of estimating its significance, both in theoretical and practical terms. Philosophers needed even more time to conceptualize the sphere of linguistic communication processes, and especially to notice that it is in this area that the specificity of human existence and human knowledge is being constituted. (ibidem, p. 5)

This fixation on community, if I can put it this way, is regarded by many authors as dangerous. Plessner (2008, p. 27) says straightforwardly: 'In the conscious abandonment of the right to maintain distance between people by following the ideal of sinking into an expanding network of organic ties, man is threatened' (transl. A. Wójtowicz).

2. *Vita mixta*: The consonance of solitude and communitiveness

The tendency, characteristic of human philosophy, social philosophy or political philosophy from the earliest days, to antagonize the concepts of solitude and communitiveness proved to be idle, inadequate, and often harmful. In recent times, the Quattrocento idea of *vita mixta* has been revived; which, while accepting the antagonism of solitude and communitiveness, at the same time indicates that they exist on the principle of *coincidentia oppositorum*. The fundamental message of Plessner's work – signalled by its very title, which suggests the need to accept the existence of and to respect the 'limits of community' – is summarized in a very meaningful observation:

> It is not a matter of rejecting the law of the community of life, its nobility and beauty. It is a matter of rejecting its recognition as the only worthy form of human coexistence; it is not a matter of rejecting *communio*, but of rejecting *communio* as the only principle, rejecting communism as a way of life, rejecting radicalism of the community. (Plessner, 2008, p. 45)

In the field of psychoanalysis, Plessner is supported by the aforementioned Anthony Storr. As a guiding thought of his dissertation, the latter also employs the observation that the phenomena of solitude and communitiveness should be viewed as complementary, even though they are contradictory, and not – as they hitherto functioned – alternative options (Storr, 2010, p. 13). Such a move, in Storr's opinion, is to rehabilitate and enhance the value of solitude as a place for an individual's creative and personal development, and perhaps even as an important and useful method in the psychotherapeutic process. As he states:

> Love and friendship are, of course, a significant part of what makes life worthwhile. But they are not the only source of happiness. … Many ordinary interests, and the majority of creative pursuits involving real originality, continue without involving relationships. It seems to me that what goes on in the human being when he is by himself is as important as what happens in his interactions with other people. (ibidem, p. 14)

And finally, almost expressing the *credo* of the thesis as the dialectic tension between solitude and communitiveness, Storr concludes: 'Two opposing drives operate throughout our life: the drive for companionship, love, and everything else, and the drive toward being independent, separate, and autonomous' (ibidem, p. 14).

3. *Vita paradoxa*: the unsocial sociability

Storr's remark explicates, in fact, the important content of an idea that has accompanied the philosophy of solitude from its very beginning, albeit not developed for many centuries – and which, following Kant's famous expression, recognizes the 'unsocial sociability of people' [*die ungesellige Geselligkeit der Menschen*] (Kant, 2005a, p. 34; cf. also: Plessner, 1988, pp. 286–298). This idea expresses, in the most spectacular way, the natural dialectical coupling between the phenomena of solitude and communitive-

ness, here referred to as 'unsociability' and 'sociability'. In the *Metaphysical Elements of the Theory of Virtue* (*Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Tugendlehre*, 1797), the philosopher from Königsberg, while clarifying his concept, laconically states that man is a creature meant for a social life (although at the same time an unsociable one) (Kant, 2005b, § 47, p. 151). Włodzimierz Galewicz explains this 'paradoxical property of humans' (as he calls it, after Kant) (ibidem, § 47, p. 151, fn. 360) with the condition where the 'tendency to come together in society' is balanced by 'resistance which constantly threatens to break this society up' (ibidem, § 47, p. 151, fn. 360). The author of the *Metaphysics of Virtue* illustrates this tension with an example of a powerful 'need to confide in others (even without any further purpose)' (ibidem, p. 152), when confronted with a fear 'which others could experience because of the thoughts revealed to them' (ibidem, p. 152). This fear has a limiting and preventive character. It is so powerful that it forces us to 'hide a significant part of our judgements (especially about other people)' (ibidem, p. 152).

> [Man – complemented by P. D.] Man would be happy to talk to someone about what he thinks about the people with whom he interacts, about government, religion, etc., but he cannot assume such a risk: partly because the other, who cautiously keeps his judgment to himself, could use his confessions to his detriment, and partly because, when it comes to revealing his own mistakes, the other could keep his own in secret, so that he himself would lose his respect, if he was to sincerely reveal himself before him [transl. A. W.]. (ibidem, p. 152)

This very legible, yet isolated and prosaic example of the occurrence of 'unsocial sociability' captures one of the important aspects of the dialectics of solitude and communitiveness – and, in a wider perspective, of the dialectical character of human existence. Namely, it is an ontologically sound relation between the desire for openness (being open to others) and the need to partially or completely close oneself to others. On the other hand, the case of 'unsocial sociability' illustrates the ethically important coincidence between sincerity in behaviour and the attitude towards others. Paradoxically, however, because of the others, and only indirectly due to oneself, the case of 'unsocial sociability' demands the use of numerous restraints and camouflages; whereas one would like to abandon them completely, or at least partially. Incidentally, we are dealing here with an interesting moral paradox – to use Saul Smilansky's expression (2009). It is the paradox of the partial or complete incompatibility of our moral expectations (claims) with the circum-

stances with which we are confronted. For, on the one hand, we were ready to show sincerity to others; while on the other hand, fearing (unfortunately, often fully justifiably) the insincerity that they could externalize towards us, we restrain ourselves from a surge of sincerity (against ourselves – but for our own benefit) by becoming an open or a disguised hypocrite. Generally, however, our action is seasoned with a mixture of both – i.e. the community-forming sincerity, and also withdrawal into silence, pretence, lying or perversity, which condemns us to one or another kind of solitude. We agree – as is noted, for example, by Leszek Kołakowski (2005, pp. 29–35) – that in interpersonal relations, despite a fairly widespread acceptance of the requirement of truthfulness, there is a far-reaching acquiescence towards behaviours which are more or less contradictory to it. The paradoxicality of this situation is enhanced by the fact that the claim of sincerity on both sides collides with mutual suspicion of insincerity. Thus, moral activity often boils down to seeking a tolerable balance between the indicated approaches – although there are people who do not recognize such or any moral compromises, and advocate either maximum sincerity or ostentation in relations with others.

In the context of the main subject of the article, it is worth noting the simple yet significant relationship between solitude and communitiveness on the one hand, and sincerity and ostensibility on the other. Sincerity (at least at the level of intentions) is conducive to building a community through acquiring one of its most important building blocks, i.e. confidence; at the same time (at the level of actual social interactions) its excess is perceived as detrimental to the sustainability of the community. In such a case, sincerity, giving way to insincerity, becomes a cause of loneliness (a sense of seclusion or alienation), while insincerity in turn becomes a building material for the community. As the first ancient texts of philosophers interested in the problem of solitude demonstrate, solitude acts as an ally and an enclave of sincerity, while social life *in genere* offers more concession and encouragement for 'façade' behaviour based on insincerity.

The generalization of this observation is connected with the third aspect of 'unsocial sociability', which has anthropological importance: i.e. the struggle between the authenticity and inauthenticity of human life. This is an extremely intriguing and wide-ranging subject, which deserves to be treated separately. Here we will confine ourselves only to reflecting on its importance for the philosophy of solitude; while at the same time pointing out that in general – especially in the case of its individualistic orientation, concentrating within itself an ontoexistential, contemplative and libertal interpretation of solitude – authenticity is associated in this aspect with loneliness.

Communitiveness, in turn, is seen as a morally questionable (respective) tendency, which is an expression of human mediocrity, immaturity, dependence, unoriginality, schematism, uncritical imitation, conformist servitude, appearances, and finally, primitively understood sociability; it is motivated by the inability to confront the challenge of solitude, and the related isolation, silence and self-reflection that deeply penetrate our self-awareness and 'good' (albeit usually faked) disposition.

The Kantian dialectic of love and respect, for which the philosopher seeks – as he puts it himself – a 'harmonious balance' (Kant, 2005b, p. § 46, p. 149), is very much in harmony with the dialectic of solitude and communitiveness in the sphere of moral references. He explains it with the possibility of treating love as an 'attraction', and respect as a 'repulsion' between the parties involved; 'and while the principle of love compels [friends] to get closer to each other, the principle of respect compels them to keep an adequate distance from each other' (Kant, 2005b, p. 150). All this is done to avoid, even in the greatest friendship, such a degree of intimacy that strains or violates the principle of respect, making the whole relationship – at best – merely a 'social form' (ibidem, p. 150).

Hence, it follows that the community-forming principle of love, contrary to the common, stereotypical beliefs – and in order to achieve the desired harmony between them – needs to be balanced by a proportional application of the principle of respect. This principle correlates with solitude – not, however, in the sense that it is a matter of having respect solely for oneself and contempt for others, but that it is only solitude. Such solitude can be even as prosaic as an ordinary temporary seclusion (caused, for example, by separation), which creates conditions conducive to gaining an adequate distance from a person or persons whom we owe not only love but also respect.

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Aware I Am Alone: Intersections of Solitude and Mindfulness

Świadomie jestem samotny. Powiązania samotności i uważności

Abstract: This paper explores the relationship between solitude and mindfulness. Parallels between the two constructs exist, allowing them to complement each other in furthering the well-being of individuals and communities. Three perspectives through which mindfulness may assist in forming foundational understandings of solitude are presented; these comprise *Theoretical*, *Practice*, and *Research*. The *Theoretical* lens provides introductory understandings of both solitude and mindfulness. On this basis, integral parallels between the two constructs are outlined. Next, *Practice* reviews solitude that is fostered through mindfulness practices. Further, additional models for recognizing solitude as a part of mindfulness are proposed. Finally, *Research* summarizes a current project that uses biophysical data to investigate mindfulness experienced both alone and together.

Keywords: mindfulness; solitude.

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Abstrakt: W niniejszym artykule samotność jest zgłębiana przez pryzmat uważności (*mindfulness*). Oba zjawiska – w pewnym sensie podobne do siebie – uzupełniają się wzajemnie w promowaniu dobrostanu jednostek i wspólnot. W tekście zaprezentowano trzy perspektywy, poprzez które uważność może zasilić podstawowe znaczenia samotności: teoretyczną, praktyczną oraz badawczą. Teoretyczna zapewnia wprowadzenie do rozumienia pojęć samotności i uważności; z tej perspektywy zostały integralnie ukazane paralele/podobieństwa między rzeczonymi pojęciami. Praktyczna ujmuje samotność w aspekcie praktykowania uważności, wraz z propozycją dodatkowych modeli rozpoznawania samotności jako części uważności. Perspektywa badawcza stanowi podsumowanie projektu badania uważności doświadczanej samotnie i wspólnotowo z uwzględnieniem biofizycznych danych.

Słowa kluczowe: uważność, samotność.

1. Introduction

The constructs of solitude and mindfulness have received increasing amounts of attention, in both quantitative and qualitative explorations. However, research to date has maintained a distinction between these constructs, investigating them separately. Similarly, increased practitioner use of interventions that incorporate mindfulness and solitude have brought both terms (again separately) within the lexicon of professionals in the field of helping/well-being, and the individuals they serve. Such attention and growth is exciting, yet not without consequences. Within the realm of scholarship, potentially conflicting contrasts may be debated, reflected upon, and/or further investigated. Outside of academia, practitioners may at times navigate competing interventions which, while proclaiming theoretical fidelity, offer dramatically divergent methods and modalities. Illustrative of this dilemma, specifically within the field of mindfulness, are comments from Jon Kabat-Zinn, creator and founder of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). While acknowledging the acceptance of mindfulness within Western civilization and the effectiveness of MBSR, Kabat-Zinn (2015) voiced concern regarding the growing problem of 'McMindfulness […] which ignores the ethical foundations of the meditative practices and traditions from which mindfulness has emerged' (p. 1). If mindfulness and solitude are to experience continued growth and application for the well-being of individuals and communities, then clearly there is need for thoroughly exploring, if not resolving, such conflicts through both theory and research.

Towards that end, this manuscript offers a simultaneous exploration of both solitude and mindfulness, according to the belief that the constructs have significant parallels which may prove beneficial in illuminating understanding. The course of exploration will encompass three perspectives, beginning with *Theoretical*, transitioning to *Practice*, and concluding with *Research*.

2. Theoretical

Solitude

For many individuals, the construct of solitude remains misconstrued as loneliness. A 2017 article within *Psychology Today*, titled 'The Joy of Solitude: Loneliness as a Subjective State of Mind', begins by stating:

> According to a recent study, many people prefer to give themselves a mild electric shock than to sit in a room alone with their own thoughts. […] The pain of loneliness is such that, throughout history, solitary confinement has been used as a form of torture and punishment. (Burton, 2017)

The majority of the article continues to decry the many concerning and potentially maladaptive consequences of loneliness. Indeed, the term and definition of solitude are not introduced until nearly three-quarters of the way through the article, shortly before the author concludes, 'Be this as it may, not everyone is capable of solitude, and for many people, aloneness will never amount to anything more than bitter loneliness.' While *Psychology Today* may not provide a truly representative sampling of individuals' perceptions of loneliness and solitude, the publication boasts a readership of approximately 3,755,000, with a digital footprint of 40 million page views and 13.7 million unique visitors each month (2019). The periodical arguably has an influence within American culture.

Similarly, to investigate the experience of loneliness, the University of Manchester and the BBC led a collaborative research project titled 'The Loneliness Experiment' (n.d.). With more than 55,000 adults and young adults surveyed, the BBC found that less than half of the participants (i.e. 41%) agreed that loneliness might sometimes be a positive experience. Reinforcing this perspective that loneliness is to be avoided at all costs, the study summary provides ten strategies to 'combat loneliness'. Mirroring the small percentage of individuals who consider the possibility of loneliness be-

ing somehow positive, nearly all the strategies aim to distract from or avoid loneliness. Specifically, of the ten strategies, two aim to distract from the experience (e.g. 'Find distracting activities or dedicate time to work, study, or hobbies'), six require the presence of others (e.g. 'Start a conversation with anyone'), and only two suggest that individuals consider viewing the experience as positive (i.e. 'Change your thinking to make it more positive' and 'Take time to think about why you feel lonely'). Such perspectives clearly portray modern loneliness as something to be avoided (Stern, 2015), as the accompanying feelings (e.g., abandonment, self-rejection, 'deserved' absence, loss) can be painful, if not debilitating.

Here it is important to note that the adverse emotional or relational experiences associated with loneliness should not so readily be conflated with the physical reality of loneliness (e.g. being physically alone by oneself, without others). Indeed, most individuals may identify times when physical aloneness was not associated with painful emotions, but rather, a positive affective experience. Such examples may include listening to music at the end of a stressful day; taking a solitary walk through a wood; being individually engaged in a favourite hobby; or dedicating time for individual contemplation, meditation or prayer. These examples call for another perspective on being by oneself, where there is a shared physical reality with loneliness (i.e., away from others), but a stark difference in people's emotional, cognitive experience. From this emerges the construct of solitude.

Solitude has been described as separate from loneliness, and occurs when the individual experiences a disengagement from others (Stern, 2015). Perhaps more importantly, solitude is caused not by social enforcement or imposition, but instead is voluntarily activated by the individual (Akrivou, Bourantas, Mo & Papalois, 2011). Coplan, Ooi and Nocita (2015) further assert that solitude is distinct from social avoidance or unsociability, but instead may be viewed as a non-fearful affinity for aloneness; the individual may even desire solitude.

Adding nuance to this idea of disengagement, Stern (2015) clarifies that through solitude an individual may choose to disengage physically, socially, emotionally, and/or cognitively. Importantly, while individuals willingly 'disengage' in order to enter solitude, in many cases this action may be performed so that engagement with non-present others may occur (Stern, 2015). Examples of engaging with non-present others may include reading a favourite novel alone so that one may connect with a fictional character; visiting a gravesite or memorial to 'talk' to someone deceased; revisiting past conversations; or rehearsing/imagining conversations in the future.

In summary, loneliness and solitude may be viewed as different points along a spectrum of aloneness, with loneliness considered as 'unhealthy' in comparison with solitude – not because of the nature of aloneness (i.e. being physically by oneself), but instead due to the contributing factors and/or affective perceptions of the individual. Similarly, while individuals engaged in solitude may be just as physically alone as those experiencing loneliness, in solitude we would expect to find a more 'healthy' affective experience, once again due to the precipitating factors or events. Having thus laid a foundation for conceptualizing solitude, we turn now to mindfulness.

Mindfulness

The 21st century has seen an explosion of mindfulness theory, research and practice in Western civilization. While mindfulness and other reflective, contemplative meditation practices have long been a part of many Eastern civilizations, the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn (i.e. Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction) may arguably be considered the catalyst which has ignited mindfulness in the West. Mindfulness practices, and their study, are to be found within multiple disciplines, contexts and populations.

Often defined as 'Paying attention in a particular way', mindfulness practices aim to facilitate focused awareness, more than serving as a mythical panacea for the stressors and ills of hectic Western society (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). The Vietnamese Buddhist Monk Thich Nhat Hanh poetically describes mindfulness as 'A palace guard who is aware of every face that passes through the front corridor' (2008). This description captures the non-judgmental characteristic of mindful awareness, where the individual attends to thoughts/emotions as they pass, yet remains stationary rather than being swept away. Here, 'non-judgmental' may be conceptualized as resisting an automatic, conditioned response to an experience. Instead, the mindful individual is able to recognize present moments as they are encountered, and can practise a suspension of immediate judgments. Such judgments may pertain to stimuli encountered (e.g. noticing a thought in one's attention), values or 'judgments' assigned to those stimuli (e.g. associating shame as individuals *shouldn't* think that), and/or subsequent actions (e.g. suppressing the thought and focusing on shame). This process of recognizing or 'attending' to present moments from a non-judgmental stance facilitates awareness of the present moment from a perspective distinct from that of the individual.

Notably distinguishing Western from Eastern mindfulness traditions is the incorporation of novelty production. Langer asserts that more than awareness, mindfulness fosters a flexible mental state where the mind is open to new or novel distinctions (2009). This heightened awareness incorporates the individual's awareness of themselves, their surroundings, and the intersubjectivity of these two elements in their relation (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000). Such intersubjectivity not only challenges dichotomous judgments, but also encourages previously unconsidered relationships between internal thoughts and/or emotions. Novelty production can lead to increased curiosity, creativity and problem-solving (Pirson, Langer & Zilcha, 2018).

In summary, the review of the literature addressing the Western tradition of mindfulness suggests a definition of mindfulness as purposeful, non-judgmental, present-moment awareness that incorporates novelty-production (Cleveland, 2018a; Gehart & McCollum, 2007; Langer, 2009). The use of mindfulness practices extends beyond the mental health/wellness setting; they are also applied within K-12 educational settings, among others (Cleveland, 2016; Tadlock-Marlo, 2011; Tobin, 2018). As the scope and breadth of K-12 education moves beyond the mere incorporation of academic domains, this is indicative of a more holistic perspective on children (e.g. mental wellness, social-emotional learning, spirituality and religiosity, etc.); thus, mindfulness may be a place of centring, which interconnects all components of student wellness.

Construct Parallels

In exploring solitude and mindfulness, three parallels between the constructs emerge for consideration. These parallels notably extend beyond the realm of definition, having implications for the practice of both solitude and mindfulness. The three parallels here outlined are Intention, Being-With, and Wellness-Seeking.

Intention

As previously stated, the mere state of individuality does not create solitude. Indeed, individuals rejected by others may identify as experiencing loneliness or isolation rather than solitude or aloneness. It would seem, then, that a defining predication of solitude lies in the intention of the alone indi-

vidual (Akrivou et al., 2011). Intention serves just as pivotal a role as mindfulness. Much like deciding to pay a fee for a chosen activity, the mindful individual must 'pay' attention (Carson, Shih & Langer, 2001). Therefore, it seems reasonable to assert it is the intentional action(s) of the autonomous individual (whether physical and/or cognitive) which determine whether or not she/he enters into these reflective states of solitude and/or mindfulness.

Being-With

While solitude may physically resemble a disengagement from others, in actuality the practice can serve as a means of engagement (Salmon & Matarese, 2013; Stern, 2015). Rather than a state of being without, the solitary individual voluntarily engages *with*. This may take the form of being *with* silence; *with* thoughts in reflection; *with* characters in a favourite novel; *with* conversation to a deceased loved-one; or *with* memories. This important contrast between *being-with* and *-without* is just as pertinent for mindfulness. Mindfulness is not an ignoring of sensory experience, but instead an intentional focus on the present moment, by attending to its varied thoughts, emotions and perceptions. Additionally, just as mindfulness cultivates a means of centring awareness where the individual can simply 'be' in the present moment, solitude may likewise foster a reflective state of enstasy (Jackson, 2016; Stern, 2015).

Wellness-Seeking

Finally, a third parallel between solitude and mindfulness might be regarded as a shared orientation towards wellness-seeking. Interestingly, this characterization might seem contrary to the oft-publicized, misinformed stereotypes of both constructs as means to escape or 'get away' from stressors inhabiting daily life. Addressing the dangers consistent with such a mindset towards solitude, Henri Nouwen (1978) might well have been providing a similar defence of mindfulness:

> It is true that solitude can offer healing to our wounded self, and we may indeed return from solitude more vital and more energetic, but to believe that this is the primary role of solitude leads to false ideas. [For example:] 'The strong don't

> need it and those who ask for it are in bad shape and need to be restored.' […] But when things are normal, solitude is no longer necessary. (pp. 16–17)

Studies investigating mindfulness-based interventions (or MBIs), continue to demonstrate encouraging results, thus suggesting the efficacy and relevance of mindfulness-based interventions (Dunning et al., 2019; or Goldberg et al., 2018). However, to only employ MBIs when individuals present physical or mental illness introduces the same fallacies articulated by Nouwen, which implicitly assert that mindfulness possesses no benefits for healthy people (Chiesa & Serretti, 2009). For example, a mindset that reserves mindfulness for individuals experiencing trauma or 'too much stress' precludes the role of mindfulness as a protective factor against stressors and negative emotions. Additionally, such an approach shows disregard for the contemplative, reflective states of introspection that mindfulness (and for that matter, solitude) may foster within individuals (Long & Averill, 2003).

Foundational to solitude and mindfulness is the belief that both practices constitute a part of the holistic wellness of individuals and communities. Indeed, it is only through continued, regular practice that mindfulness becomes awareness of self and (eventually) others (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). Prior to insight, compassion, or healing being imparted to the self (let alone others), a stable foundation of mindfulness must be created. Similarly, through separation of the self, solitude fosters a reconceptualization of the self and an awareness of the unity and interconnectedness of community (Long & Averill, 2003; Nouwen, 1978). Once again, however, if solitude and mindfulness practices are to be postponed until an individual is in a state of crisis, this at best limits their benefits for self and community. As Chan (2016) states, 'Truly, mindfulness and solitude go hand in hand as they benefit [individuals'] cognitive and mental state' (p. 21). In short, individuals who practise mindfulness and solitude influence communities in a dynamically intersubjective manner; one in which individual wellness contributes to whole group wellness, which returns to individual wellness via ecologically systemic interactions.

3. Practice

Definitions of mindfulness and solitude have been presented above, as well as three parallels between the two constructs. Attention is now turned to the practice of these activities: specifically, three characteristics of mindfulness practices which may actively foster solitude.

The first element might be termed, 'Alone with Others'. As already stated, solitude may be initially conceptualized as disengagement, or distancing. However, opportunities for experiencing (or practising) solitude abound everywhere, even when it may be challenging for the individual to shut out or silence external stimulation. Salmon and Matarese point out that for many individuals, a dependency on external stimulation may mean that the elimination of such 'noise' only intensifies internal mental 'turbulence' (2013). Recognizing mindfulness as one means of addressing this addiction to 'noise', they state:

> Coming from a mindfulness-based perspective, we propose that cultivating a sense of solitude may best begin by simply being where we are and focusing in the present moment. Rather than dealing with the complexities of getting away somewhere, we endorse the value of being present in our surroundings, whatever they happen to be. (p. 337)

Although forms of mindfulness practice are varied, and practitioners/leaders are encouraged to remain open to possibilities, the implementation of MBIs frequently takes the form of small group gatherings. This picture of many selves practising individual awareness *together*, resonates with the idea of solitude as something individually activated with like-minded others. Such groups, and the rapport they foster, help facilitate individuals' voluntary disconnection from the social, mental, and/or contextual 'press' experienced in daily life (Akrivou et al., 2011).

Secondly, through intentional focus on present-moment awareness, mindfulness practices contribute towards healthy experiences of solitude. The element of awareness enables individuals to espouse an inward focus, rather than a mere 'getting away from it all' approach to solitude (Salmon & Matarese, 2013). Once again, solitude is not a shutting-out or ignoring of stimuli in order to simply cease thinking or to 'do nothing'. In focusing awareness towards the stimuli of the present moment (e.g. sensations, thoughts, emotions), mindfulness guides the time of solitude towards attending to both internal and external stimuli, and towards directed reflection. Additionally, through mindful awareness, individuals experience a paradox of perspective. Only by first espousing a 'limited' perspective of the present moment, are individuals able to gently expand their awareness outwards. Awareness presents a similar paradox in solitude, as it is only through awareness of the authentic, individuated self that one is then free to be with 'other' (Jackson, 2016).

Finally, a third element of MBIs that contributes towards solitude is the non-judgmental tenet of mindfulness. Inherent to healthy solitude is the experience of authentic peace, or solitude of the mind (Chan, 2016; Jackson, 2016). Such peace results not from a lack of conflict or tension, but rather from self-examination, reflection, and/or self-attunement (Long & Averill, 2003). Arriving at such reconceptualization requires navigating internal stimuli with an open, non-judgmental stance. As previously described, a core component of mindfulness is attending to or recognizing internal and external stimuli from a detached, alternative, or 'non-judgmental' stance (Carmody, Reed, Kristeller & Merriam, 2008). In this manner, mindfulness facilitates the non-judgmental awareness of internal stimuli, so that the individual in solitude may engage in self-reflection and/or reconciliation.

These three elements of mindfulness practice that contribute to healthy solitude (i.e. alone with others, awareness, and non-judgmental) may be conceptualized in the following illustration. Partaking in a group MBI, participants gather together, all with a similar intention of dedicating time and energies towards contemplative activity. A key component of MBIs is that participants are *invited* into mindfulness exercise (e.g. guided meditation), which once again reinforces the voluntary aspect of both mindfulness and solitude (McCown, Reibel & Micozzi, 2011). Having begun, participants are gently led to directing their focus towards present-moment awareness. Direction begins with awareness being pointed at outer, external stimuli, before gradually shifting towards internal sensations, thoughts and emotions. Intermittent verbal guidance from the leader reinforces the simultaneous alone⇔together aspect of participating in the exercise. In other words, participants are *together* in sharing common space and communally following a common script, while at the same time they remain *alone* with their noticing or recognizing of internal stimuli. It is only when the individual becomes aware of the 'other' aspect of their sensations, thoughts and emotions, that the element of being non-judgmental can be practised. For beginning participants, immediate judgmental responses may take the form of, 'I wasn't thinking about my centring breath, I was distracted. I should pay attention.' Continued practice, producing increased and more stable awareness, might yield a focus on emotions: 'My mind keeps returning to anger. I shouldn't be angry.' Regardless of the recognized stimuli, participants are encouraged to release automated, predetermined judgments (i.e. 'I *should* pay attention', 'I *shouldn't* be angry'), and to simply attend to stimuli as they come into focus. Non-judgmental awareness, as though they are noticing from an 'other' stance, allows the solitary individual to engage in self-examination and reflection.

4. Research

This manuscript has highlighted the increasing attention paid to solitude and mindfulness, by defining these two constructs and presenting salient parallels between the two practices. Further, the author has attempted to articulate a vision of how healthy solitude might in fact be an outcome of practising mindfulness activities or mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs). So far, this exploration of solitude and mindfulness has remained largely theoretical. Bringing this exploration to a close, the author now highlights one example of research that is currently investigating intersections of mindfulness and solitude.

Mindfulness practitioners are called to be authentic in their guiding and instruction of MBIs (McCown, Reibel & Micozzi, 2011), and a similar call has been made for mindfulness scholarship (Cleveland, 2018a; Tobin, 2018). At times, such congruence may lead to disparate voices even within the community of scholars; however, it is hoped that 'mindful scholars' investigating mindfulness live out core elements, such as open awareness and a non-judgmental stance. The following research project investigates solitude and mindfulness through biophysical data collected from graduate students enrolled in a counselling skills course.

The author (who is the primary investigator) regularly teaches an introductory counselling skills class for graduate students enrolled in mental health provider programmes (e.g. clinical mental health counselling, school psychology, school counselling, clinical psychology, sports psychology), where students receive instruction on foundational counselling skills. The course content focuses on primary 'Stage I' skills (e.g. warmth, reflection, paraphrase, empathy, etc.), and then more advanced 'Stage II' skills (e.g. pattern statements, probes, immediacy, parallel process, etc.), which students can employ throughout counselling sessions (Koltz, 2015). The first two weeks of the course take the form of 'traditional' instruction, with students meeting in the classroom and engaging in lectures, discussions and learning activities. However, the remainder of the course takes place within a counselling lab, with students forming groups of three. Each triad is composed of a 'counsellor', 'client', and an observer. Students rotate through the positions, recording the sessions as they practise learned skills. This role-play format allows students to experience what it is like to function in the guiding role of 'counsellor', to occupy the position of a 'client' sharing concerns, and to espouse a more detached perspective as an observer. For many graduate

students, this experience is marked with high stress, as they may not be used to engaging in open-ended, non-scripted role-play scenarios. Further, these sessions are recorded for faculty review and grading, which frequently adds to the students' stress.

Very little literature addresses role-playing activities within mental health provider preparation programmes. The few studies that exist recognize experiential role-play activities as essential instructional practices (Osborn, West & Nance, 2017), and that such practices can carry emotional weight even though participants recognize them as fictional (Rodriguez et al., 2018; Taylor, 2018). Dennison (2011) highlights that even when such role-playing activities are perceived as stressful, students may prefer these activities as being more 'realistic'.

With this in mind, a regular curricular component of the course involves beginning each weekly class session with a guided mindfulness meditation. Students and faculty gather as a group, engage in a guided mindfulness meditation, and then have a brief time to process the experience before moving on to class activities. The intent is to actively model mindfulness practices for students, as well as to provide an exercise that is aimed to mitigate experienced stress.

Similarly to Pauly, Lay, Nater, Scott and Hoppmann (2017), the current research project explores participants' arousal levels while engaged in solitude and mindfulness activities. Specifically, participants' biophysical responses to guided versus non-guided mindfulness meditation, as well as group versus individual practice, are explored. Beginning each class session, students wear a wrist sensor which captures various biophysical data, most notably heart rate (HR), movement, and electrodermal activity (EDA). While not as precise as cortisol measurement, ECG or fMRI monitoring, EDA data has been used as a reliable marker for consistent, accurate assessment of participant stress (Cleveland, 2018b; Villanueva, Raikes, Ruben, Schaefer & Gunther, 2014). Students are then 'invited' to participate in the group guided mindfulness session (i.e. together in a large classroom), or follow the same guided meditation in solitude (i.e. alone in a lab room). Later in the semester, this same invitation is given, but with the change that both options (i.e. together or alone) provide non-guided mindfulness meditation. A single case-study design applied to participating students will explore students' HR and EDA levels while they are participating in the various conditions of class time (e.g. guided meditation together, guided meditation alone, non-guided together, non-guided alone, engaged in role-play). It is hoped that this quantitative exploration will provide an additional perspective from

which to view the experiences of solitude, mindfulness, and their possible intersections.

5. Conclusion

Solitude and mindfulness represent relevant resources for facilitating individuals' reflection, awareness and growth. Sadly, many people view these therapeutic devices as only addressing trauma, rather than as necessary part of holistic wellness of the self. Recognition of the fallacy of this view has implications that reach beyond the individual to the greater community; as Nouwen (1978) warns, 'this view of solitude, […] will slowly paralyze community life and eventually kill the most vital forces of life together' (p. 17). Mindfulness-based interventions, through voluntarily being alone-together, cultivating present-moment awareness, and practising non-judgmental self--examination, may counter such an erroneous view, and thereby contribute to the health and wellness of individuals and their communities.

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Silence and Human Development

Cisza drogą rozwoju osoby ludzkiej

Abstract: This article seeks to answer a fundamental question: What has made silence a scarce commodity, even though it is among the more important human needs? The impact of silence on human development over the course of a lifetime, and in relationships with others, is shown. The affirmative aspects of silence from an anthropological perspective, as a natural human need that contributes to the development of full humanity, is underlined. With this aim, the article clarifies the differences between silence in the sense of quiet hush, and in the sense of keeping quiet; and between solitude and loneliness. The paper concentrates on the positive influence of silence on personality development and purposely omits the negative aspects of silence, since they do not serve the integral development of the person – this issue needs a separate discussion.

Keywords: silence; education.

Streszczenie: W artykule podjęto próbę odpowiedzi na fundamentalne pytanie: co sprawiło, że cisza stała się towarem deficytowym, choć jest jedną z ważnych potrzeb człowieka? Ukazano znaczenie, jakie ma cisza w rozwoju człowieka na różnych etapach jego życia oraz w relacjach z innymi. Zwrócono uwagę na afirmatyw-

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ne aspekty ciszy w ujęciu antropologicznym, jako naturalnej potrzeby człowieka, służącej jego rozwojowi ku pełni człowieczeństwa. W tym celu starano się wyjaśnić różnice między ciszą i milczeniem, samotnością i osamotnieniem. W tekście skoncentrowano się na pozytywnych cechach ciszy i świadomie pominięto jej negatywne aspekty, które nie służą rozwojowi osobowości – to zagadnienie wymaga oddzielnego omówienia.

Słowa kluczowe: cisza; milczenie; wychowanie.

Silence is associated with the situation before creation;
our universe emerged from silence,
is embedded in it and will dissolve in it
(Borkowski, 2007, pp. 40–42).

1. Introduction

'Silence' as a category has not lost its importance, even though it has been studied since ancient times. The concept of silence is present and functions both in common and intellectual discourse. Due to its interdisciplinary character, silence is subject to analysis from philosophical, psychological, pedagogical, moral and legal perspectives.

For the ancients, to abide in silence was not a problem. They were privy to vast spaces, areas of fauna, green space, psychological and physical space, the absence of noisy tools. For millennia, education took place close to nature, in low-density areas, close to the family, surrounded by silence and the sounds of nature. Monasteries were places of organized zones of silence, but the need for silence as a tool of human development was also recognized by pedagogues. Korczak (1978, 2019) organized 'a quiet room'; Montessori (Kramer, 1988; Miksza, 2018) conducted lessons in silence; contemporary Benedictines in Tyniec Monastery carry out Christian meditation in silence; and many schools, including some in Poland, are implementing (silent) meditation for their students. In an increasing number of aspects of our lives, we see the need for silence – for example, 'silent zones' are being implemented in trains and planes.

'Pure' silence is impossible to experience, so I propose to consider silence as a complex cultural phenomenon, which includes artistic and intellectual elements. Silence is central to the process of socialization – it is a cultural inheritance.

In this paper, I would like to answer a fundamental question: What has made silence a scarce commodity, even though it is among the more important human needs? What meaning does it have in communication? How does it impact human development over the course of a lifetime? What, if any, is the link between silence and solitude (or with solitude that is chosen, creative, and reflective)? I will underline affirmative aspects of silence from an anthropological perspective; I will also demonstrate that it is a natural human need that contributes to the development of full humanity. With this aim, I shall clarify the meanings of silence, and the difference between silence in the sense of quiet hush (which fascinates and divides research) and in the sense of keeping quiet. In this paper, I shall omit the negative aspects of silence, since they do not serve the integral development of the person, and concentrate on the positive influence of silence on personality development. I will focus on the culture of chaos and noise, the concept of silence and keeping quiet, the phenomenon of silence, types of silence, the need for silence, and silence as a means of personality development.

2. Silence and noise

Silence is an unfathomable phenomenon, as the quality of silence is that it is not heard. Silence may be identified with the state of peace and internal equilibrium. It is for this reason that concentration and meditation were encouraged by St John of the Cross and St Theresa of Avila. One may ascribe silence to the human person from the beginning of his existence and, therefore, it should not be limited or destroyed by anyone. The concept of a social contract, a common social life, while considering the freedom of every human being, requires respect for silence, understood as calming-down, detachment, a state of harmony and peace of mind. Silence can also, and perhaps above all, be identified with the Absolute, with God. The limits of silence are defined by autonomy, that is, being subject only to those laws that we set for ourselves.

In his book *Man's Search for Meaning*, the psychologist Frankl (2011) (regarded as the father of logotherapy, i.e. healing through 'meaning'), wrote that happiness is always a by-product of a good deed. But in order to undertake any activity, that is, to engage in human action, first one must reflect. This requires silence, which is connected to thinking, understanding and concentrating.

In human formation and education, establishing boundaries is crucial. First one must establish limits and then teach children freedom, leaving them ever-greater space for action. One must teach a child that there are consequences of excessive noise, excessive liberty, excessive tolerance; that everything in life has its place, its time, and its context, which must be considered.

Yet living in a specific historical time allows us to look at silence from a contemporary perspective. Formerly omnipresent, today destroyed, unwelcome, and misunderstood – but also urgently wanted. The unprecedented dynamic development of science, technology and media is related to noise, and contributes to many changes both in nature and in man's upbringing. The faster pace of life and the desire to possess, the uncertainty of tomorrow, intensify the anxiety of modern people. Under the influence of noise, anxiety arises in the human mind – this was a fact known by the great philosophers, who taught calmness and a balanced wisdom. They spoke not exclusively with words, but also with silence.

External factors, such as the quantity and movement of moving vehicles and people, are conducive to the feelings of confusion, excessive nervousness, aggression, as well as a sense of loneliness. A person locked in a space filled with haste, a clutter of mechanical sounds, bombarded with an excess of information – which often clash – forgets that human life is limited by time, and this fact obliges us to reflect on the meaning of life (Woolf, 1994) and the quality of its survival. We are surrounded more than ever by devices and goods of all kinds, and awareness of human dignity and silence is waning. One can notice the fatigue of modern people with noise and hatred. The clash between silence (keeping quiet) and noise is played out today not only in the sphere of basic concepts, but also in everyday life.

3. Silence and keeping quiet in literature

The lack of an unambiguous definition of the concept of silence and keeping quiet causes difficulties in discourse. Exact translations of terms give rise to some difficulties, misunderstandings, and incorrect use of the terms. I therefore propose to adopt a rather general definition of silence and keeping quiet. As we become acquainted with aspects of the problem, it is possible to refine the concepts.

First, we must recognize the fact that we can keep quiet in even when there is noise, but in the noise, the silence dies. Noise kills silence and damages the human person. A wider meaning can be attributed to keeping quiet.

Refraining from speaking words may resonate meaning in the shared space; it may intensify the words already spoken and provide a space for a concentration of meanings. In keeping quiet, we consider what has already been said, and our thoughts mature. It is also the moment of completing what has already been said or is about to be said. Keeping quiet is not a retreat from the word, but rather a chance for the maturing of the words that are to be spoken, a crystallization of the word before its reverberation. In some cases, remaining quiet is more eloquent than providing an audible word. Indeed, it can be a form of communication. Not everything can be expressed in words; sometimes the words used don't correspond with reality – they may be expressing an untruth, a lie.

Remaining silent can be a special way of conversing, through body language, when communication moves from verbal to silent. In the novel *The Brothers Karamazov* by Dostoyevsky (2015), the silence of the main character speaks much more than any verbal statement. In the story of the Grand Inquisitor, Dostoyevsky puts Christ in the position of a silent listener. Jesus does not speak at all, and his silence may be understood as a gesture of deep concentration on his opponent's words; an expression of empathic insight into his thoughts. But it may also indicate an awareness that the refutation of the Inquisitor's conviction cannot adequately be put into words.

Virginia Woolf, in writings such as *To the Lighthouse* (1994), devoted a great deal of space to silence (keeping quiet, interruptions, pauses), which is conveyed by the symbolic order of words that she inserted into the narrative. Thus, she did not treat silence as a synonym for 'absence' or 'desertion', but uses silence as a specific form of representation of 'the presence of Being'. Using silence, that is, 'keeping quiet', as a way of communication, she characterizes her characters more clearly than by describing their external features. Thanks to the silence (suspending dialogue, gestures or looks replacing words, ingenious punctuation systems), characters communicate better than when they use words. Her protagonists often point out that 'it was impossible to say anything', and alternatively, 'many things have been left unsaid'.

Silence is often portrayed as an ultimate state – I am silent in the face of the mystery, pointing towards something that I cannot explain in a discursive language. There are many kinds of silence, as silence can take many forms. For instance, there exists a silence of those who have nothing to say, a silence of despair, a silence filled with love and wonder. There is also a silence of those who don't have the courage to do or to speak – they 'keep calm', while others suffer and die (Lash, 2004). There exists a silence caused by

an extreme experience, strong feelings and emotions, the silence caused by cowardice, or silence in the face of evil. And, perhaps obviously, there may be nothing behind the silence, it may be just the silence of emptiness.

We encounter the use of the phenomenon of silence (keeping quiet, refraining from speaking) and its various manifestations also in contemporary literature. Sartre (2007) did not locate silence in some supra-linguistic sphere or as something opposed to language, but rather as a phenomenon of language itself. Silence does not have to mean the negation of the voice, the negation of 'presence'; on the contrary, one can find in silence a place of great creative potential that is recollected and purified from the noisy racket (Etela, 2009).

4. The need for silence of many kinds

Modern people have a great need for a physical and mental space where they are able to enter into the world within themselves. Both the need for silence and its survival depends on the maturity of a human being. Hence, silence is different for a student, different for a teacher; it is something else for a politician, for a creator or for an elder. Yet people, like silence, are part of the same world. Silence as space allows us to hear the external sounds of nature, sound signals, and at the same time leaves a place for imagination and reflection, and gives us a chance to listen to the words of others. Silence is essential in communication between people because it allows one not only to hear the words of another and to understand the spoken content, but it also makes listening easier. In silence, we begin to sense the needs of another human being, and our brain is intensely seeking a solution to the situation in which we find ourselves.

Medieval monasteries are indeed model examples of the interplay of time, silence, and the place where rhythmically measured time played an important role in the functions of sacred space. Today, we seem to have mastered the avoidance of finding even a moment for silent listening. We are saturated with conversations, telephone calls, radios and televisions, not to mention the newest technological gadgets that provide noisy distractions: tablets and smartphones.

Filek (2014) points out that relative silence has many forms. Due to the nature of being 'before', 'after' and 'between' events, silence takes on different contours. Silence is different 'before the storm' and 'after the storm'. Silence can also occur as a pause.

5. Dimensions of silence

External silence is a condition that allows hearing the voice of a person other than ourselves, a call towards ourselves. It becomes a challenge directed at us. *Internal silence* is the subject of internal listening and is essential for the spiritual development of the human person; a condition of hearing the voice of one's conscience, perhaps the voice of God. It becomes part of us when we enter into internal silence. It is the opposite of the racket of thoughts, the clamour of desires, the battle of emotions. It helps to regenerate strength, both psychological and physical. *Dialogical silence* takes place between me and you, between us, as people. There may be the infamous 'silent days' when we are offended and do not speak to each other. The silence between us is a form of not speaking, of keeping quiet. In this way, it is a form of speech. Keeping quiet speaks, and its speaking may have many meanings. Indeed, the silence of keeping quiet is very meaningful (Filek, 2014). *Silence as a space* in search of internal freedom. Finally, *absolute silence* is the silence of death, in which we have no part.

In the past, little attention was paid to the phenomenon of silence: silence was simply around us. Now, an omnipresent noise destroys silence not only in public space but also in our private spaces: we are losing the capacity to protect places where silence once had a privileged position. We have an intuitive awareness of the value of silence in human development, but we only get to know it when we begin to miss the quiet. The value of silence is most appreciated by artists, for whom it is a prerequisite for their work. This is the group most aware of the fact that entering into silence and isolation is associated with concentration, and silence is accompanied by creative solitude.

6. Affirmative aspects of silence – the presence of silence in educative formation

A varied approach to silence makes us aware of the actual state of affairs, and thus draws our attention to the various challenges it faces; at the same time, it sensitizes us to the educational value and effort required to introduce the elements of silence into the process of educating the younger generation. The insignificance of our life from the perspective of the cosmos, and yet, its uniqueness, unrepeatability and fragility, lead us to consider how

best to live it with as little pain as possible, and yet in the most useful and sensible manner. We need to reflect – to think – which are a human being's natural riches. To be able to do so, it is necessary to introduce silence into the educative and maturation processes of the human person. Learning how to be with myself and dialogue with my own self in silence, allows my inner 'I' to meet my external 'I'. These are the necessary conditions to analyse one's faults and gifts. But this fact provokes many challenges and changes. In this perspective, the topic of silence takes on an appropriate status and becomes very important.

Becoming aware of both the need for and the significance of silence allows a better understanding of what role it plays in our lives. Both silence and noise reach the brain through the ear, triggering specific changes (beneficial, calming, or devastating in the case of noise). The ear is not sleeping, so it listens and hears the sounds that the brain processes.

Silence is essential for the educative process; it is essential for cultural formation. One might refer to the 'parable of the broken window' (Hazlitt, 1993), which exposes one of the more significant mistakes of popular reasoning – that an activity always benefits society (as mending a broken window benefits the glazing industry), without taking account of the hidden losses. The conviction that a so-called 'partnership' proposed by educational liberalism would always bring positive educational effects turned out to be mistaken. Waves of aggression (even in schools) are flooding Poland (as tribal activism). We need to introduce silence as a method of self-discipline, of control over one's emotions, by including silence within dialogue; this will constitute a particular horizon of reflection on action.

In its most basic understanding, educational formation appears as an organized method of interaction with others in order to ensure personal development. It seems that such a broad approach makes it possible to find a common denominator for various concepts and, at the same time, reveals significant dimensions sufficiently strongly. These dimensions should be reduced to two: the purposefulness of interaction, which presupposes not only an earlier reflection but also the possession of the necessary knowledge about humanity; and the externality of interaction, which in turn demands the existence of objective patterns and various types of stimuli. In both cases, it is about the development of a person not only physically but also psycho-spiritually. Education has a crucial role in shaping a person's development. Every theory of education must necessarily, at the very least, answer the basic question about the goal of education, in terms of exerting external influence to ignite the actual development of a child or a young person. The question is, 'What

is the relationship between silence and education?' More specifically, how can silence be introduced into the process of education? How does silence affect human development?

First, we must remember that silence is something other than 'keeping quiet' (not speaking), although these concepts are often used interchangeably and sometimes overlap. But silence is not the same as emptiness; it is a call to a personal reflection. It defines our beings when we confront our own inner 'I'.

7. Silence as the link between physical and spiritual life

Montessori (Kramer, 1988; Miksza, 2018), as well as Steiner (2005, 2007), pointed to the coexistence of movement and silence as necessary elements in education. Silence facilitates well-adjusted behaviour, balancing the processes of stimulation and inhibition. So, what is silence? Where does it come from? What is it for? Where does it lead?

I believe I can identify three 'places' from which silence flows. The first source is nature, the experience of peace, which opens one to a different dimension of existence and a new perspective on reality. The second source of silence is the experience of creativity. Finally, the third source from which silence comes is the spiritual encounter, for example with God, which, to some extent, from the beginning, defined what it meant to be human. Here, something completely different and important is present, which stimulates new ways of perceiving and expressing oneself.

When does the need for silence and keeping quiet arise? To take up another's time by chatter is immoral, as is not keeping silence in certain circumstances. The lack of necessary silence is caused by redundant words that we speak in a situation that calls for silence and quiet. It is redundant to express one's opinion on a given topic, if nothing good will come of it, but it will provoke an argument or trouble for the other. It is better to keep quiet than to hurt another by one's remarks. Therefore, we need to master our susceptibility to chatter. We need to force ourselves to be quiet, to give the other a chance to speak. Let us think before speaking, and be careful in choosing our words**.** Silence, like the air we breathe and the water we drink, is an essential element in the life of every human person; our organism needs it just as much as it needs oxygen and water. Silence is a moment when we begin to listen to our thoughts, to our bodies. People look for silence, feeling the need to cut themselves off from excessive information. Hence, many are begin-

ning to practise meditation, participating in Ignatian retreats, during which the participant speaks only with his or her spiritual director. They are seeking *something* that might help them maintain internal equilibrium.

People who have a problem with self-control – over their emotions, desires, sense of meaning and truth in life – are often afraid of silence. They are afraid of the moment when the thoughts they had long pushed to the edges of their awareness will re-emerge. Then, they will be forced to answer the questions they had hitherto been evading. They are afraid of learning the truth about themselves. They are scared of remembering situations in which they chose the wrong path. They avoid the moment when they will have to answer to themselves why they are doing what they are doing.

Life among other people requires humanity. To preserve one's humanity, we need silence, the ability to reflect. Young people are in great need of someone to listen to them, and yet they talk, sometimes all at the same time. They often lack the kind ear of someone who will listen. An overabundance of pent-up emotions, without the possibility of unloading them, leads to aggressive behaviour.

Memories of the silence of the family home, safe silence, warmth and peace, evoke joy, which motivates people to recreate an atmosphere known since childhood, in which we grew up. Returning to places where we went with our parents calms us down, reminding us of safe times and carefree games.

Silence is a good that we rarely value. It matures along with the person, supported by pedagogy, ethics and religion. Yet the experience of noise is significantly more common than the experience of silence. We are accustomed to living with noise from childhood; it has become our natural and only known milieu. Noise threatens our health and even our lives, while silence is becoming rarer and rarer.

8. Conclusion: Educating for reflection through silence

Silence is, in fact, fundamental in education, teaching us to listen. Keeping quiet is a task that orients one towards reflection, which leads to growth – and this is also the task of education. That which is most important happens within the human person. Experiencing and exercising silence as a method for personal growth and human development is a very beneficial state.

The principles that must be followed in teaching silence were presented by Montessori (Kramer, 1988; Miksza, 2018). Silence has its own melody and does not exclude sound, but rather is present in the music. Silence is

a way and ability in life. The life of a pupil in school is regulated by clearly outlined norms: that is, rules regarding time and behaviour connected with the programme and structure of given subjects, and private rules of a given teacher (their particular style of teaching, and expectations). All of this requires a certain discipline and internal tranquillity, so that both teacher and pupil are able to carry out a dialogue in silence. Many schools have established zones of silence, and in some, there is a quiet room. (Silent zones are organized in all schools in Niepołomice district; in Wawrzenice there is even a quiet room; and many schools introduce 'silent lessons' and focus on the dilemma of silence.) It has to do with shaping oneself through silence, and working in silence.

There is a difference between imagining silence and finding silence within oneself. Emotional calming-down can occur, among other ways, through the habit of daily writing, listening to the waves of the ocean (even from a recording), walking in silence in the halls during a break, jogging in silence, fishing, chess – all of this leads to the development of personality and concentration.

The centrality of silence in human development is exemplified in the refurbishing of the Brandenburg Gate, from 1994. Here, there is now a silent room for meditation, built on the pattern of the 'Silent Room' that Dag Hammarskjöld ordered for himself and his co-workers in his quarters at the United Nations in New York. The goal was to create a space for quiet reflection amidst the hustle and bustle of the big city. It is a place of tolerance between nations and religions, and a place of peace. The thought of creating a place for silence in the centre of Berlin emerged at the end of the 1980s, in West Berlin's intellectual circles. In 1993, a 'Society for Supporting a Quiet Place in Berlin' was organized under the patronage of Dr Hanny Renta Laurien. The work of the Society (in cooperation with the Berlin Senate) led to the opening of the Place of Silence on 27 October 1994. This silent room is simply furnished: its one decoration is a tapestry created by Ritta Hager from Budapest. There is a pictogram hanging on the wall in the form of a bas-relief designed by Franz Prentke of Berlin. Here, silence is now at the centre of social and political development, as it should be.

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The Praise of Self-Instruction in the 21st Century – against a Background of Selected Concepts of Self-Education in Poland during the Partitions and Interwar Period

Pochwała samouctwa w XXI wieku – na tle historycznych propozycji samokształceniowych w Polsce czasów zaborów i międzywojnia

Abstract: In the text, the author considers the present sense and meaning of self-instruction – in connection to the issue of being alone – against a background of selected historical concepts of self-education in Poland. Considering education and its role in learning to think, the author assumes that being alone as a mode of human existence is a philosophical starting point. Therefore, self-instruction presents itself as an adequate example, illustrating the possibility of experiencing solitude and learning to be alone as a way of being a person. In the times of the partitions, self-instruction was a very popular postulate among Polish intellectuals involved in activities promoting civil and patriotic attitudes, in a country subjected to denationalizing

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politics. In the interwar period, the concepts of self-instruction were still developing, due to defects in the created official school system at the time. The author focuses on one such concept, created by Władysław M. Kozłowski. Kozłowski himself assessed his work for the education of compatriots as fulfilling a civil duty and acting for a free and democratic Poland. Today, recalling the concept of self-instruction allows us to see it as a necessary humanizing complement to school education in Poland, balancing between the extremes of encyclopaedism and instrumentalism. It can be used to bring out a few arguments for education not being reduced to professionalization and which promotes the human condition as *vita activa*.

Keywords: self-instruction; solitude; aloneness; thinking; self-education; education.

Abstrakt: W tekście autorka proponuje rozważyć dzisiejszy sens i znaczenie samouctwa – w powiązaniu z zagadnieniem osobności – na tle wybranych historycznych koncepcji samokształceniowych w Polsce. Osobność jako sposób istnienia człowieka jest dla autorki filozoficznym punktem wyjścia w rozważaniach nad edukacją i jej rolą w uczeniu myślenia wymagającego bycia ze sobą samym (u siebie). W związku z czym samouctwo prezentuje się jako adekwatny przykład ilustrujący możliwość doświadczania i uczenia się osobności jako sposobu bycia. W czasach zaborów samouctwo było hasłem popularnym postulowanym w gronie polskich intelektualistów zaangażowanych w działalność krzewiącą postawy obywatelskie i patriotyczne w kraju poddanym zaborczej wynaradawiającej polityce. W międzywojniu w dalszym ciągu koncepcje samouctwa były rozwijane z powodu wad w tworzonym oficjalnym systemie szkolnictwa. Autorka skupia uwagę na jednej z koncepcji, tworzonej przez Władysława M. Kozłowskiego. Sam Kozłowski oceniał swoją pracę na rzecz kształcenia się rodaków jako spełnianie obowiązku obywatelskiego i działanie na rzecz wolnej i demokratycznej Polski, która wymaga od swoich obywateli rozumu i samodzielności. Przywoływanie dziś koncepcji samouctwa pozwala widzieć ją jako potrzebne humanizujące dopełnienie szkoły w Polsce, balansującej między skrajnościami encyklopedyzmu i instrumentalizmu. Można z owej koncepcji wydobyć wiązkę argumentów na rzecz wykształcenia niesprowadzalnego do uzawodowienia a sprzyjającego kondycji ludzkiej jako *vita activa*.

Słowa kluczowe: samouctwo, samotność, osobność, myślenie, wykształcenie samego siebie, wychowanie i kształcenie.

1. Introduction

Self-instruction is perceived mainly as a remedy for an absence of education. In my presentation, I will try to measure its value, particularly under present Polish conditions. Today's crisis in education is a state in which, more than by its shortages, we are threatened by its use of political tools and instrumentalization. What are the symptoms of this crisis? Firstly, we can observe it in the form of preserving encyclopaedism; and secondly, in the form of reductionism and the instrumentalization of school education, by both the authorities and its recipients. We inherited encyclopaedism from the days of the classical high school (*Gymnasium*), mainly in the Prussian model (Alves, 2019). It was common in Prussia and in Polish territories under Prussian rule (according to the formula: gaining knowledge depends on memorizing facts, discipline in the form of drilling, the system of the school hierarchy, and dependence on the authority of the teacher: professor and the headmaster).

During the Polish People's Republic, encyclopaedism (used in the communist countries) was the norm in general secondary schools. And today, the school education is again becoming a weapon in the hands of authority, which aims to achieve its goals through the education of the youth. On the other hand, the entities of education increasingly think of it as a means of climbing career levels – and here education reveals its second *extremum*, reductionism and instrumentalism, without reducing the burden of encyclopaedism. Can such a state of education be conducive to thinking? I assume this makes it difficult. It shifts thinking exercise to a later stage of life reserving the possible establishment with scholastic thinking for school[1].

Thinking is not a common practice at all, and education in a crisis may neglect the need to think. Certainly it is adjusted and stimulates the subject's activity (including cognitive), but it is not necessarily based on thinking. But is it conducive to the development and acquisition of mental abilities (having an open, critical mind) and personality skills (attitudes of independence, responsibility)? One may have some doubts. What, then, is conducive to thinking?

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[1] See: Hugo Kołłątaj (ed. 1953) writing about 'scholastic thinking' as a problem of Polish education at the end of the 18th century in: *Stan oświecenia w Polsce w latach panowania Augusta III (1750–1764)* [The state of enlightenment in Poland in the last years of August III (1750–1764)]. This is a censored work, published in its entirety only in the second half of the 20th century.

In my text, I will argue that what fosters and creates excellent conditions for thinking is **solitude**, a state of being at home with oneself. It is not a popular thesis. Furthermore, at present, everything seems to contradict this thesis. Our presence in culture is largely carried out through modern information technology, such as smartphones and tablets. Today, they are our window to the world. Through these devices we connect with others; and not only with our close ones. These devices give us the feeling that we are in constant – potential – communication with people all over the world, and can keep us up to date with everything that is happening worldwide. It is common to see people staring at their smartphone screens, reading from them, exchanging messages or talking with someone; this creates the picture of our cities and our everyday life, in the public space and beyond. But is this a pure way of meeting and conversation – in a modern version? And are we then available to ourselves? I doubt it. Are we not neglecting ourselves? Perhaps looking at smartphones shows not our openess to the world and others; but rather, our loneliness, fear, and an avoidance of reading inside ourselves, which inhibits contemplation and reflection. It can also simply describe our lack of preparation for a meeting with our own thoughts. This is how the Canadian writer Patrick deWitt (2019) approached this matter in an interview, describing how smartphones take away our solitude. I treat him as an ally of this thesis, as regards the human need for solitude which is threatened today, underestimated and distorted into the form of loneliness (isolation, rejection). And if we are so addicted to smartphones and rarely have a chance to experience our aloneness, then perhaps the task of education should be to learn how to deal with and manage without such devices, and to be able to practise being alone with ourselves.

For me, **aloneness** as a mode of human existence is a philosophical starting point in considering human education, and the role of **solitude** in teaching thinking, which requires being at home with oneself. However, I do not want to treat solitude as an end in itself. The key is to capture its positive side, as a **method** that enables people who are busy, anxious and uprooted to experience being alone, being with themselves; as a method to stop and increase the ability to experience thinking, and reflection about themselves, others and the world. **Thinking**, in turn, I would like to view as **an end** in itself, as the value of a person; as one's name, which is at the same level as one's freedom and openness to dialogue and meeting with others.

To this end, I propose to refresh the concept of self-instruction, treating it as a remedy for today's education crisis, in the culture of smartphones. I consider it as a voice that encourages learning to be with oneself, and learning to

experience aloneness as a meeting with oneself and with the thinking mind. Also, as a necessary humanizing complement to school in Poland, balancing between the extremes of encyclopaedism and instrumentalism. I have researched historical pedagogical texts from 100 years ago (the times of shortages of public education in Poland because of the partitions), and draw on arguments from today's perspective, for renewing the sense of education and its use. I recall mainly one figure – Władysław Kozłowski – who lived in the years 1858–1935, and thus experienced captivity, including deportation to Siberia, then the rebuilding of statehood and a system of public education. Kozłowski himself assessed his work for the self-education of his countrymen as fulfilling a civil duty and acting for a free and democratic Poland, which requires reason and independence from its citizens.

I assume that as a result of the analysis of **self-instruction**, it will be possible to demonstrate the value of **solitude** in a person's life; the need to learn and experience **aloneness** as a way of being alone (with oneself) and as a school of **thought**. In summary, I would like to present a few arguments for **education** being not limited to professional training, but conducive to the human condition as *vita activa* – extracted from the concept of self-instruction.

2. Aloneness as experiencing oneself and as a school of thought

Being alone (with oneself), being separately as a way of human existence (being a person, being a personal being), is my philosophical starting point in the consideration of education and its role in teaching thought, on the basis that thinking requires the subject to be at home with themselves. This sense of being a person – separately – is manifested in various forms. Starting from the very beginning, a small child still has no educated ability to recognize themselves as a separate self, speaks about themselves in the third person, sees themselves a manner indistinguishable from their surroundings, and is afraid of separation from their mother. On the other hand, autonomy is regarded as the goal of human development. Between these extremes exists a whole spectrum of intermediate forms through which one passes, when progressing from infancy and dependence to autonomy. This time is filled by education. In this space, one should as a learner attend to the dimension of being with oneself.

Genetically, an encounter is what precedes thinking triggered by a single subject; the experience of the proximity of a person who is ready to ac-

cept the trust of a child. Józef Tischner – a Polish philosopher of dialogue – gave his views on meeting and thinking, in relation to the pedagogical scene. He argued that the beginning of thinking lies in meeting and conversation. 'Nothing gives us food for thought, like the other' – he said (Tischner, 2008, p. 130). For him, dialogue was the beginning of all experience of the world, including the experience of God. In every form of dialogue, a human being is invited to think; including ethical thinking (to be truthful towards others, not to lie to them, to be faithful to them, to be a confidant of someone's hopes) and religious thinking (including touching the limits of thought). In the next step, and thus a step forward, it is necessary to constantly balance dependence relations (dependence on the educator / teacher / peer) with self-education experience. This new experience is the opportunity offered by the problem of self-solution, which is set by the learner, or the teacher whom the learner trusts (in addition to the assigned tasks). As we remember, in the case of John Stuart Mill, the dependent (all-encompassing) relationship with his father first required separation from his pedagogical relationship with him, so that his education would take the form of an independent educational work, including experiencing being alone without the feeling of deprivation (Wrońska, 2012, pp. 108–110).

At this point I would like to recall a few remarks by the phenomenologist Roman Ingarden, about a person with a reference to aloneness. In the view of the author of *Książeczka o człowieku* ['A Little Book about a Man'], the value of a man as a person lies in the fact that he is crystallized, integrated, or on the way to his crystallization and integration. One's centre is a living, personal 'I', a conscious entity. This 'I' as a person has a character, is free (aware of their own freedom), and is thus a centre of action, capable of grasping the initiative; while on the other hand, they must be relatively isolated from the environment. A human is a person at least *in potentia*. In the course of one's life, one can develop one's personal potential (potential as a person). Among the personal values that are worth nurturing and improving in one's life, in his book *Wykłady z etyki* [Lectures on Ethics], Ingarden distinguished awareness, freedom, strength of character, intelligence, happiness, versatility, depth, independence, internal criticism, and individuality. These values are, according to him, the basic equipment of a person, but when neglected, they may reveal their lack or opposite: that is, character weakness, intellectual dullness, lack of understanding, spiritual poverty, shallowness of feelings and thoughts, dependence, dogmatism, and a quality of being anonymous. In addition to the above, he also distinguished the very value of a person – this concept of merging, crystallizing, integrity. It means

that even though a person is subjected to time-bound, historical changes, they still maintain a durable, essential core; this is the basis and the source of both quality development processes and the individual manner in which the interaction takes place between a person and the world. It is only on the basis of this psychophysical integration that Ingarden provides the dimension of the person's *dignity*. This special dignity is given to the person by their moral deeds (Ingarden, 1989). 'I am the strength – he claims – that wants to be free. One can only last and be free if one voluntarily gives oneself up to produce goodness, truth and beauty. Only then one exists' (Ingarden, 1987, p. 68).

It is obvious that the moral dimension of human existence requires openness to dialogue and involvement in the affairs of others. But space and time for solitude should also be defined and outlined if one is to feel at home with oneself in that specific time and space, involved and capable of involvement, and able to leave oneself to meet with others. Being alone at a mental level, as a creature capable of reflection, finds its fulfillment at the level of action in relation to another human being and in the community. Hannah Arendt devotes great attention to this issue in *The Human Condition*, by considering and reinterpreting two faces of the human being: the *vita activa* – the activity of a person, being an actor of events and initiator of actions; and *vita contemplativa* – human reflexivity and distancing. It is also valuable to recall her distinction between private and public spheres, where in the first she places secretiveness, intimacy; while the public contains everything that is important and should be contributed to the *forum*, spoken in front of others and implemented for others (as a public matter) (Arendt, 1998). For Arendt, aloneness is not just a matter of intimacy and privacy.

In her work *The Life of the Mind*, Adendt makes a distinction between intellect and reason (mind), with an emphasis that the ability to think is assigned to reason. This is extremely important in connection with education. The intellect is considered to be the mental activity that is apparently practised during the years spent at school. We use the term 'intellectual education', but in the meaning of the process guided by the teacher. On the other hand, there is the case of the mind. She begins her reflection on thinking by quoting Cato's ancient thought: 'never is a man more active than when he does nothing, never is he less alone than when he is by himself' (Arendt, 1978, p. 8). Following this thought, Arendt concludes that today – regardless of the range of modern 'deaths' (such as of God, philosophy, metaphysics) – 'our ability to think is not at stake; we are what men always have been – thinking beings'; and that 'men have an inclination, perhaps a need, to think beyond the limitations of knowledge, to do more with this ability than to use

it as an instrument for knowing and doing' (ibidem, p. 21). This need, in her opinion, is the result of the relationship between the ability to think and to tell right from wrong; namely that 'weakedness may be caused by absence of thought' (ibidem, p. 13). This is the problem of the so-called banality of evil; and consequently, Arendt emphasizes that 'we must be able to "demand" its exercise [the ability to think – KW] from every sane person, no matter how erudite or ignorant, intelligent or stupid he may happen to be' (ibidem, p. 13). Thus, one must distinguish between the two faculties: reason (*Vernunft*) and intellect (*Verstand*), or between two mental activities: thinking and cognition. For Arendt, Kant's distinction between knowledge and faith – in other words, that he 'found it necessary to deny knowledge […] to make room for faith' (ibidem, p. 14) – was nothing but making room for thinking.

Why do we think? In seeking the answer, Arendt turned to the ancient Greeks and the Romans. She stayed with Socrates longer, as she found him to be a teacher of thought, called by Heidegger 'the purest of the West. This is why he wrote nothing' (ibidem, p. 174). Socrates taught thinking by describing himself as a gadfly (he stung and bit people, stimulating them to think), and a midwife (he delivered people of their thoughts); he was also called an electric ray (he paralized but triggered thinking activity). He was dangerous in what he did, because he mobilized others to think; and it is thinking that makes people disobedient, not succumbed to authority. According to Arendt, what triggered the thinking of Socrates was the love (need, desire) for beauty, justice and wisdom. One has to arouse this, because without it one is unable to think. Arendt, like Socrates, argued that evil is an absence, but went a little further, to focus mainly on the absence of thinking (thoughtlessness). It would be a mistake, however, to confuse Socratic love (*eros*) with other emotional states, such as passions and certainty of conviction, which tend to be more of a barrier to thinking. This can be seen, for example, at rallies by politicians, ideologues, preachers; these are gatherings of crowds of followers of a given ideology or worldview, giving pre-prepared answers to various ills and problems of everyday life and beyond. This is a different way of satisfying existential needs, a regaining of a sense of security and a liberation from uncertainty and anxiety; it is competitive to thinking. Yet there is a great demand for these ideological images of reality. Therefore, should we see thinking as a privilege reserved for a limited minority? On the contrary.

Arendt, making a distinction between the intellect knowing something and reason thinking about something, defends the thesis that

> thinking in its noncognitive, non-specialist sense as a natural need of human life […] is not a prerogative of the few, but an ever-present faculty in everybody; by the same token, inability to think is not a failing of the many who lack brain power, but an ever-present possibility for everybody – scientists, scholars and other specialists in mental enterprises not excluded. Everybody may come to shun that intercourse with oneself (ibidem, p. 191).

It is solitute but not loneliness, because a man has himself as company. Loneliness occurs when we are unable to 'split up into the two-in-one' and to keep ourselves company (ibidem, p. 185). This two-in-one takes the form of dialogue with each other: one is talking and listening silently, and this 'heals the solitariness of thinking' (ibidem, p. 187). It also makes it possible to see a man acting wrongly as someone inconsistent with themselves. We deal with this in every situation, in which a person wants to make an exception for themselves and not adhere to the rules (applied generally, for everyone); but he or she would like others to adhere to them, and thus such a person contradicts themselves. 'A life without thinking is quite possible; it then fails to develop its own essence – it is not merely meaningless; it is not fully alive. Unthinking men' – Arendt adds – 'are like sleepwalkers' (ibidem, p. 191).

One can also wonder if we are actually alone when we think. Maybe not at all, because when we think, we can have a conversation with humanity – as Michael Oakeshott would say. Therefore, if we are in such good company, loneliness as deprivation is not threatening to us. And while being at home (with yourself), you can invite others into yourself. Guests are welcome. We can accommodate a variety of voices (not only the discursive 'voice of science', but for example the voice of poetry) – because all these utterances contribute to human activity, argues Oakeshott (1959, p. 9). When we are at home with ourselves, we can also transcend ourselves and be for someone else, in an understanding, accepting way; such as leaning over someone's misery, or simply wanting to be close to someone or sending someone a smile. But this is a further perspective, and Arendt herself would introduce it in the work *On Will*. For the culmination of the thinking process as 'the two-in-one of soundless dialogue' (Arendt, 1978, p. 181), it is the power of judging that embodies thinking in the phenomenal world. At this level, we are no longer alone (with our thinking), because we are entering a world in which, among others, we decide to issue judgments about specific things and facts, and become involved in the action. In turn, Tischner, the author of *Myślenie według wartości* ['Thinking According to Values'] (Tischner, 2002),

demanded the necessity of waking up to thinking, a task he reserved for teachers and mentors (Tischner, 1984).

For children, but also for fearful people, concealed from the world in their hideouts and not yet awakened to think, Tischner – and also Arendt – prescribe the meeting (dialogue) with the other. 'I first talk with others', explains Arendt,

> before I talk with myself, examining whatever the joint talk may have been about, and then discover that I can conduct a dialogue not only with others but with myself as well. The common point, however, is that the dialogue of thoughts can be carried out only among friends, and its basic criterion, its suprime law, says: 'Do not contradict yourself' (Arendt, 1978, p. 189).

In Tischner's version, we find a description of the meeting, not so much with a friend as with a confidant of hope (he or she cannot fail and must speak the truth) (Tischner, 1984, pp. 66–71). Arendt and Tischner agree here: dialogue not only fills the thinking process, but also introduces and invites us to think.

Even John Dewey, an advocate of activism and teamwork in education, stressed that the educator's task is to arouse thinking, to shape a searching and reflective attitude: 'stop and think', he says, because

> all reflection involves, at some point, stopping external observations and reactions so that an idea may mature. Meditation, withdrawal or abstraction from clamorous assailants of the senses and from demands for overt action, is as necessary at the reasoning stage, as are observation and experiment at other periods […]. Reasoning is no more akin to disputing or arguing, or to the abrupt seizing and dropping of suggestions, than digestion is to a noisy champing of the jaws. The teacher must secure opportunity for leisurely mental digestion (Dewey, 1910, p. 210).

And although he treated thinking as an instrument for solving problems and satisfying needs, he was far from using thinking for fulfilling someone's apetite or caprice. As he wrote, freedom 'does not consist in keeping up uninterruptive and unimpeded external action' (ibidem, p. 65); its true sense is intellectual, as 'freedom of mind' (ibidem, p. 64) or freedom of observation and judgment, that serves intrinsically valuable goals.

In addition to the arguments of philosophers, it is worth recalling the reflections of Patrick deWitt, a contemporary writer who praises solitute. In one of his interviews, he talks about his decision to live without the Internet.

In his school days he experienced major learning difficulties, despite his love of reading. He admits that his love for books was aroused in him by his father. He tells us that his father, at the age of seventeen, decided to embark on a journey after reading *On the Road* by Jack Kerouac; he left his home forever. For this reason (and not thanks to the school), Patrick understood that books can have an enormous impact on human life. His reading, however, did not translate into success at school. Apparently, he did not read what the syllabus and teachers required. When writing his own novel, he decided to disconnect from the Internet, which took too much of his time. As he says, without the Internet he is happier and more productive.

> 'Smartphones', he admits, have taken away moments of solitude, which are crucial for my work. When my laptop was connected to the Internet, I checked the email or turned on something on YouTube every few minutes. It took me a lot of time to return to the thread left behind (deWitt, 2019).

After writing the book, he discovered that he did not need to go back to the Internet anymore. Thanks to this change, he has gained a lot of time. Today, he says, he does not have a television, uses the simplest phone with a flip-top, and has no Internet at home. When he needs to send an email, he goes to a cafe. He spends there an hour each day, five days a week. In the remaining time he is outside the network.

If solitude allows us to experience aloneness as a way of existence and to undergo the process of learning to think, then let us move it to the field of education. But where and how can it reside in this space? I assume that at the school level it will be difficult to obtain. To what extent, if at all, does a student have the opportunity to ask a question? Are they given the task of rethinking a particular problem or finding a way to solve it, or are they allowed to activate their imagination and find a problem to investigate themselves? Apart from getting to know and understanding what the author had in mind, do they have the chance to share their own thoughts after reading a given text? Are they given any tasks that involve preparing their own questions for the text they read, their solutions to a given problem, or their interpretation of the facts, processes and events that they have learned? The diagnosis seems to be very inauspicious (Nussbaum, 2010; Postman, 2000). Is this only a problem of our modern times, or was it a problem in the past? To answer this question I will expound upon remarks from Polish history, by recalling the figure already mentioned: Władysław Kozłowski. I will try to transfer to our field his commitment to the self-education of his compatriots, in the

service of a free and democratic Poland. Just as they were 100 years ago, his demands are still invaluable. In a different historical context, there is still the same need for education that makes people commited and sensitive citizens, rational and independent people.

3. Władysław Kozłowski and his criticism and postulates regarding education – praise of self-instruction

In the era before that of Kozłowski, Hugo Kołłątaj discussed the state of the Enlightenment in Poland in the last years of August III (1750–1764). His work described the condition of our society, in which scholastic thinking prevails, as being a contradiction of a mature form based on self-reliance and independence (Kołłątaj, 1953). Let us also recall an earlier figure, John Locke, who dealt with issues concerning the conduct of the understanding, but did not include them in his text about education. Eventually, we can find them in the second volume of his main epistemological work, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*. Thus, the ability of the mind as a concern for learners was discussed in his work addressed not to children but to youth and adults (Locke, 1856). Kozłowski was a translator of the first volume of this book, and we know that he supported many points of Locke's philosophy (Kozłowski, 1921). We can observe his influence especially on Kozłowski's concept of self-education (Wrońska, 2012, pp. 62, 101).

Kozłowski often quoted another English scholar, namely the historian Edward Gibbon, who said: 'we have a twofold education – one is given to us, the other is gained by ourselves, and that is what is most valuable' (Kozłowski, 1932, p. 1). Kozłowski, like Locke, praised the use of our own reason; therefore, the task of education is to promote learning to think independently. For him, education is not teaching, but a piece of mental equipment with such skills and knowledge that will enable further self-learning, or self-education. To address the permanent limitation of access to knowledge, as well as the indoctrination present in the formal education system of the Polish partitions and during World War I, Kozłowski found a way to improve the mental condition of the society; not within formal education, but as a part of self-study activity. According to him, the task of education is to develop general, but clear and precise concepts about each of the sciences. This has a twofold purpose: (1) as a means of helping us become aware of world phenomena, so we as learners know where to go and how to keep going when the need or passion makes us learn more about any subject;

and (2) as the material from which the whole world-view is made (ibidem, pp. 149–150).

Elementary knowledge of these sciences should be within the scope of the school's work. The state of balance between schooling and self-instruction is optimal for education. We see that an imbalance between them causes the most common disadvantage of education, which is manifested firstly in being well-read, but at the same time ignorant of the foundations that a school should have given (as in the case of a wiseacre who easily switches from topic to topic and changes his views along with everything he reads). Nowadays, especially in Europe, this is in fact not very frequent, as we care about equipping children with basic knowledge. Secondly, when the self-learning is predominantly complementary to schooling, but there is no effort to educate oneself, this leads to the case of the eternal student: an encyclopaedist. Kozłowski emphasizes that education, although based on broad knowledge, should not be an encyclopaedic one – not even in the smallest degree – but a synthetic one. As he states, 'not the amount of knowledge, but the ability to link the contents to each other' is the value of education. Self-education leads to the emancipation of man. However, it requires shaping beliefs that are the result of one's own work (although school should prepare the ground for this by developing emotional, cognitive and mental foundations for independent work). If schools were to entirely replace self-education, 'the fate of such a society would be miserable', asserts Kozłowski (ibidem, 1932, p. 22).

The comprehensive education of oneself creates the individual's comprehensive worldview; it integrates feelings, will, knowledge and readiness to act. What distinguishes this worldview, according to Kozłowski, is: (1) consistency, i.e. diligent removal of internal contradictions in one's experience; (2) scientific thinking, i.e. relying on knowledge and basing one's ideas on it; (3) criticism, i.e. taking into account the boundary between knowledge and faith; and (4) freeing oneself from blindly following tradition, but instead guiding oneself with ideals, using the achievements of the great artists and thinkers from the past (ibidem, pp. 111–113). He argues that if you have leisure time, and the support of institutions facilitating knowledge and learning (for example museums, libraries, open lectures, etc.) then working on yourself may exceed the effect of formal education (Kozłowski, 1902, p. 40).

Kozłowski tried to convince everyone to undertake self-instruction, explaining to his compatriots who were reluctant to learn independently without the support of 'a good school', that self-education is not at all devoid of

mentoring. Importantly, the learner can have more influence on choosing teachers from outside the neighbourhood's immediate environment, 'among writers of all nations and ages, making use of the existence of books' (ibidem, p. 181) – as was the case for Patrick deWitt and his father. Kozłowski asked, 'why would it be more shameful to learn from Plato, Kant, Laplace, and Darwin, than from Mr. X from the Gymnasium of Saint Ann in Kraków?' (ibidem, p. 181). Self-instruction as a form of self-education is the independent use of knowledge without the intermediation of a scholar-lecturer; the learning is 'open', using every situation and opportunity to acquire new knowledge and expand what is already possessed. Moreover, it also involves – in addition to reading – the contact with another person, and an openness to everything in them that can enrich us: a word, judgment, example, etc. (ibidem, p. 41). For Kozłowski, every student is and should be an autodidact. They should 'overwork' all the school material by themselves. To count on pouring wisdom into the student's head during classes for six or more hours a day is a psychological, pedagogical and also philosophical absurdity. Nevertheless, the education of oneself should be eagerly supported by the school, and teachers should rely on the readers' independence.

Kozłowski, as a critic of contemporary schooling in Poland during the interwar period, accused it of many cardinal errors. For example, (1) overloading, under the pretext of facilitating, through an excessive number of hours; and (2) teaching content that is not actually scientific, although labelled as such. In the text *Uzdrowienie szkoły* średniej ['Healing of the secondary school'], he argues that this causes increased intolerance of different views, hatred of their followers, and a lack of one's own opinion. Among his postulates for healing education, he proposed (1) abolition of the secondary school certificate; (2) spreading education in the widest possible social strata, with the inevitable consequence of removing all obstacles to entering secondary school after passing elementary school, and later to higher education institutions of all types; (3) legislative protection of children against overloading; and (4) transferring religious classes to church congregations, and introducing ethics to schools (Kozłowski, 1927, p. 3). He separately formulated his criticism of the matriculation examination [in Polish, *matura*] in a poignant sketch, *Precz z maturą!* ['Down with the Matriculation Examination!']. Here he pointed out that it was a method of punishing and intimidating Polish youth during the partitions; but after regaining independence, it still remained an obsolete and unnecessary apparatus 'to extinguish lights in the nation', by supporting bureaucracy and enabling the authorities to fill 'all posts with their pawns' (Kozłowski, 1926, pp. 12–13).

To sum up, it can be assumed that Kozłowski treated school and self-education as two separate issues: schooling creates scholars, but self-education produces educated people. Learnedness or erudition is not equal to education. True education is distinguished by two features: (1) the synthesis of 'knowledge into the whole general view', and (2) the independent fulfilment of this synthesis,

> assimilating it with our individuality […]. The first feature creates a whole picture on the basis of fragmentary information from various fields; it produces cohesive and uniform foundations on which we base our judgments; while the second makes these judgments really ours. You can learn all your life without getting an education, and have ready opinions for all possible circumstances without being the author of these judgments (Kozłowski, 1932, p. 21).

School works well if it forms and ennobles character, teaches and develops discipline, will and mind; accustoms one to systematic and correct thinking; trains the mind and gives out basic knowledge, thus preparing one to develop beliefs, without instilling them. The goal of self-instruction is 'to elaborate answers to issues raised by life, to create beliefs which help to direct our behaviour and conduct' (ibidem, p. 23). A book will be helpful here, which you can obtain.

4. What and how to read? – within the ideal comprehensive education of oneself

For this purpose, Kozłowski prepared a handbook (1932) intended to help in self-instruction. Education liberates oneself from childhood, understood as dependence; it is the enlightenment of the individual. Childishness is not a fault, but abandonment of working on oneself to escape from dependence already marks the guilt. As he states in this handbook,

> The ideal of true education is to give everyone the opportunity to have their own thoughts, to have their own, not borrowed, and deeply rooted judgments about life, art and knowledge. The task of education is not to make everyone a writer; but you can say that every educated person is a writer in potency (ibidem, p. 30).

He also quotes Fichte's words:

> What way have I come to what I know? Was I driven by the pursuit to know, zest for knowledge? Did I wade through uncertainty, doubt and contradiction? [...] No, I do not recall such a state. These instructions were given to me before I even wanted them; I was answered before I asked the question. I listened because I could not avoid it (Fichte, 2002, p. 17).

Kozłowski interprets this thought as aptly catching the moment in which a person can make a decision to choose themselves as their guide in life: that is, using their own conviction, their own judgment about things, and the pursuit of critical development of this belief.

The first impulse to write this handbook was a catalogue of works from various fields to read, along with books, both sent to him by his younger brother Kazimierz, during his exile in Siberia. Kozłowski admitted that this was very useful for him. Thinking about writing a book on what to read, he wondered if it is possible to manage someone's reading without violating the individuality of a reader, and whether it is possible to prepare a catalogue of excellent books suitable for everyone. After a long consideration, he decided to develop a book that would be a collection of general methodological guidelines, but would not prejudge 'the results to which the reading will lead'; along with a list of titles 'which have earned the unwavering right to be considered valuable and educating', while avoiding imposing views, beliefs and goals. Indeed, nothing is more contrary to the concept of education than

> imposing ready-made, not critically digested and thought-out views. This way, only the herd […] is raised, the blind tools of parties are fabricated, ready to go uncritically with the slogans of their leaders. Not free, not self-thinking and not self-determining individuals (Kozłowski, 1932, p. 15).

He admitted that the leading idea of the first editions of his handbook was the expectation that the book would be an 'educator of generations from the years of slavery'; that it would awaken the desire for independence and the desire for progress, which are crucial for the life of the nation. In the times of an independent Poland, Kozłowski came to the conclusion that this leading idea did not have to change at all, because a 'partisan spirit and sectarianism' continued to threaten the development of the individual mind, giving either ready solutions or biased ones that 'tighten their horizons' (ibidem, p. 15). Instead of promoting an impartial search for the truth, they slacken thought and will, making people accustomed to complying with the arguments of the fighting groups and their bellwethers. Thus, self-instruction has not lost its

importance, provided that it is allowed to promote the ideal of comprehensive education.

5. Summary

The above considerations allow it to be stated that it is worth postulating self-instruction as a form of education that runs parallel to the formal one and continues after its completion, within the framework of a wider project of educating ourselves. It makes sense if we want education to leave room for independent choice; if want it to maintain initiatives for seeking knowledge and reading selflessly; and not be transformed into a tool and a market product ordered by various stakeholders. Secondly, self-instruction is unavoidable if we think about learning throughout life. One must be able to escape school and school thinking, which moulds the minds of children and young people, and does not help them become independent in thinking. Finally, we can take into account self-instruction as a form of resistance to schooling, but not in its extreme form of dropping out, which creates the risk of greater losses than profits, including loneliness and isolation. Indeed, an example of such resistance is seen in Poland today.

The praise of self-instruction – as part of a reflection on aloneness and solitude, as a mode of human existence – coincides with the concept of comprehensive liberal education. Here, it creates a chord in which the humanizing note of *non-profit* education is heard (Nussbaum, 2010). Kozłowski's indications are again valid. He was convinced that everything must be done to increase the circle of intelligent people; or, in the words of Arendt, the circle of people who think. Just like Kozłowski, although I am criticizing modern schooling, I do not recommend acquiring knowledge outside of school. Rather, we should remove the excess of knowledge from schools, and introduce more opportunities to meet others and ourselves (our aloneness), through dialogue and the experience of thinking – in solitude.

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The Loneliness and Isolation of the Parentified Child in the Family

Samotność i izolacja dziecka parentyfikowanego w rodzinie

Abstract: Parentification is a phenomenon that occurs in family life, consisting of a reversal of the roles of the child and their parent or parents (Böszörményi-Nagy & Spark, 1973). It is understood as a functional and/or emotional change of roles in which the child subordinates their own needs in order to adapt to and take care of the instrumental or psychological needs of the parent. The presented research is embedded in the interpretive paradigm. The research material allows the author to distinguish specific stages of parentified childhood (proper childhood, transition phase, adult childhood), within which appear categories such as responsibility, involuntary heroism, self-containment and loneliness. With regard to the last two categories, the author wishes to construct the image of a lonely child experiencing the reversal of family roles. There is a peculiar paradox at work: the loneliness of the child within the family environment. There is a lonely struggle for the survival and proper functioning of the family, while keeping up the appearance of a normally functioning

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family, maintaining family homeostasis, and meeting their own needs and those of their loved ones.

Keywords: parentification; isolation; loneliness; child in family.

Abstrakt: Parentyfikacja to zjawisko występujące w życiu rodzinnym, które polega na odwróceniu ról między dzieckiem a rodzicem/rodzicami (Böszörményi-Nagy i Spark, 1973). W realizowanych przez autorkę badaniach, osadzonych w paradygmacie interpretatywnym, parentyfikacja staje się głównym przedmiotem zainteresowania. Na podstawie zgromadzonego materiału badawczego autorka wyróżnia etapy dzieciństwa parentyfikowanego, a w ich ramach takie kategorie jak: odpowiedzialność, niedobrowolny heroizm, samoradzenie sobie i osamotnienie. W odniesieniu do dwóch ostatnich kategorii autorka konstruuje obraz osamotnionego dziecka doświadczającego odwrócenia ról w rodzinie. Na uwagę zasługuje fakt, że dochodzi tu do swoistego paradoksu – osamotnienia dziecka w rodzinie, środowisku mu najbliższym. Toczy ono samotną walkę o: przetrwanie i właściwe funkcjonowanie rodziny, zachowanie pozorów normalności, utrzymywanie rodzinnej homeostazy, zaspokojenie potrzeb swoich i bliskich.

Słowa kluczowe: parentyfikacja; izolacja; samotność; dziecko w rodzinie.

1. Introduction

Early experiences in the family home bring significant and often unavoidable consequences in the later life of almost every human being. This is the result of the closeness, special bonds and specific intimate relationships occurring in the family, as well as the family roles and unique kinds of rights and obligations that bind the family members. In fact, family and family happiness are still the most important values that Poles cherish in their everyday lives.

Parentification is a phenomenon that disturbs the functioning of the family, and above all significantly violates children's educational and developmental processes. Transferring responsibility for the whole family onto children seems to be a socially acceptable form of violence against children. Parentification is putting them in difficult situations in which they try to face tasks and challenges that exceed their strength.

The article presents the picture of a lonely childhood resulting from the experience of parentification. Loneliness and solitude, presented from a bi-

ographical perspective, are one of the most important aspects of the experience of parentification. The distinction between different approaches to the sense of being alone or being left alone, as experienced by the child, is reflected in the analysed narratives. The adopted research perspective enables an attempt to recognize this phenomenon in the lifelong context of the parentified people, and provides reflection upon the different aspects of such loneliness.

2. The phenomenon of parentification

Parentification is a phenomenon that occurs in family life, consisting of a reversal of roles between the child and their parent or parents (Böszörményi-Nagy & Spark, 1973). It is understood as a change of roles in which the children demote their own needs in order to adapt to and take care of the instrumental or psychological needs of the parents (Schier, 2012).

Parentification occurs when the child takes on responsibility for the tasks, duties, safety and emotions of the family members (usually the parents), mostly in order to maintain the balance known also as homeostasis of the family. Salvador Minuchin (1974) states that by violating the boundaries between the parents and children, parentification leads to the disruption of family hierarchy and power. Thus, the child becomes part of the parental subsystem – Minuchin describes such a child as a *parental child*. This state, if long-lasting, causes a number of negative consequences; according to Louise Earley and Deila Cushway (2002), these include overloading the child with an excessive amount of tasks that are beyond their developmental abilities, or the child's inability to meet their own needs, as a result of satisfying the needs of their parents.

Functional parentification consists of using the child to carry out work related to housekeeping and the organization of family life; they take over duties such as cooking, cleaning, washing, taking care of siblings and other family members, or even earning money. The emotional exchange of these roles involves placing the child in the role of a trustee, family judge, therapist, or even the mediator in the parental conflicts (Hooper 2008). The reversal of family roles, often unconscious, seems to be a socially accepted phenomenon. Children become so-called 'small heroes', showing specific strength and courage, since they take responsibility for the family environment, supporting their parents and guardians. However, this kind of heroism is marked by exhausting efforts that exceed their strength, undertaken due

to a sense of duty or loyalty. Such children feel that they need to 'save' the family system and preserve intrinsic family bonds. When facing numerous tasks, responsibilities and expectations, children undertaking them display strength, bravery, and also take responsibility for their family environment, and thus support their parents and guardians.

The reversal of the natural order of family roles indisputably affects the child's development. The assessment of this impact should include the following factors: the type of family boundaries, openness in defining the child's tasks, the nature of the child's work, the person whom the child is to look after, and the degree of internalization of the guardians' needs. The relevance of the tasks performed and the kind of undertaken responsibilities should also be taken into account (Jurkovic, 1997). N. D. Chase (1999) distinguished *healthy* (adaptive) and *pathological* (destructive) parentification. The first involves 'situational or culturally conditioned, isolated child behaviours related to the care for parents/siblings, perceived as sporadic or normative' (Grzegorzewska, 2016); this can positively influence the child's development by shaping their conviction that they are competent and helpful to their parents, thus developing responsibility and a sense of agency. By contrast, destructive parentification occurs when the parent imposes a specific role upon the child as a result of their helplessness or impotence, while expecting behaviours typical of adults (Schier, 2015). In this case, the child is burdened with obligations significantly exceeding their abilities and strength; this has many negative consequences, usually identified only in the adult life of the parentified person.

The experience of parentification is a difficult one, and it is usually unconscious and undisclosed – it is hidden behind the closed door of the family home. It may seem that it is also an element of the 'natural order' of the family, resulting from its functioning as a system in which, in the absence of one family member's ability to perform the assigned tasks (roles), and in order to maintain its durability ('being together'), the other members (children) take over these tasks (de Barbaro, 1999).

3. The research methodology

The study has been conducted according to the interpretative paradigm (Sławecki, 2012)[1], with the aim of recognizing what parentification is, and

[1] The research for the author's doctoral dissertation, *The experience of parentification*

what the experience of parentification in the family consists of. The experience of the family role-reversal appears as a phenomenon, mechanism, or set of behaviours happening in the course of human life; as such, it constitutes an element of the person's biography, shaping it in various ways. The subject of this research is the experience of parentification examined from a biographical perspective; this consists of respondents' biographical experiences that are related to the sphere of family life, and the meaning attributed to them by the parentified individuals.

The biographical perspective allows us to capture the subjective character of the research subject. As Danuta Lalak (2010) states, biographical research brings the social sciences into the context of social reality, in which the individuality of the actor must be taken into account, and this individuality is in turn structured and socially conditioned. The biography of a human being becomes a specific platform for the reflective integration of human activities, such as cognition, vigour, communication, and meeting others. This deepens self-awareness and the ability for biographical learning. In terms of science and cognition, biography is a subjective structure of the lived life.

The data collection technique mainly consists of Fritz Schütze's autobiographical narrative interview method (1983), which allows the researcher to get to know the individual's perception of the world, and the most intimate surroundings and experiences of the research participant. Interlocutors present their own past, i.e. the course of their life seen from their own point of view. Human beings are active subjects constantly interpreting their experiences and gained information; they negotiate the meaning of events and objects during their meeting with others (Urbaniak-Zając & Kos, 2013). Thus, by using the biographical approach, the researcher studies the life of a particular individual as presented by him/herself in the narrative form.

During the research, the interlocutors were asked to tell the story of their life with particular reference to their family. The researcher was interested in how people who have experienced parentification – and who are now adults – present their experience from the time perspective, and how they situate this experience in their own biography.

In the attempt to answer the research questions concerning the meaning and sense given to family experiences, people who had experienced family role-reversal in their childhood were sought. The literature on the subject

form the biographical perspective, was conducted from April to September 2018. The defence of the dissertation took place on 9 July 2019.

points to specific risk groups which have increased probability of parentification occurrence. Therefore, such risk groups were treated as criteria for the purposeful selection of interlocutors. Accordingly, the following selection criteria for the study were formulated: experience of addiction in the family, illness and/or disability of a parent or other family member, large families, mono-parent families, and transnational (disconnected) families.

The research group consisted of 25 people, aged 20–67 years, comprising seven men and 19 women; they joined the research according to the snowball method, if they reported a specific fitness to the above-mentioned selection criteria. The empirical material obtained during the study was later transcribed and analysed in accordance with the guidelines constructed by F. Schütze (1983). These consist of the following stages: (1) formal analysis of the text (establishing a communication scheme; selecting narrative, argumentative and descriptive fragments; dividing the material into segments according to the terms of the taken subject; time to which these narratives relate; the type of speech or intonation), (2) structural description (subjecting each segment to detailed analysis; constitution of so-called cognitive figures – selection of biographical advisors, orienting others, i.e. people setting the course of the biography, significant others (Schütze, 1983); (3) constructing theoretical structures (background construction, screening, theoretical commentary, argumentative commentary, coda), process structures (biographical schemes of activity, institutional patterns, trajectories, metamorphoses), and analytic abstraction (generalization, i.e. appointing common categories to all the stories obtained from interviews); and (4) contrasting comparison, and building the theoretical model. The application of F. Schütze's analytical procedure allowed the selection of specific problem areas related to the experience of parentification, which enabled its full picture to be presented in the doctoral dissertation.

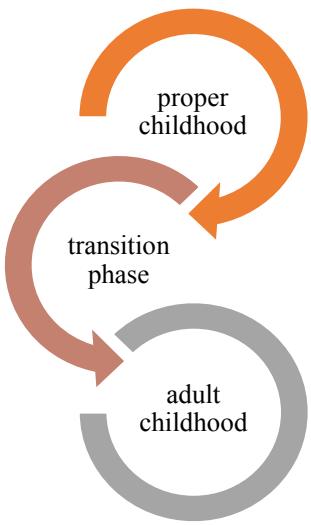
4. The results

The biographical perspective adopted in the presented research allows the problem of parentification to be understood as an individual experience emerging from specific family and non-family circumstances. The reversal of family roles had marked the course of the individuals' life, although it had not often been the main problem in a given family. Childhood, being a key stage in human life, in their case had been marked in a specific way, which will be referred to as parentified childhood. Based on the analysis of col-

lected research material, the phases of parentified childhood and its aspects and characteristics were distinguished. The narrators clearly indicated that a feeling of loneliness and solitude accompanied their experience of parentification. This is very important for learning and trying to understand the mechanisms of family role-reversal.

On the basis of the narratives of the parentified individuals, three stages of childhood were distinguished. These can be seen as a kind of mirror image of the course of family role-reversal: proper childhood, transition phase, and adult childhood.

Diagram 1: Phases of parentified childhood.[2]



Source: own study.

The picture of proper childhood which emerges from the narratives of the interlocutors is that they perceive it as the time of proper, or relatively correct functioning of the family – as a period of normality, when the family

[2] The stages of parentified childhood are presented in a more extensive manner in the doctoral dissertation *The experience of parentification form the biographical perspective* (2019).

roles seem natural (this is carefree childhood, during which the parents take care of the child). The interlocutors pointed out that as young children, they were unable to notice, understand or comprehend the proper functioning of the family environment, and they would not have recognized any problems (that in many cases had already been occurring). Such things would stay outside the child's consciousness and exceed their ability to see or understand them.

On the other hand, such a narrative construction regarding childhood may be a way of building a safe point of reference to the past, allowing the adult to explain the more difficult parts of childhood and to confirm the belief that 'it has not always been this way'. Interlocutors considered this part of their childhood as a distant memory, perceived as images, feelings or events:

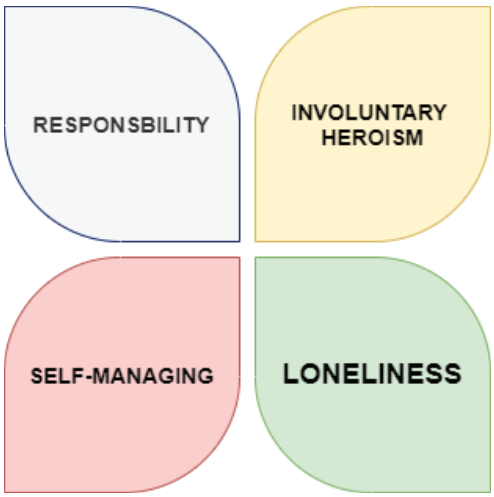
> My memories from the age of four, five and six, appear as images in my head. I remember these things very well, because I remember that my family was full then: there was dad, there was mother and everything was fine. I did not notice any things that would negatively affect the image of the family. (W4, woman, 37 years old)

However, the next stage, referred to as the transition phase, changes this perspective. It includes circumstances and events significant or contributing to the transition from proper childhood to adult childhood. This transitional phase is accompanied by situations in which the child confronts the family problems. It often involves the child taking the initiative and undertaking actions that emotionally and instrumentally exceed their capabilities and strength.

The child gradually or rapidly enters the stage of adult childhood, understood here as 'non-childhood' – i.e. childhood that has been lost or even taken away. The interlocutors clearly described this period as a time of hardships, duties, loneliness, attempts at raising themselves and siblings, etc. On the basis of the obtained narratives, the following elements of adult childhood were distinguished: responsibility, involuntary heroism, self-managing, and loneliness.

The listed aspects of adult childhood determine the specificity of the experience of parentification as a process with signs of increasing trauma, or involvement in situations and responsibilities that exceed the child's strength.

Diagram 2: Elements/aspects of adult childhood.



Source: own study.

The responsibility of the parentified individuals was seen particularly in the fact that the child provided support for other family members (parents or siblings), took over their obligations and comforted them – in a way that forced them to feel it was necessary to take care of the proper functioning of the family, in an instrumental and emotional sense. Instrumental tasks included activities such as almost full-time housekeeping (washing, tidying up, window cleaning, shopping, cooking), taking care of younger siblings, attending parents' meetings at school, and even financially supporting the family. On the other hand, emotional or moral responsibility meant caring for parents or other family members (mainly siblings).

> I took care of her all the time. I fed her. I even took her to kindergarten or escorted her to other places. All the time there was a thought in my head, that I have to look after her. Not that I must, you see, this was never 'I must'. It was not even compulsory for someone to tell me to do something, I just felt that I have a mission, you know. Such missions are so strange. And concern so many things. I taught her so many things, I taught her how to read, I taught her to write. (W7, woman, 29 years old)

Thus the child had been taking in her frail arms the burden of family problems and obligations. The parents, on the other hand, allowed the child this kind of involvement, and sometimes even enforced it or defined it as one of the principles – or norms – of family life.

> My mother realized that I could make money, since the moment when I took my first odd job as a 14-year-old girl, still attending high school. And my mother, seeing me bring some money home, told me openly: 'If you earn money already, then from now on I will only keep your younger brother, and you will just have to support yourself.' So, as a 14-year-old I was left alone, having to learn, work and take care of myself. (W8, woman, 35 years old)

The quoted fragment points out another essential element of the image of adult childhood, namely **obligatory 'self-managing'** by the child and the **loneliness** that is related to it.

'Self-managing' means taking up an independent attitude in most spheres of one's own life and family life. The child would have to cope with their own problems and needs, try to meet their needs on their own, and face the troubles and challenges alone. This concerns functioning at school, among peers, and in the family environment. In each of these environments, 'self-managing children' become brave children, who are coping, capable and fit to deal with everyday difficulties. The parentified children adapted to the reality and demands placed upon them. At the same time, such 'self-managing' children would seem to be torn between their own feelings (suffering, inner pain, a sense of inadequacy), and the deeds and actions that they had to undertake. By becoming part of the parental subsystems, as Salvador Minuchin notes (1974), such children assume responsibility for the family and family members.

In a sense, the family problems that the parentified children confronted forced them to take up this lonely fight of self-managing. Such situationally enforced independence resulted in the children having to present themselves as more mature than they really were. This attitude became their strategy for life, yet it was not fully internalized. As one of the respondents said, it was a kind of superficial reconciliation with what one experiences – acceptance and sole fulfilment of the given role.

> At first glance you could say that I came to terms with the fact that I had no support from my family nor anybody else, and I had to deal with everything alone. (W8, woman, 35 years old)

In addition to being burdened with numerous tasks, the children are left alone to deal with their own development and meeting their needs. Paradoxically, the parentified children experience loneliness even though they function within the family – which should be their closest environment. Such adult children battle with the lonely struggle for survival and proper functioning of the family, keeping up appearances of normality, safeguarding the family secrets regarding these difficulties and problems, and satisfying their own and the family members' needs. In such conditions, loneliness becomes hidden, internal and unnoticed by others.

Jadwiga Izdebska (2004) writes about the loneliness of the child in the family, emphasizing the dramatic character of this situation. The child bears no fault nor chooses this situation, and yet is left to fend for themselves, with the feeling of fear and uncertainty. As Maria Łopatkowa (1983) states, intense loneliness may be damaging for the adult psyche, but it always damages the child. For adults, loneliness is sometimes a choice – but not a necessity. For the child, loneliness is never a choice, since it is contrary to the nature of the childhood period. Łopatkowa (1983) distinguishes the following characteristics and elements of the loneliness of the parentified child:

- loneliness is always an individual experience, subjectively perceived by the child;
- it is associated with strong stress and is dangerous to the child's functioning, development or education – it can be a disruptive factor;
- it is the result of external circumstances – irregularities in the relationship between the child and their relatives, or disorders in the functioning of the family.

The above-mentioned features reflect the loneliness of the parentified child. By interpreting the narratives obtained in this study, more specific aspects of such loneliness can be detailed:

- negligence of parental duties, forcing the children to take care of themselves and take care of (usually younger) siblings;
- lack of emotional closeness with the parental figures – the respondents emphasized that their parents did not show them love. In one of the interviews the following words appeared: 'I cannot say that my parents raised me, they simply kept me' (W10, woman, 35 years old);
- lack of experiencing childhood as a calm, carefree period during which the child is a subject of education and care. Instead, the child receives tasks, duties, requirements and expectations, the implementation of which is not always welcomed by parents;

– lacking or limited contact with other children, which denies them the chance to play, find friends or establish friendships – it is, in fact, a kind of social isolation of a child.

> There were many children, so, of course, I was pushed to take care of the buggies. And there were all kind of tasks while running around the building with these buggies, watching over the kids. And when my friends could still stay outside, I had to help my mother to bathe the kids, help my mother to clean up. (W11, woman, 45 years old)

– lack of real outside support – neither the family nor the social services react to the situation of the lonely parentified child. The interviewees emphasized the importance of other family members helping them in so-called survival by showing support, spending time together, talking, etc. None of the obtained narratives mentions that family members aimed to change the existing situation, by improving it or providing the child with proper conditions for development. As an example, I would like to present the situation in which a grandmother, described by one of the respondents as a significant person, passively observed how her 12-year-old granddaughter dealt with the household and her brothers' upbringing during their parents' long absence (caused by taking a job far away from home): 'Grandma was simply there up to the moment when I turned 18. She just sat there, so nobody would find any fault with the fact that I'm not an adult' (W10, woman, 35 years old).

None of the interlocutors indicated any attempts of intervention by other family members.

The situation is similar when the possible institutional support is taken into account. It was revealed that the only institution present in the lives and narratives of the respondents was school. However, it was presented in a definitely negative light: not as supportive, showing understanding and helpfulness; but rather, as avoiding deeper knowledge, and belittling the children's problems. 'I have had many conversations with my teachers. They kept saying that if I had to work, I should go to the part-time or evening high school. Nobody seemed to understand this' (W8, woman, 35 years old).

Therefore, the parentified child appears to be a lonely/alone/isolated hero – an involuntary hero – forced into heroism directly (by orders, assigned duties and statements) or indirectly (as a result of circumstances, their own sense of responsibility for the family, feeling bonds and duty towards family

and family members, especially parents). It is no accident that such a sense of responsibility has been identified as the main element of the experience of parentification, since it can also trigger further mechanisms related to this phenomenon.

5. Loneliness and isolation of the parentified individuals

Although special attention has been paid to loneliness as one of the categories describing the experience of parentification, one should also ask the question of whether being parentified becomes a source of feeling lonely and isolated, thus broadening the interpretative framework of the phenomenon. The focus was previously on situations in which children had to demonstrate self-independence, self-managing, self-action; this prefix 'self' indicates acting or functioning by one's own efforts. Therefore, while analysing the narratives of people who have experienced the family role-reversal, it should be noted that some of the cited aspects of loneliness could be interpreted as manifestations of loneliness and isolation felt by children in the context of their individual experiences.

This kind of being 'alone', which is related to everyday situations, duties, and to important milestone events, is also considered as 'being alone'; this could refer to the contemporary philosophy of loneliness, which emphasizes the importance of the ability to be alone with oneself. This is an ability that prompts reflection on the meaning of one's own life and life in general, induces thinking about ultimate matters, and potentially gives the opportunity to enjoy one's own existence (Dubas, 2006). In this research, this kind of loneliness is reflected in the form of interlocutors dealing with their own experiences, family problems, and their consequences for the parentified children. It is reflected in individual strategies, thanks to which the narrators performed some kind of self-diagnosis, confronted their own suffering, named the specific problems, and usually sought for a solution or help.[3] Such situations of 'being with oneself' were involuntary, and in fact unfavourable, since they resulted from the disturbed functioning of the family. However, these created conditions for reflection, which is essential in relation to the actions taken to save oneself. It can be considered as a positive dimension

[3] These processes were more extensively described in the aforementioned doctoral dissertation.

of parentification, because it resulted in the parentified people finding the strength to work on trajectories (Riemann & Schütze, 1992).

Another indication or consequence of the parentification experience was the social isolation of the interlocutors when they were children. A child who is committed to 'family matters', becoming more absorbed in and responsible for the family and its members, becomes its prisoner. Such a child lacks the time and opportunities to establish and develop social contacts, by meeting or playing with other children.

> I remember that a friend came once, asking if we could go for a walk [...] I was afraid to ask if I could leave. She could not understand it: 'But how's that possible that you cannot go out? Can't you go out after school, in the afternoon?' So I tell her this: 'No, I have to ask first if I can go, if I can find time, if my mother has no other duties.' Anyway, sometimes [...] I also stayed with the younger siblings, so there wasn't such an option at all. Of course, I had plans, especially in the spring and summer, the most beautiful period, when one could play in the yard. (W11, woman, 45 years old)

The above quoted passage draws our attention to the obligations resting upon the shoulders of the parentified children, limiting (and in some cases even preventing) contact with other children. Psychology treats these kinds of social relations as crucial for the child's development; they are especially important for shaping prosocial and altruistic behaviours, as well as cooperative and communicative skills (Eiseberg, 1992). The interlocutors emphasized that their group of friends was either very narrow (one or two friends/colleagues) or they had no friends at all. In the first case, faithful friends provided significant support in their survival and attempts at overcoming difficulties. In the second situation, the parentified people again had to face problems or work on their trajectory alone. One of the important stages consists of abandoning this attitude of self-reliance and self-managing, realizing that one should seek help outside the family.

> As for the rest of these experiences, they are with me to this day. They are not only positive – that I am resourceful, and so on. They certainly are, but not all are positive. There are also negative sides. I'm going to undergo therapy, because I already feel that I can't handle this alone. (W8, woman, 35 years old)

The above passage also indicates the consequences of parentification, both positive and negative ones. Positive effects include a sense of agency

and being helpful, getting admiration and respect from others, resourcefulness, organizational skills, decision-making ability, responsibility, and competence at pursuing goals. However, the consequences described as negative are much more severe. They generate a number of problems, difficulties, failures or suffering in the lives of the parentified people and also their relatives. Undoubtedly, among them we can find loneliness, solitude and isolation. They are accompanied by: failure to meet the emotional needs of the child; overloading the child with duties; effecting a sense of enslavement; bringing about a destructive sense of responsibility; disordered and difficult relations with the generational family (parents, siblings); problems in relationships with members of their own reproductive family (spouse/partner, children); and psychosomatic ailments (depression, workaholism, unidentified body aches and tensions, illnesses). Most of these consequences appear as individual problems that the parentified people had to face in their childhood or adulthood. Their struggle with family experiences often meant leaving the house – both mentally and physically – and that can also be considered as 'quitting the state of loneliness' and reaching out to others, to the outside world – in search of help, in search of their own self and their own path in life.

6. Summary

The interlocutors' construction of narratives about their childhood is a kind of process of reproducing and interpreting events and experiences – by talking about them or being silent; justifying parents or themselves; describing, arguing, and placing the experience of parentification in the history of their life.

A childhood during which the child faces the necessity of the so-called fight for survival (their own or their family's) is a childhood lost. Such events trigger mechanisms that shift attention to meeting not only one's own needs, but those of the family and family members as well. The respondents clearly pointed to the fact that for them this was a period of hardships, duties, loneliness, attempts to raise themselves and their siblings, etc. Therefore, the parentified children, instead of receiving love, care, protection and interest, must give these to their family members, and have to push their own needs to the background, or fulfil their own needs themselves.

All the various aspects of the parentified child's self-independence indicated in this article, such as self-managing, loneliness, solitude and isolation,

indicate that the nature of their experiences and the phenomenon of parentification are very complex.

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Silence, Solitude and Social Cognition in Adolescence: Implications for Research and Education

Cisza, samotność i poznanie społeczne w okresie dojrzewania. Implikacje dla badań i edukacji

Abstract: What are the key issues regarding silence, solitude, and social cognition in young people's lives, and their implications for education and emotional health? To answer such questions, the current paper will explore the question: How do young teens use their ability to understand other's minds and emotions to navigate their relationships with themselves, their peers, and during times of silences and solitude? To address this question, this paper critically examines how mentallisation may help youth to navigate their experiences of solitude and relationships. Examples from recent and ongoing cross-sectional and longitudinal research with adolescents are discussed within the context of education and developmental psychology research. Finally, I discuss how findings from developmental social cognitive research can be applied to the classroom, to help develop innovative strategies that honour,

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respect, and protect the silences in students' lives and their private times spent in solitude.

Keywords: social cognition, emotion, solitude, adolescents, education.

Abstrakt: Jakie są główne zagadnienia związane z ciszą, samotnością oraz społecznym poznaniem w życiu młodych ludzi? Jakie ich implikacje dla edukacji oraz zdrowia emocjonalnego? By odpowiedzieć na te pytania, w niniejszym artykule poddano analizie następującą kwestię: jak młodzi nastolatkowie korzystają ze zdolności rozumienia umysłów i emocji innych osób, aby budować relacje z sobą oraz z rówieśnikami, szczególnie w okresach ciszy i samotności? By podjąć wskazane zagadnienie, krytycznie zbadano, jak mentalizacja może pomóc młodym ludziom w kształtowaniu doświadczeń związanych zarówno z samotnością, jak i z relacjami. Przedyskutowano przykłady z ostatnich i nadal trwających badań adolescentów, przekrojowych oraz podłużnych, ujmując je w badawczym kontekście edukacji oraz psychologii rozwojowej. Wreszcie ukazano, jak pozyskane doniesienia z badań nad rozwojem społeczno-poznawczym odnieść do klasy szkolnej, celem rozwijania innowacyjnych strategii, honorujących i chroniących ciszę w życiu uczniów oraz ich prywatny czas spędzany w samotności.

Słowa kluczowe: poznanie społeczne; emocja; samotność; adolescenci; edukacja.

1. Introduction

'I enjoy my time alone.' Fourteen-year-old girl
(Bosacki, Sitnik, Dutcher & Talwar, 2018).

Adolescence is a pivotal time in all areas of development, where the two central tasks are to develop a sense of identity, and to form and solidify relationships (Blakemore, 2018; Crocetti, Prati & Rubini, 2018). Given these two life tasks, how can teachers and researchers encourage 'emerging adolescents' (i.e. children on the cusp of adolescence) to develop adaptive social-cognitive and emotional skills that will help them navigate times of silences, solitude, and social connections? What are the key issues regarding silence, solitude, and social cognition in young people's lives, and their implications for education and emotional health? Specifically, in this paper I explore the question: How do young teens use their ability to understand

others' minds and emotions to navigate their relationships with themselves, their peers, and times of silences and solitude? To address this question, I critically examine research on young adolescents' ability to understand mind, emotion, and spirit within their private and public worlds, and how they use this ability to help them navigate their experiences of solitude and their relationships.

These questions and others are discussed within the context of education and with reference to sectional and longitudinal research with Canadian adolescents. Finally, I will discuss how teachers and researchers can apply findings from developmental social cognitive research in the classroom, and develop innovative strategies that honour, respect, and protect the silences in students' lives, and their private times spent in solitude. Overall, this paper explores the question: Given that the overarching aim of education to nurture and improve the moral, emotional, social, and spiritual lives of youth, exactly *how* can we help young people grow?

Definitions – what is silence?

Although the word 'silence' is ubiquitous and often found throughout many educational and psychological literatures, silence is often defined as a prerequisite for reflection, and an integral part of the creative process that entails a fluid loop between reflection and practice. Throughout this paper, I focus on silence as a form of communication, and as an integral part of the teenager's sociolinguistic repertoire that is learned mainly at home and also within the school setting. The 'art of conversation' entails a sociolinguistic repertoire of practice which allows us to learn and practise sociolinguistic behaviours; these are guided by social and cultural conventions which govern appropriate verbal interaction. The art of conversation thus entails both the act of speaking *and* listening.

As Berryman (2001) suggests, silence may communicate as a call, but it involves no sound. That is, silence can signal and communicate with others, but does not offer any vocalization. Silence can signal, as well as sound calls. Given the ambiguity of the language used to refer to silence, in numerous languages, there is a cluster or words which refer to communication without sound. In English, they are 'stillness', 'silence' and 'quiet'. All three must be considered in the interpretation of silence, because no single one contains all that is meant by the whole. Overall, the main task of this paper is to depict the complexity of adolescents' experiences of silence within the classroom.

Definitions: What is social cognition?

Social cognition is defined as the ability to use one's cognitive and emotional skills to help make sense of, and negotiate, social interactions. Skills such as empathy or the ability to 'feel others' (Bloom, 2016, 2017), and perspective-taking, develop over time and become increasingly complex as children enter adolescence. In particular, Theory of Mind (ToM) involves a myriad of social-cognitive abilities that are used to make sense of mental states in oneself and other people, in order to predict actions. In the past 20 years, there has been a surge of interest in the development of Theory of Mind in relation to older children and adolescents (Bosacki et al., 2018); however, few studies explore how teenagers apply ToM skills to experiences of solitude and to relationships (Woodcock, Cheung, Marx & Mandy, 2019). Given the importance of identity formation and attachment during adolescence (Kaniusonyte, Truskauskaite-Kunevidciene, Zukauskiene & Crocettii, 2019; Kroger, 2006), adolescents need to learn how to spend time with themselves in solitude, as well as to interact with others in relationships. How, then, can ToM skills help youth to hone their personal skills within solitude, as well as social skills within relationships? In the next sections I will outline research in both areas, within the context of adolescence.

2. Research: ToM in Relationships with self and other (Solitude and Attachment)

Research: Silence in Solitude

Silence can be experienced alone or with others, and can be accompanied by positive and/or negative emotions. Compared to research on the 'simple' or primary and basic emotions (i.e. emotions linked to underlying physiology) such as happy and sad, complex or moral or self-conscious emotions that involve the ability to self-evaluate against internalized standards of behaviour, such as pride and shame, receive less attention (Bosacki, Pissoto-Moreira, Sitnik, Andrews & Talwar, 2020; Saarni, 1999). Thus, although theoretical links exist among self-conscious emotions, self-cognitions or identity, solitude, and social relations (Bain, 1875; Blote, Miers, Van den Bos & Westenberg et al., 2019; Hull, Petrides, Allison, Smith, Baron-Cohen, Lai & Mandy, 2017), little is known about how such a nexus develops in ado-

lescents (de Hooge, Breugelmans, Wagemans & Zeelenberg, 2018; Karbach & Unger, 2014).

Private silences may represent a speaker's decision to abstain from contributing to a conversation, and thus suggest a sense of personal agency or control over the decision (Blote et al., 2019); the decision could be guided by one's own volition, independent of any external forces. Alternatively, an individual may have felt pressured by others to comply to the silence, and thus may feel 'silenced'. Thus, the process of 'silencing' is psychologically and emotionally complex and multifaceted.

The decision to remain silent becomes in part social, in that the individual's choice to remain silent in a public forum may have mixed positive and negative influences on others (Son & Padilla-Walker, 2019). For example, within a learning school environment, a child who is called upon in class and chooses to remain silent may challenge the teacher, as the teacher may interpret the silence as a lack of knowledge or effort, caused by either fear or defiance. The silent child singled out in front of their peers might also appear odd to others. In terms of the decision to remain silent among one's peers, this social silence could also be viewed as a prosocial action. That is, this act of social silence can serve as a comforting or emotionally supportive action, as either hugging or listening to a peer may have a positive influence on the friend's well-being (Son & Padilla-Walker, 2019).

In addition, the mental and social reasoning – or theory of mind (ToM) ability – when connected with silence in the classroom, may also create a reaction solicited from the audience; this in turn may create mixed emotional reactions within the child (Nicolic, van der Storm, Colonessi, Brummelman, Kan & Bogels, 2019; Woodcock et al., 2019). On the one hand, a child who is asked to sit in the class with others for five or ten minutes of 'silence' or 'quiet time' may experience positive emotions, as this task provides the opportunity to remain silent, reflect, contemplate, and to listen to their inner voice and expand their imagination. Thus, such times of silence and solitude have the potential to give adolescents the opportunity to exercise their imaginative and creative abilities by listening to both mental and physical messages from within. Alternatively, being asked to sit in silence by an authority figure may also induce negative feelings such as shame, embarrassment and guilt, as well as negative thoughts that ruminate over the young person's experience of silence.

The ambiguous nature of the experience of silence leads to multiple interpretations, in that two people may interpret the same event differently. To illustrate such ambiguous interpretations, on a personal note, when I was

seven years old, during art class one school day, my Grade 2 teacher ordered me to spend time alone in the classroom closet. I had failed to follow instructions in our art class, and instead of painting what the teacher had asked, I took the liberty of creating my own rules, and continued to paint a different scene. My teacher ordered me to be sent to a five-minute 'time-out' of quiet and solitude in the classroom cloak closet.

In this case, my teacher might have expected my 'time out in the closet' to serve as a disciplinary action. That is, my teacher might have intended that this 'time-out' or solitary confinement away from my peers was meant to provide me with a quiet time of solitude, in which to reflect on how I had failed to follow class rules, and how as a consequence of my actions, I was ordered to be in a closet by myself. In contrast, in my view, it was an opportunity to imagine myself outside of the classroom on some beach holiday instead. Both cases, of either self- or other-initiated silence, as defined by a lack of verbal expression, provide an opportunity for an individual to listen to her or his thoughts, emotions and physical sensations; which in turn may have either positive or negative influences on a child's sense of self confidence and competence.

Similar to academic experiences, within the school context, social situations also include experiences of silence, and such experiences may either *ameliorate* or *exacerbate* the young person's sense of social competence and confidence (Kaniusonyte et al., 2019; Spence & Rapee, 2016). According to a psychocultural approach to personal experiences of silence (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Fivush, 2019), in order to decide if one talks or remains silent, one first identifies which resources (experiential, cognitive, affective, linguistic, etc.) are most useful to one's self in a social world (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Regarding the process of silence and speech, the question remains: How do adolescents learn to satisfy their social and emotional needs enough to develop curiosity and avoid boredom (Berlyne, 1966; Engel, 2011, 2015), *and* to participate effectively across diverse social contexts (Jiang, Jiang, Du, Gu, Sun & Zhang, 2019)?

In other words, how does self-knowledge emerge out of social experiences in different pragmatic circumstances during adolescence? This psychocultural approach assumes that the abstract knowledge (e.g. ToM) is built out of experiential, pragmatic knowledge acquired in an interpreted, social world (Bruner, 1996). Such a developmental view of psychological understanding supports further research of scholars who explore the connections between thought, language and behaviour within the social world across cultures (Kuhn, 2019; Taumpoepeau, Sadeghi & Nobiol, 2019). For example,

in the case of social avoidance and social anxiety, silence is often connected with negative social experiences, self-cognitions, and emotions (Blote et al., 2019). Silences may thus carry different psychological meanings which represent different motivations underlying the silence.

These experiences of silence may be especially pronounced during social group situations, where verbal expression is often equated with confidence, popularity and social status. Such situations occur frequently during adolescence, when a teen who holds psychological power over her peer in the social hierarchy chooses to harass or psychologically damage her peer, giving her a lower social status by choosing to not speak to her. Hence, a popular adolescent who develops an advanced ToM ability may choose to use this information to harm others, and thus decide to either neglect or reject their peers – by either not speaking, or ignoring any requests or attempts for interaction (Fenigstein, 1979; Nicolic et al., 2019). This 'silent treatment', or acting as though someone is invisible, is often considered a form of psychological or emotional harassment if the adolescent on the receiving end is hurt emotionally, as the silence may be interpreted as a sign of rejection.

Alternatively, adolescents who find it stressful to join social groups, or who are painfully shy, may choose to remain silent in a group situation to remain safe, and to avoid the negative feelings that may arise from the possible rejection (Woodcock et al., 2019). That is, an adolescent may wish to say something to another peer, but the thought of rejection, social evaluation, and/or ridicule may prevent her from taking the risk of expressing her thoughts. Thus, if she then wishes to contribute but cannot due to fear of judgement or evaluation by others, she may decide to either remain silent, or withdraw from the social situation to avoid negative feelings such as anxiety and/or irritation (Eggum-Wilkens, Danming, Zhang & Costa, 2020).

Others may also choose to remain silent because they enjoy their time alone, in the classroom, in solitary play, walking alone in outdoors during school recess, or choosing to remain uninterested or disengaged. Recent studies on adolescents who prefer solitude to being with others find that some may lack the motivation to approach others, while at the same time, may not necessarily have the motivation to avoid others (Danneel, Maes, Vanhalst, Bijttebier, & Goossens, 2018). Thus, when such individuals are approached by others they will not remain reticent and retreat, and may not experience wariness and anxiety (Schmidt & Poole, 2019; Coplan, Ooi & Baldwin, 2019).

Finally, in situations in which adolescents feel unsafe and fearful, silence can be used in a tactical or strategic way as a source of self-protection.

This safe silence conceals as it communicates, and can hide an adolescent's anger behind a mask whose meaning he can quickly change if necessary (Bosacki, 2013). For example, findings from our interviews with Canadian 11 to 13-year-old girls and boys showed that adolescents who remained silent and refrained from engaging in social conversations often felt upset, anxious or stressed. Silence, then, may send mixed and ambiguous messages to others (Bischetti, Ceccato, Lecce, Cavallini & Bambini, 2019; Jara-Ettinger, Floyd, Huey, Tenebaum & Schulz, 2019). Hence, when contained, silence can be wielded to protect the self. Alternatively, it can be used to create psychological space within relationships, which can help to formulate new directions and offer possibilities for change. Thus, hostile silences, controlling silences, resisting silences, political silences, and safe silences can enhance possibilities for creating change in the self and others.

In sum, silence is complicated in that it has psychological benefits as well as costs. That is, for some individuals, silence may be viewed as a source of inspiration and self-exploration, and a time for quiet reflection and contemplation (Goossens & Marcoen, 1999). However, for others, silence may be accompanied by loneliness and emotional pain. The latter vision of silence may thus bring wariness in social company, victimization, fear of rejection, and feelings of loneliness (need for social connections) and aloneliness (need for solitude) (Coplan et al., 2019; Galanaki, 2004). In short, there are multiple underlying motivations for behavioural expressions of silence among adolescents, many of which remain unknown. Given such complexity regarding adolescents' motivations for silence and solitude, further investigation is needed (Eggum-Wilkens et al., 2020).

Research: Silence within Relationships

Adolescents' ability to communicate effectively with others depends partly upon knowledge and skills that have little or nothing to do with language per se. For example, children learn that they may have to greet others and to end a conversation with some form of a sign-off. The social conventions that govern appropriate verbal interaction are called sociolinguistics or pragmatics, and continue to develop in complexity during adolescence. Such behaviours include the understanding and performance of rules of conversational etiquette – taking turns in conversations, such as saying goodbye when leaving, and so on. Social pragmatics also includes strategies for understanding the subtleties of ambiguous and non-literal or figurative lan-

guage, such as humour (Bischetti et al., 2019); metaphor, irony, and sarcasm (Grice, 1975; Jara-Ettinger et al., 2019); and the ability to initiate conversations, change subjects, share stories, and argue persuasively.

Beginning at around two to three years of age (Pouscoulous & Tomasello, 2019), children continue to refine their pragmatic skills and sociolinguistic conventions throughout the preschool years, into adolescence and adulthood. However, this development is affected by cultural differences, as languages often follow varying and distinct conventions, particularly in the areas of social etiquette, social rules and conventions. That is, adolescents consider not just what other people see and know, but also how people are likely to behave in different contexts, based on the costs different plans impose on different agents. Such an understanding may, in turn, help them build more nuanced theories of other people's behaviour, and further develop their theory of mind or the ability to mentalize (Jara-Ettinger et al., 2019).

As mentioned earlier, silence is ambiguous in that it can be experienced in solitude or with others, and can be accompanied by mixed emotions. Within close friendships, silence can be felt in terms of feelings of loneliness. For instance, recent studies suggest that despite having an existing best friendship, some adolescents experience loneliness (Nowland, Balmer & Qualter, 2019) and silence in terms of sadness. Such feelings of silence are in contrast to young people who claim to experience feelings of peace and comfort during silences within their close friendships (Parker & Asher, 1993). Given the diversity of such experienced silences, those who experience sad silences may need support to form high-quality friendships and reduce their loneliness (Nowland et al., 2019).

To describe feelings of being silenced by others within relationships, versus choosing to remain silent among others (i.e. self-silence), Goldberger, Tarule, Clinchyand and Belenky's notion (1986) describes two types of silences: *structural* and *strategic*. *Structural* silence is due to societal rules that dictate when individuals should speak or be silent, and may lead to negative feelings. Thus, such structural silence drives some people to a defensive stance of silence and passivity, which stems from feelings of fear and threat. In contrast to this structural silence in which an individual has either little or no control, *strategic* silence is when an individual makes the decision to be silent. Situational and cultural factors can dictate individual strategic silence, in which the individual deliberately chooses to be silent and yet remains able to engage in conversations as an active contributing knower.

Structural and strategic silences play important roles within an adolescent's personal and social worlds. In the case of structural silence, an ado-

lescent may either feel 'silenced' due to lack of knowledge of a particular emotion word, or may feel silenced by the 'other' who does not allow them to speak. Such a lack of communication, or this disconnect, may lead the adolescent to feel silenced and unable to speak. Thus, structural silence is dependent upon social situations and interpersonal interactions.

In contrast to structural silence, in strategic silence, irrespective of external forces, an adolescent may *choose* not to express a specific emotion, or to articulate a specific emotion label. Thus, strategic silences are mostly self-motivated and regulated. Given these differences, what then are the emotional implications of self-imposed or strategic, versus authoritative or structural, codes of silence? Given that the experiences of such silences are personal in nature, and the motivations for self-silence may be influenced by social interactions, ultimately the decision to remain silent remains at a private, subjective level (Nguyen, Werner & Soenens, 2019).

During adolescence, constructive uses of solitude can include silences as a means of power, reflection, and self-expression (Zavala & Kuhn, 2017). In addition to spending time in silence during periods of solitude, silence can also be used as a particular method in large group situations such as schools. As vocalization is often connected to issues of power within the classroom, some students who often speak out may feel more powerful than others, and are thus more likely to use silence as a tool to convey this power (Blote et al., 2019; Jara-Ettinger et al., 2019).

Literacy involves critical and reflective thinking and functioning, or mentalization, through the social event of discourse and dialogue (Zavala & Kuhn, 2017). Such a relational event helps to promote inquiry and argumentation that constructs social identities, positions adolescents amongst their peer group, and demarcates social boundaries between adults and adolescents (Kuhn & Crowell, 2011). Findings from our ongoing studies illustrate young adolescents' awareness of the power of classroom peer dynamics, and how their actions have social and emotional consequences (Bosacki et al., 2018). For instance, most adolescents claim to know which of their peers to include, and whom to marginalize within the peer group to gain status or power in the classroom (i.e. popularity).

Studies suggest that children as young as four and five years old are capable of analysing their social gains by conducting a cost/benefit analysis (Jara-Ettinger et al., 2019). Hence, some children may draw on social knowledge for personal benefit and raise their status within the social hierarchy of the classroom. Other studies with older children illustrate how some young people may decide to use silence as opposed to articulation, to exert

power and control over others (Woodcock et al., 2019). For example, one may choose to not speak to – or to ignore – another peer due to the peer's lower social status (e.g. they are unpopular). As a result, the lower-status peer is often treated as invisible or unworthy of communication. However, some decide to use their social knowledge to help others, as was seen in our longitudinal research with Canadian adolescents (Bosacki, Moriera, Sitnik, Andrews & Talwar, 2019). In response to the question 'What makes you different from others in your class?', a 15-year-old girl stated that 'a lot of kids are really quiet and I'm really helpful and help them to become more confident and bring them into this world.'

In contrast to prosocial silences, silences may also send another message, of alienation, despair and hopelessness. That is, aggressive or belligerent silence can prevent confrontation and anger in relationships. Aggressive silence often fails to bridge social connections to others that could lead to dialogue, reconciliation, or new relational patterns. The hostility vented through such silences also holds the potential to affect others negatively. Given that silence may send mixed and ambiguous messages to others, it may communicate anger but contradicts the anger's call for a response. Aggressive silence also suggests an unforgiving and critical harshness toward the self. Such silence is sometimes associated with stress, lack of self-compassion (Bosacki et al., 2018), and other internalizing challenges such as anxiety and depression.

In addition, while not intended as aggressive, misinterpreted silences may be just as detrimental to students' mental health. Recent findings from our research suggest how Canadian elementary school teachers' perceptions of children's verbal loudness and silent behaviour may reflect stereotypical gender patterns (Coplan et al., 2019). That is, teachers were more likely to rate quietness and silence in girls as positive, and loudness or exuberance as problematic, whereas the opposite pattern was found for boys (e.g. loud boys/silent girls – good; silent boys/loud girls – bad). Similar findings are found in our past research on Canadian adolescents' views of talking and listening with their friends and family members. Results showed that compared to boys, girls were more likely to report that silence was often more effective in social relationships than talking, as many felt ignored or silenced when they did speak (Bosacki, 2013).

Gender differences in social cognition and experiences of silence, then, may exert an indirect influence on the development of social-cognitive and communicative differences in children's stereotypical gender-role ascriptions, such as femininity and masculinity abilities (Bosacki, 2013; Bosacki

et al., 2018), as opposed to differences in biological sex. Thus, guided by their own emotional scripts that have been co-constructed through social interactions with their parents and others (e.g. siblings, peers, teachers), adolescents' social and emotional competencies may reflect gender-role stereotypes, resulting in observable gender differences (Bosacki et al., 2018). Hence, the process of learning to understand emotions within a social context may not be contingent solely on whether a child is female or male, but on the way in which a child's gender interacts with her/his environment.

3. So What? Educational Implications: How can schools 'cultivate curiosity'?

The connections among emotional development and language – including silence – are complex, and have strong implications for the educational context, particularly the secondary-school classroom. Many emotion researchers note that sometimes the expression of emotion is contingent upon a particular label or emotion word. Thus, building on Goldberger and colleagues' (1986) notion of structural and strategic silence, both types of silence may have different emotional implications. That is, structural silence experienced within relationships may be accompanied by feelings of shame and guilt or sadness, whereas strategic silence may be connected with feelings of peace and satisfaction, as this is the personal choice of the one who is silent.

Regarding the subtleties of perceived social interactions and solitude, researchers also remain challenged by the question of how adolescents learn to understand the mental states and emotions of others, and how this influences their sense of self-worth and preferences for socialization and solitude. To help understand how adolescents co-construct their knowledge of others based on their social experiences, advocacy research helps to illustrate how socio-political structures affect the sociocultural construction of knowledge and consciousness (Seider, Clark & Graves, 2019). Given that critical analysis offers a way of analysing different strands of thinking, such as academic, social, emotional, and moral (Seider et al., 2019), this paper in part applies an analytical lens to help define the role curiosity plays within the area of psychosocial pragmatics, or what we do with language to relate to others (Grice, 1975). More specifically, in the following section I build on studies that suggest curiosity drives engagement and well-being (Hulme, Green & Ladd, 2013; Kashdan & Steger, 2007).

A culture or climate of mutual respect, courage, compassion, curiosity and sensitivity is one that helps promote prosocial attitudes and behaviours, including acceptance of and respect for differences. The tacit and explicit social norms and rules that govern sociolinguistic behaviours in the school setting define what is acceptable and unacceptable treatment of individuals. Given that school life affects all aspects of human development, and because our world is becoming increasingly global and diverse, children are likely to interact with others whose race, ethnicity and family backgrounds differ from their own (Seider et al., 2015). In addition to race and ethnicity, other differences such as gender, social class, physical characteristics and sexual orientation may serve as focal points for conflict and intolerance among adolescents. As past researchers suggest, there is a need for the creation and implementation of gender and culturally sensitive, developmentally appropriate curricula that promote tolerance and respect for differences among students, in this increasingly multi-ethnic, multi-faith and democratic society (Surette, 2019).

The school culture or climate also represents the nature of the interpersonal relationships (student-student, student-teacher, teacher-teacher/parent) that exist in the school, and how involved parents are in the daily activities and decision-making processes in the school. The emotional or psychological tone set in the school establishes expectations for standards of interpersonal relationships among the students beyond school walls as well. That is, to promote a larger culture of empathy and compassion, the classroom and school need to reflect the larger community (and vice versa). Furthermore, educators and researchers are called to address emerging tensions between ethnic and school/academic identities in educational practice (Taumpoepeau et al., 2019).

To address the need to promote acceptance and respect for self and others, and overall mental health, multiple holistic educational programmes now aim to promote adolescents' learning, and to transcend status variables such as ethnicity, social class and gender (Okano, Jeon, Crandall & Riley, 2019). For example, one holistic educational programme developed by Jiang et al. (2019) follows a cognitive, emotional and behavioural framework (CEB). Drawing on psychocultural principles of development, this programme promotes tolerance of differences by understanding the developmental contributions to attitudes towards others who are different; this is achieved through examining the cognitive, emotional and behavioural ways in which these attitudes are expressed. The cognitive component refers to knowledge, expectations and beliefs about others; the emotional component refers to chil-

dren's affective reactions; and the behavioural component includes the observable actions towards others who are different. This is done by examining the cognitive, emotional and behavioural ways in which these attitudes are expressed.

In addition, one of the most widely accepted notions of peace education reform in North America is the school conflict educational strategy of peer mediation and mindfulness programmes (Priniski, Hecht & Harackiewicz, 2018). Such programmes encourage students to manage conflicts constructively using negotiation procedures, including leadership and peace-making skills. Key features of these programmes include the development of models that promote conflict mediation, peaceful, nonviolent leadership, and respect for differences. These programmes build on foundational skills such as critical inquiry, critical thinking as dialogue and argumentation (Kuhn, 2019), reflective or contemplative functioning, curiosity, and prosocial action (Engel, 2011, 2015).

Regarding practical tools for educators, further exploration of various experiences of silences and their socioemotional and spiritual consequences suggests the need for useful assessment tools and interventions. Drawing on research that shows links between psychological and spiritual understanding and positive school experiences (Bosacki et al., 2019), we can teach a 'psychological language' to adolescents that focuses on self-reflection, self-compassion and self-acceptance (Bosacki et al., 2020). As educators, we can encourage children to develop a mental-state vocabulary of the self and others (Bruner, 1996). Such initiatives support researchers and educators who advocate the importance of narrative, emotion and metacognition in education (Fivush, 2019; Hughes, 2011).

Curriculum development that utilizes narrative may thus enhance adolescents' ability to understand self and other in a psychological sense. Fiction books that describe people's psycho-emotional worlds can be used in the classroom to improve critical consciousness, and curiosity (Seider et al., 2019). For instance, excerpts that encourage adolescents' reflection, from Sylvia Plath's (1996) *The It-Doesn't-Matter Suit*, Judy Blume's (1972) *Blubber,* and Margaret Atwood's (1988) *Cat's Eye*, could be used to illustrate the landscape of adolescents' private worlds and inner voices. Moreover, consistent with work in positive youth psychology (Seligman, 2002), as well as our past and ongoing work on adolescents' psychosocial development and mental health (Bosacki, 2002; Bosacki et al., 2020), future research in this area may provide a framework for a holistic curriculum that aims to foster both inter- and intrapersonal competencies.

Such programmes may help children and adolescents to develop into courageous, curious, competent, compassionate and caring adults who are both experts in their chosen careers and socially responsible. As the 21st century becomes increasingly complex and technologically advanced, educators and researchers need to take the time to be critical of the programmes, and to examine the gaps and silences, in order to promote ideal connections among ethics, excellence, culture and cognition.

In sum, through the integration of ideas from developmental cognitive psychology (e.g. metacognitive activities such as social problem solving and critical dialogue) (Kuhn, 2019; Pennequin, Questel, Dalaville, Delugre & Maintenant, 2019), and holistic curriculum models (e.g. art-based activities such as role-playing, autobiographical writing and painting, creative writing, drawing, music, and dance), multidisciplinary psychoeducational programmes can make a valuable contribution to secondary-school curricula. Such comprehensive educational programmes could be used to help balance the distribution of affective and cognitive, as well as metacognitive activities within classrooms.

4. Future Questions and Directions

In summary, this paper has presented an overview of research on silence, social cognition and social relations in adolescence. However, the aforementioned studies do not specifically address the possibility that 1) a developmental constructivist theoretical framework may help to explain individual differences found among language, social-cognitive abilities and social relations; 2) that self-cognitions may play an intervening role between social cognition, experiences of silence and solitude, and social relations; and 3) that gender and culture-related linkages and differences may occur between experiences of silence and solitude, social cognition, and social relations. Future studies, including our ongoing work, need to explore such complex questions.

Building on past literature (Blakemore, 2018; Bosacki, 2016), most typically, developing adolescent minds are capable of social cognitive skills such as mentalization, including metacognition (the ability to think about thinking) (Efklides, 2011; Flavell, 1979), self-cognitions, and social-relational skills (Nicolic et al., 2019). This paper has aimed to show how experiences of silence during adolescence may influence young people's sense of self, relationships, and overall well-being. Through the integration of ideas

from cognitive psychology (metacognitive activities) and holistic curriculum models (art-based activities) that promote collaborative learning as well as contemplation and reflection, such a programme may provide a valuable contribution to adolescent education.

Programmes that integrate cognitive psychology through the use of metacognitive activities will encourage students to be active participants in the construction of knowledge and making meaning. To reach this goal, the fields of psychology and education need to work together to promote a community of curiosity and enquiry that addresses the definition of human nature and promotes critical curiosity, constructive solitude, and prosocial action (Son & Padilla-Walker, 2019; Vracheva, Moussetis & Abu-Rahma, 2019). In collaboration with social conversations, one's private, internal dialogue strengthens one's connections to self, community and beyond (Zavala & Kuhn, 2017). Such openness and connection is necessary if we are to listen to and learn from children and youth.

In short, a future vision for research on the psychosocial implications of silence in adolescence includes educators and researchers who work and care about youth. All youth leaders need to share a common goal to awaken adolescents' curiosity and appetite for learning and life. We cannot allow today's youth to become disengaged from others around them, or bored with life.

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Figures on a Windswept Shore: The Interplay of Aloneness and Communitas in Oral Storytelling

Postaci na wichrowym brzegu. Współzależność samotności i wspólnotowości w ustnym opowiadaniu historii

Abstract: Storytelling is an artistic practice which is often understood as generating a sense of togetherness, or, to use Victor Turner's (1969) more specific term, 'communitas'. Yet in my experience as a storyteller with young people in many contexts, including mental health settings, aloneness is an equally important feature of storytelling gatherings. Many stories feature lonely characters, and telling such stories calls on the teller's own experiences of being alone. Many listeners appreciate being left alone for the duration of the story, and respond to it privately. Observing this has often brought to my mind the image of the story as a rocky shore, on which the listeners are wandering separately while aware of each other's presence. In this essay I interweave the story of 'The Stolen Child', a fairy tale featuring an isolated young woman, with observations from two youth mental health settings in which I led storytelling workshops. In so doing, I seek to illustrate the interdependence of aloneness and togetherness in oral story-sharing, as encapsulated in Jean-Luc Nan-

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cy's observation (1991, p. 35) that 'singular beings lean together'. There is thus no simple opposition between aloneness and communitas; I offer tentative experiential evidence that moments of surprising connection can be enabled by giving listeners permission to first be separate.

Keywords: storytelling, aloneness, communitas, enstasy, young people, storytelling in mental health.

Abstrakt: Opowiadanie historii jest artystyczną praktyką, rozumianą często jako tworzenie poczucia bycia razem, lub, używając bardziej dokładnego terminu autorstwa Victora Turnera (1969), 'communitas' – wspólnoty. Jednak moje doświadczenie jako gawędziarza (*storyteller*) w pracy z młodymi ludźmi w wielu kontekstach, w tym klinik zdrowia psychicznego, ukazuje samotność jako równie istotną cechę spotkań mających na celu opowiadanie historii. Wiele opowieści przedstawia osamotnione postacie i opowiadanie o nich przywołuje własne doświadczenie osamotnienia snującego narrację. Wielu słuchaczy ceni możliwość pozostawienia samemu na czas trwania historii i zareagowania na nią prywatnie. Obserwowanie tego nasuwało mi często alegorię opowieści jako skalistego brzegu, na którym każdy ze słuchaczy wędruje osobno, pozostając świadomym obecności innych. W niniejszym eseju „przeplatam" historię pt. „Skradzione Dziecko", baśń o wyizolowanej młodej kobiecie, ze spostrzeżeniami z dwóch klinik zdrowia psychicznego dla młodzieży, w których prowadziłam warsztaty z opowiadania historii (*storytelling*). W ten sposób staram się zilustrować współzależność samotności i wspólnotowości w ustnym przekazywaniu historii, na którą zwrócił uwagę Jean-Luc Nancy (1991, s. 35), pisząc, iż „pojedyncze byty wspierają się razem". Tak więc nie sposób mówić o prostym przeciwstawieniu sobie samotności i wspólnotowości; oferuję nieśmiało eksperymantalny dowód, iż momenty zaskakującego połączenia umożliwia uprzednie pozwolenie, by być oddzielonym.

Słowa kluczowe: opowiadanie historii; samotność; wspólnota; wewnętrzność; młodzi ludzie; opowiadanie historii a zdrowie psychiczne.

1. Introduction

For two years I held a storytelling residency at Maple House[1], a mental health inpatients' unit for adolescents. Every week I held a storytelling work-

[1] Pseudonym for the setting.

shop with a group of those who wished to take part, among the young people currently resident. In agreement with the setting's staff, the aim was not therapeutic *per se*, but to provide opportunities for open-ended creative engagement, absorption, expression and connection. Thus, workshops involved a mixture of elements: stories told by me; stories composed by individual young people or collectively by the group; games and crafts responding to their themes, or simply chosen by the young people; and visual art, drama or song-writing, to extend or develop stories.

Any storyteller (or theatre-maker) is always conscious of the interplay between the story or text they are presenting, and the context in which they are presenting it. As Gaylord explains,

> the theatrical occasion involves double consciousness for all concerned. The performance takes place on at least two levels of 'reality' simultaneously and within at least two frames. The outer frame always embraces both audience and performers. The inner frame demarcates the playing space. (Gaylord, 1983, p. 136)

Therefore, in this article I weave together a rough transcript of 'The Stolen Child', a story I told during one memorable workshop at Maple House, with my observations of how this and other stories were received in that setting. In so doing, I aim to illustrate my slowly acquired understanding of the interdependence between the ability of storytelling to engender solitude, and its tendency to reach towards a kind of togetherness or connection. To amplify this discussion I will also draw on another project, *The Tale Exchange* (2017), which experimented more explicitly with this interplay, and specifically with the possibility of a meeting of minds 'around corners' (Heinemeyer, 2018).

2. Listening together

The Stolen Child (1)

It was a wild day of high winds in a little town clustered against a jagged shoreline. A young woman entered on foot from the road inland. She wore a shapeless dark-coloured dress but if you looked carefully you could see the swell of her belly. She knocked first at one door, then the next, but each of them closed in her face, until when she reached the far end of the town she gave up and stood

for a minute looking around her, clutching her back. The time had come for her to give birth to her child and the pains were coming closer together.
She picked her way down onto the rocky shore, avoiding the slippery seaweed, feeling the slap of spray off the sea on her neck and face, and clambered over rocks until she found a platform sheltered by a boulder. She crouched down on her hunkers and it was not much longer until her child was born. A little boy, his cries almost drowned by the wind. She held him up for just one moment to see he was whole and hers, then quickly tucked him inside her dress, against her chest to keep warm, leaned her back against the rock and fell into an exhausted, dreamless sleep.

Storytelling is a practice riddled with metaphors of 'communitas', a term coined by the anthropologist Victor Turner to describe the way in which rituals or performances may bring a society together, usually temporarily, without hierarchy or social divisions:

> as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *comitatus*, community, or even 'communion' of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders. (Turner, 1969, p. 95)

While a storyteller is not a 'ritual elder', the aspiration to bring an audience into a shared 'liminal' or threshold state (Turner, 1969) between fiction and reality is highly celebrated among performers of all kinds. The widely held belief that storytelling engenders communitas becomes concretized, for many aficionados of storytelling, by individual experience. Often, when I have been among a storyteller's audience, I have felt a convergence between me and those others gathered, a slowing of each person's breathing rate, and a confluence of focus on the images formed somewhere between the teller's words and our own minds. Storyteller Geoff Mead (2011) describes a physical sensation of vibrating on the same wavelength as others present in the room, while he is telling or listening to others tell stories. Moreover, research confirms the empirical existence of this phenomenon. Fran Stallings (1988) assembles evidence from psychology and neuroscience, of the 'hypnagogic' or 'mild trance' state which story-listeners may enter.

The idea of a shared hypnagogic state has been harnessed in therapeutic practice. Alida Gersie claims with regard to her own therapeutic story-making groups:

> Such story-work can be used to create access to communicative practices that demonstrate commitment to the community's well-being. It also fosters ways of being together that provide everyone with some joy. (Gersie, 1997, p. 24)

The idea that listening to stories together may heal rifts, reconnect the isolated or divided, allow for moments of connection which bypass conventional social defences, or even bring about shared epiphanies, is a powerful one. Thus, during my residency at Maple House, I aspired to offer workshops which would provide, metaphorically, 'another room' within which those present could safely meet. While each individual was mired in their own issues, anxieties, fears, obsessions and depressions, I hoped they might fleetingly experience the possibility of real connection with others, within the safe fictional or even fantastical bounds of the stories I brought them. Indeed, I believe I did glimpse such moments.

Yet Maple House convenes a population which is usually too transient to be a real community – who often sense, indeed, that they are better off *not* forming one. I did observe friendships forming within the setting, usually cautiously; but friendship groups were rare. Every week young people leave, new ones arrive, and states of mind vary so much that every day brings a new human constellation. Every crisis affecting one resident could sweep up others in its wake, and the contagion effect sometimes brought unpredictable threats to each young person's journey of recovery. At other times, an easier atmosphere of cheerfulness would reign, but it could never be taken for granted. I wrote at the time that each week when I arrived for my storytelling session, I did not know what I would find:

> Like a sailor visiting a port, I walk into the saloon looking for old friends or new acquaintances, and see what's up. Like the children climbing the Faraway Tree, I do not know what land I will be entering when I clamber up the ladder each week, or how welcome I will be. (Heinemeyer, 2015)

It was accordingly rare to feel that everyone present was 'together in the story'. Even gathering the group of young people to make a start was a delicate process – deciding where to sit, who was in, who was definitely out; who was listening with one ear, but with her eyes downcast and her back half-turned. Some warm-up games would form a fragile ring, and at some point I would usually tell a story – usually something either from long ago, or from far away. As it unfolded I would see or sense reactions. There was usually someone who liked the cadence of a storytelling voice while she was

plaiting her friend's hair, but was possibly less interested in the story itself; someone who was fired up by a certain image in it; someone who was aggravated by it; someone who wriggled uncomfortably, as if he wanted to get away. There were usually one or two who gave themselves over to the story or whatever other thoughts and memories it summoned up for them, gazing just past me as images formed in their minds.

A colleague attended my Maple House workshop one day, and observed that I seemed more hesitant telling to this group than in other contexts: rather than giving a confident performance, holding their attention and meeting their gaze, I would often look down at my hands, as each of them was doing. I could not at the time explain why, but I think I felt driven to mirror the tentative mood in the room, so as to allow them to be alone, and to leave the story at any time.

The images that frequently came to my mind were that, rather than a circle around a campfire, my story was providing something more similar to a rock surface, with ledges and handholds for those who wished to hook onto it for a little while; or a wide open, windblown shore, sparse and exposed, with all of us aware of each other's presence but wandering separately.

3. Listening alone (OR, Handwork)

The Stolen Child (2)

When she awoke she was aware of a cold draught at her chest, and realized her baby was gone. She jumped to her feet and searched wildly all around the boulder, but all the way up and down the beach there was no-one to be seen. The waves were high and powerful, but still far off, and her clothes were dry. And so she had no choice but to make her way along the coast. Everyone she met, she asked if they had seen a baby, but there was never any news. By nightfall her feet were criss-crossed with cuts and she could not walk any further. She collapsed under a grassy outcrop, just in sight of a small fishing village.

Early the next morning she felt firm, strong hands lifting her to her feet, half-lifting her into a house, tucking blankets all around her in a bed, bringing some hot liquid for her to drink. She had no strength to do anything but comply. Kind women's faces clustered around her, voices asking her questions that she could barely understand. All she could do was repeat her question, 'have you seen my baby? Where is my baby?' The kind faces now creased with discomfort and murmured a name, the name of someone who might know, or

rather who might be able to deliver a difficult message they did not want to utter themselves.

They brought her to a camp outside their village and to a tiny caravan where a very elderly woman was drinking tea. The old woman clasped the young one's hands and told her, 'you were perhaps not wise to give in to your exhaustion on that particular shore. There is the hill just along from there, where the Old Ones live, the ones you call fairies. They are beautiful but they are not kind and they cannot make anything for themselves, not even children. And so they take them from us. I can tell you how to find the mound, but you will not get your child back from them without giving them something of equal value in return.'

The young woman was distraught – 'I haven't got anything of value, not even shoes for my feet. I am afraid that is how it is,' said the old woman, and repeated: 'the only thing you can do is bring them gifts of equal value.'

The young woman stumbled out of the caravan and back down to the shore. It was still windy, bleak, rocky, with nothing between the sea and the sky that could help her. Nothing but the bones of dead seabirds, feathers blown off their breasts, sticks of driftwood thrown up by the waves. Picking up the bones and sticks she started to play with them, forming them into the curved triangle of a harp. She grasped at the straw of an idea. She pulled down her hood and plucked out some strands of her hair – she had thick, long, red-brown hair – and started to tie the shape together into a firmer framework. She plucked more strands of hair and strung the framework like a real harp, pulling each one to the right tension.

She looked around her again and started to gather the soft downy feathers. Again with strands of hair she bound them into a kind of cloth, soft and warm and light. More and more of it she made until it was big enough to form a sort of shawl.

It was on those occasions when we had crafts in front of us while exchanging stories at Maple House that a cosy household atmosphere would develop, resembling the Hindu-Buddhist idea of 'enstasy', defined by Julian Stern (2015, p. 111) as 'describing the virtue of comfort in solitude'. Rather than the intense interpersonal mood in which a story is often created between storyteller and participants, I would sense that we were holding a space for each person to be alone. Sometimes the young people would bring in their own knitting projects, doodling, colouring or friendship bracelets; other times I would bring beans to shell or yarn to braid. The sensory engagement and sense of usefulness this engendered seemed to enhance the experience for

all concerned; sharing tips on how to do a particular task also offered further moments of connection.

The day I told 'The Stolen Child', I brought willow frameworks on which I invited the young people to weave their own gifts for the fairies.

It was Walter Benjamin, in his famous essay 'The Storyteller' (originally published in 1936) who pointed out the integral link between story-listening and handwork of various kinds. One reason for this was the 'orientation towards practical interests' (Benjamin, 1973, p. 86) of many storytellers, and the tendency to include practical instruction in stories; but he feels it to be primarily because

> This process of assimilation, which takes place in depth, requires a state of relaxation which is becoming rarer and rarer […] Boredom is the dream bird that hatches the egg of experience [...] (The gift of listening to stories) is lost because there is no more weaving and spinning to go on while they are being listened to. (ibidem, p. 91)

There is, of course, no simple opposition between aloneness and communitas, as is embodied in the name of this conference, 'Alone Together'. In another detailed study, Patrick Ryan and Donna Schatt (2014) interviewed adults aged 19 to 45 who had been part of the same long-running education programme at the Chicago Laboratory School, in which children were told stories for half an hour a week, every week, for many years. The interviewees, 10 or 20 or 35 years later, recalled that were never asked by their teachers to discuss or write about these stories. Nor did they recall acting them out in their playground games; indeed, most of them could hardly remember the details of any of the stories they had been told. Yet universally, they had intense memories of the physical experience of these numerous storytelling sessions – the smell of the library, the feel of the mat on which they sat cross-legged to listen, the sensation of sitting there with others, being alone in their own heads. They were also unanimous in declaring that this experience had impacted on them as people as well as on the culture of the school, influencing their interests and values, relationships and future careers in ways too unfathomable to track. Yet this experience was arguably a solitary one as much as it was a communal one; not 'another room' in which they met, but a territory each listener mapped individually.

4. Leaning together

Petra Kuppers, describing a storytelling project she ran with a group of women experiencing mental illness, draws on Jean-Luc Nancy's (1991, p. 35) observation that 'singular beings lean together' – each participant was an 'I' in a kind of isolation, not sharing a story, or even an interpretation of a story, but leaning in towards it. Storytelling (indeed all communicative interaction) requires that we accept this impossibility of real meeting. Geoff Mead (2011, p. 40) cautions that while storyteller, story and listener are in a triangular relationship with each other, 'the crucial relationship between the audience and the story is beyond the storyteller's grasp'.

Emmanuel Levinas underscores this acceptance that we can never know another person, that we are in a sense trapped within our own selves. It is only in accepting this that we can sometimes transcend our own boundaries and thus grow and change, reaching towards other people to help us to do so:

> We do not *need* to know the other person (or thing) as he is in himself, and we shall never know him apart from acting with him. But unless we *desire* this, and go on trying, we shall never escape from the subjectivism of our systems and the objects that they bring before us to categorize and manipulate. We do not get rid of our thoughts and feelings by ignoring them or by any other means. But we may seek to transcend them, first as individuals and only later, perhaps, as a group. (Levinas, 1969, p. 18)

Moreover, it is a surprising paradox that in storytelling – the very image of human community and communion – we often tell stories of lone or lonely characters. In this respect it is important to remember Lev Vygotsky's (1967) simple but vital observation, that creative acts depend on our combining images already existing in our memories. Therefore, in summoning up the heroine of 'The Stolen Child' I am in fact sharing my own experience of aloneness with my listeners, because when we tell stories, even ones of long ago and far away, we invariably draw on our own experiential repertoire to form the images in our own minds.

To underline this point I will refer to another project, and another story. I began a mental-health-focused project called *The Tale Exchange*, with four support groups for young people, by telling each group a story of the Siberian heroine Belye (based on a transcription by Van Deusen, 2001). I told how Belye isolated herself in a little house on a rock to see if a lover would come,

how she was tormented by a family of brothers, how she rescued a little boy from their bullying, and then how she brought down the power of the waves to toss the brothers' canoe and punish them. The purity of this tale, the utter self-reliance of the heroine, brought me back to certain moments when I realized that ultimately, I am alone in the world. Despite the love of family and friends, no-one could endure the pains of giving birth with me; no-one's companionship is enough to give my life meaning at points when it seems to have none. I could not tell the story of Belye without letting such personal experiences shine through it, like light through a mesh.

The *Tale Exchange* project acknowledged this essential aloneness, both in its subject matter and in its structure. It resisted, or at least postponed, the usual remedy of participatory arts projects: the invitation to come together and collaborate. Rather than bringing all the young people together, I visited each group separately and told them this story. They then worked – in their own separate ways, collectively or individually as appropriate – with different artists, in different artforms, to make creative responses to it. Groups then posted their responses to each other, and if they wished, made a second creative response through visual art or creative writing. In so doing we were effectively doing what I have described in relation to other projects, as 'communicating around corners' (Heinemeyer, 2018). It was only later that everyone involved met in one room to share what they had made. We deliberately made no attempt to coordinate their perspectives on this strange story, to summarize or crystallize them, but only to exchange them. Young people stayed in their groups but sometimes crossed the room to each other's tables, visited each other, showed what they had made, and acknowledged each other's experiences, expressed through their words or images. The story had thus created a shared space of expertise between the groups of young people before they ever met each other.

One young woman received a drawing, sent by another group, of Belye calling out to sea, calling up the waves to save her and to punish the brothers. She chose to write a poem in response to this, and both this poem and its creation process seem to encapsulate the interplay of aloneness and togetherness:

BELYE CALLING OUT TO SEA
If I call out to you, can you hear me?
Would you listen?
Options are few and you don't know how much I need you right now.
I am lost, scared but my fear is subdued because I trust you.
Not just because I have to, but I want to.

It's roaring now so please offer me your protection
Lead me in the right direction.
I am screaming with you to fight this
Together we cannot be dismissed
I believe in this
I believe in us
I believe in you
I believe this is something I can get through
Even though it seems that there is no way out
As the sky and the sea merge together to become one shade of blue
I know I have you
I am filled with so many hopes and aspirations
I will not let this be my demise
This water will not produce unrelenting waves of devastation
They are mine
They are with me
They are on my side
So please don't expect me to fall and crack
As I can withstand any attack
I am strong as I ask the winds to blow

To finish the event, the poet we had brought in to bear witness to the whole exchange gathered up all the threads that participants had brought into the room, and wove them into one poem; this made explicit the fact that each person was going away with their own version of the story, but that all had leaned in towards each other in the space.

5. Weaving together

The Stolen Child (3)

The young woman made her way along the shore to the fairies' hill. She hid herself away to observe until she saw two figures enter, showing her where the door was. There she presented herself and found her entrance barred by an elegant young man. Nothing she could say would persuade him to let her in, until she held up the shawl she had made. His eyes glittered and he reached out to grab it, but she whisked it away until he understood he would need to bargain. He stepped to the side to let her pass, and she handed over the shawl.

She made her way down passageways that grew darker and cooler, before growing lighter and warmer again. Ahead of her was a warm glow and eventually she found herself emerging into a high-ceilinged chamber, full of people staring at her, the Old Ones, the fairies, beautiful but too wide-eyed, too beautiful in fact. In the midst of them all, on two thrones, the King and Queen, and on the King's lap, a bundle – a baby – her baby. She caught her breath that was trapped in her throat, and pushed through the throng all the way to them. She lifted up her harp and began to play. A golden music filled the chamber and echoed from the walls. The King and Queen were entranced.
'Give me my baby,' she said.
'Give me the harp,' said the Queen.
'You will give me my baby first.'
And in the end her hand was on her child before she gave them the harp. She did not say another word but took her baby in her arms and walked out through the tunnels, back out into the daylight and straight down to the beach. There she lit a fire, sat down on a stone, and fed her child for the first time around their own hearth.

There is almost always a moment of tension after a story, as everyone present knows the transition must be made back into normal time and – I suppose – out of being alone together. There's a feeling that anything you say might be the wrong thing, or at least irrelevant, and might undermine whatever the story had been for each one present. It is a necessary violence, but I cannot always face it. On the occasion on which I told 'The Stolen Child' in Maple House, the setting's teacher sensed this, and stepped in himself to help me with the right words. I can no longer remember what they were.

It was one young woman's last day at Maple House. Luna had been there for many months and, as a keen creative writer and artist, had been one of the most faithful participants in all of my storytelling workshops. She had finished weaving her dreamcatcher, and brought it across the room as a gift for me.

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Loneliness in the Collective: Youth in the Socio-Educational Sphere in Poland 1948–1989

Samotność w kolektywie: młodzież w przestrzeni społeczno-edukacyjnej w Polsce w latach 1948–1989

Abstract: Political, social and economic life in Poland in the years 1948–1989 was organized within the monocratic order. This meant the existence of one centre of power and control, as well as the subordination of all social processes to immediate political goals. Education, and especially the formation of the young generation, also found itself within the orbit of political influence. The promoted educational model was built on the ideal of the so-called socialist morality. It included, among others, idealism, the cult of work, a scientific worldview, and collectivism. Collectivism was treated as the goal, method, and the form of educational work. The compulsion to function in a group and be controlled by a group might have aroused in many members a sense of loneliness, isolation, or even rejection. The sense of rejection implied isolation. On the other hand, there was a chance to reformulate isolation into a sense of loneliness. I read loneliness as a positive value, i.e. as a journey into oneself, an opportunity for self-development and for finding an inner freedom. There-

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fore, the following paradoxical questions can be posed: Was collectivism inspiring and creative, and was collectivism the source of individual emancipation? Were the youth conspiracy, youth subcultures, and all religious movements that contested the system, the proof of young people's isolation or of their creative loneliness? Answering these questions is the main goal of my paper.

Keywords: solitude, loneliness, youth, collectivism, monocentric order.

Abstrakt: Życie polityczne, społeczne i gospodarcze w Polsce w latach 1948––1989 zorganizowane było w ramach ładu monocentrycznego. Oznaczało to istnienie jednego ośrodka władzy i kontroli, a także podporządkowanie wszystkich procesów społecznych doraźnym celom politycznym. W orbicie wpływów politycznych znalazła się również edukacja, a zwłaszcza kwestia formacji młodego pokolenia. Promowany model wychowawczy zbudowany został na ideale tzw. moralności socjalistycznej. Obejmowała ona m.in. ideowość, kult pracy, światopogląd naukowy i kolektywizm. Kolektywizm potraktowano jako cel, metodę i formę pracy edukacyjnej. Przymus funkcjowania w grupie i bycie kontrolowanym przez grupę mogły u wielu budzić poczucie samotności, osamotnienia lub wręcz odrzucenia. Poczucie odrzucenia implikowało osamotnienie. Z drugiej strony istniała szansa przeformułowania osamotnienia w poczucie samotności. Samotność odczytuję jako wartość pozytywną, tzn. jako drogę w głąb siebie, szansę samorozwoju i odszukania wewnętrznej wolności. Można zatem postawić następujące paradoksalne pytania: Czy kolektywizm był inspirujący i twórczy i czy kolektywizm był źródłem emancypacji jednostki? Czy konspiracja młodzieżowa, subkultury młodzieżowe oraz wszystkie ruchy religijne kontestujące system były dowodem na osamotnienie młodzieży czy też na twórczą samotność? Odpowiedź na te pytania są przewodnim celem mojego artykułu.

Słowa klucze: samotność, osamotnienie, młodzież, kolektyw, ład monocentryczny

1. Introduction

Education, and the related process of acquiring knowledge, attitudes and values, always take place in a socio-political context. The particular dependence of education on political conditions can be discussed in the case of Poland in the period 1948–1989. The educational model then in force was to implement the so-called socialist morality. An important element of it was

collectivism, which quickly became the goal, method and form of educational work with children and young people. The collective's idea was based on the unity of worldview, attitudes and actions. However, the oppressive way of implementing the collective idea made it difficult to relate this to real community. Young people who did not share the imposed judgments could feel excluded and alone. On the other hand, the inner need for freedom has made it possible to translate solitude into creative loneliness, leading to self-realization and emancipation. Opposition between on the one hand the collective understood as a community and a sense of solitude, and on the other hand the role of the collective in the birth of creative loneliness, has become the theme of the presented article. The problem is presented from the theoretical perspective, taking into account the historical and socio-educational context, which will allow the broadest possible coverage of the issue. It is also worth noting that due to the complexity of the problem, the presented article does not close the discussion, but is an invitation to further, in-depth research.

2. Methodology of the research

The main object of my research is loneliness in the collective. Collectivism is treated as the main goal, method, and the form of educational work in Poland in the years 1948–1989. It seems interesting to examine the connection between loneliness and the collective. Determining the nature of this interdependence is also the main purpose of the paper. I aim to provide an answer to the following paradoxical research questions: **Was collectivism inspiring and creative, and was collectivism the source of individual emancipation? Were the youth conspiracy, youth subcultures, and all religious movements that contested the system, the proof of young people's isolation or of their creative loneliness?**

To seek answers to the above questions, the theoretical approach has been used. The theoretical approach is typical of research in the field of the history of education, and usually involves a three-step procedure. It consists of historical reconstruction, sociological interpretation and pedagogical evaluation (Michalski, 1981, p. 16). In the case of this paper, the historical reconstruction involved recreating the historical background: namely, the main facts and events that determined the socio-political reality in Poland in years 1948–1989. Sociological interpretation and pedagogical evaluation were used to analyse the collective phenomenon, in terms of the main goal and method of working with young people; to identify the socio-educational

effects of collectivism; and to find a connection between collectivism and creative loneliness.

3. Collectivism and education

Political, social and economic life in Poland in the years 1948–1989 was organized according to the monocentric order. This meant the existence of one centre of power and control, as well as the subordination of all social processes to immediate political goals (Ossowski, 1983, pp. 81–82). The process by which the communists took over and consolidated power took the form of structural and ideological Sovietization, which laid the foundations for a new social order that functioned dynamically until 1989 (Hejnicka-Bezwińska, 2015, p. 182).

The goal of both dimensions of Sovietization was to build a 'unity of representations', which was colloquially called the 'scientific world view' (Hejnicka-Bezwińska, 1996, p. 46). The implementation of such a goal was to be served by a widely understood culture, i.e. art, literature, everyday customs and education. It was extremely important to the rulers, because only through the process of internalizing top-down values, knowledge and attitudes, and their reproduction, could one speak of the survival of the monocentric order. The educational activities based on a behaviourist approach (assuming the absolute educability and plasticity of human nature) were to serve this purpose (Hejnicka-Bezwińska, 2015, p. 204).

The educational model promoted at that time was built on the ideal of the so-called socialist morality. It included ideology, the work cult, a scientific worldview and collectivism (Kairow, 1950, pp. 7–45; Radziwiłł, 1981, pp. 4–9, 22–24; Mazur, 2009, pp. 325–458; Pomykało, 1977). Collectivism was treated as the goal, method and form of educational work. Anthony Makarenko, whose works formed the cornerstone of the new pedagogy, became the main theoretician, and at the same time the practitioner of the collective life (Makarenko, 1950, pp. 45–57, 75–152; Kamiński, 1948, pp. 59–69).

Collectivism primarily assumed the elimination of individual autonomy and individualism. Makarenko argued that the collective is the dialectical unity of the individual and the group (Makarenko, 1950, p. 204). Individual autonomy and individualism were considered unnecessary in a situation where the fulfilment of all human life goals was to be carried out only in the collective and by the collective. It was argued that only in a team is a man able to feel good, safe and happy. Psychological arguments were used here, claim-

ing that the collective was supposed to satisfy the needs of affiliation, recognition and security (Kotłowski, 1968, pp. 157–180; Szczerba, 1959, pp. 437––447; Mazur, 2009, pp. 426–439). Szczerba (1959, p. 439) claimed that:

> The essence of collectivism is expressed in the feeling of love and attachment to the team, for the sake of the honour of his team, and in pride in his achievements and belonging to him as part of the team. Collectivism thus creates not only conditions for coupling the interests of the individual with the interests of the team, but also means that the interest of the individual is better and better satisfied.

It seems that the intention to organize the youth in collectives had a clear practical aspect. Young people, due to their natural qualities – i.e. energy, vitality, sacrifice, enthusiasm, openness of opinions, willingness to act – were a very desirable group for the communists (Boyd & Bee, 2008, pp. 368––399). For the same reason, they could not be left unattended. The harnessing of the natural attributes of youth in the form of a collective was, therefore, an intentional action.

The collectivization process was supported by formal and informal education. We can mention many actions: group pressure on the individual as one of the basic promoted educational methods, and participation of school youth in mass propaganda and political campaigns (processions, political ceremonies, drills, signing a letter of support or protest). The key political role was played by mass political youth organizations: the Polish Youth Union, the Socialist Youth Union and the Polish Socialist Youth Union. Each of these organizations, albeit with a different degree of efficiency, served short-term political interests (Król, 2015b, pp. 113–131; see: Kosiński, 2000; Kosiński 2006; Świda-Ziemba, 2010).

The collectivization of the life of youth, in the school and in the organizational dimension, had its distinctly dark side. The collective could give a deceptive sense of community, but the price for this was the unification of judgements, attitudes and actions. In other words, the school or organizational collective did not only control but also sanctioned the lives of its members. One can speak here about punctual behaviour (Szmatka, 2008, p. 175), where the collective oversaw members, and punished for insubordination and deviation from previously recognized rules. In the Stalinist period, such activities were carried out by, inter alia, Light Cavalry Brigades, which were to control students at school and beyond, and then administer punishments in the event of breaking any of the applicable rules (such as their poor academic perfor-

mance, leaving the lesson, lack of social-political activity, supporting the so-called enemies of the people's state). A common sanction was enforced self-criticism carried out in the class or school forum, and in more serious situations, student suspension or expulsion from school (Świda-Ziemba, 2010, pp. 110–120).

It was mentioned that the collective was to give the individual a sense of security, belonging and unity. It also detracted from having a sense of responsibility for one's life, because it set goals and tasks for the individual to fulfil, which were then appraised. The payment for this paternalism was to be ruthless loyalty and feelings of gratitude towards the group. People seem to have been comfortable with this situation. From the point of view of developmental psychology, the collective theoretically realized one of the strongest needs of a young person, which is a strong bond with a peer group (Boyd & Bee, 2008, pp. 368, 382–384)

However, this can only happen if the group strengthens self-esteem and self-affirmation, allows members to expand themselves and to practise new social roles, and helps them define their identity. In the case of the collective, there was no question of meeting the above conditions. The collective, as I have mentioned, was above all an oppressive and punitive group. By imposing a specific vision of the world and expecting the fulfilment of specific tasks, it acted against the young people's natural aspirations. A distinctive feature of the period of youth is the revision of one's existing opinions and the construction of a new identity. It is a period of intense development of self-awareness, of the need for self-discovery and for autonomy (Boyd & Bee, 2008, p. 369).

Only under the aforementioned conditions can the individual's system of values and their own worldview be shaped. Not only did collectivism fail to create such conditions, but it even prevented their creation. According to Laurence Kohlberg's theory of moral development, life in the collective shaped mainly the conventional morality of the first stage, where the basis of moral judgments is the rules or norms of the group to which the individual belongs (Kielar-Turska, 2000, pp. 312–316; Boyd & Bee, 2008, p. 390).

4. Collectivism and loneliness

Being compelled to operate in a group and be controlled by the group, with their private life fully transparent, may have left many people feeling lonely, isolated, or even rejected. The sense of rejection implies loneliness.

On the other hand, it could be beneficial to reformulate isolation into a sense of loneliness. Tarnogórski (1988, p. 5) claims that: 'Higher values are often the motive for choosing loneliness'. In the case of youth in the years 1948––1989, we can say that such values might include the need for freedom, autonomy in opinions and fidelity to principles.

I read solitude as a positive state, i.e. as a journey into oneself, an opportunity for self-development and finding one's inner freedom. In other words, it is an opportunity for personal development, based on the idea that only a lonely person can experience their individuality and uniqueness. This understanding of solitude is presented by, among others, Jan Szczepański (1980, pp. 20–28), Elżbieta Dubas (2000, pp. 129–130) and Czesław Tarnogórski (1988, pp. 4–5).

This corresponds to the developmental need for isolation and to remain in creative autonomy (its opposite is sociopoly, i.e. the tendency to be subject to social influences and to remain dependent on others) (Liberska, 2006, p. 68). The young person must thus overcome external pressures to determine his or her identity in a mature way. This is served by loneliness, or confronting oneself first with the environment, and then with oneself. 'In adolescence, loneliness is a natural time to search for values, personality transformations, and identity formation' (Wasilewska, 2010, p. 8). We can say that adolescence is a time of developmental need for isolation, because 'the state of controlled loneliness is sometimes recognized by young people as beneficial, allowing for self-analysis and reflexion upon the world' (Dołęga, 2003, p. 21).

Confronting the world and then oneself requires, however, the internal freedom mentioned above. It is the freedom that every human being needs, though it is not realized by everyone. In addition, it is the freedom that has nothing to do with the one promoted in the Polish communistic period. Freedom was then considered only in the collective category, understood as 'freedom from' (oppression in capitalist countries, moral dilemmas, fluctuations in the choice of a worldview). The sense of inner freedom is important because it is based on rebellion. From a psychological point of view, rebellion is an indispensable element of young people's development, necessary for defining their own identity. Young people creating their own system of values – and on its basis, their world view – have a natural need to rebel against limits to their freedom and independence, and against injustice and evil perceived in the social reality. Thus, the rebellion of the youth in the Polish People's Republic had a distinct socio-political aspect; that is, the state and its institutions became the object of opposition.

Paradoxically, it was collectivism that created emancipatory attitudes and creative loneliness, which transformed into an active search for people's own and collective freedom. It can be said that oppressive actions, universal control and sanctions acted as a catalyst for personal development, which took place on the basis of loneliness. Young people, by converting the act of rejection by the collective, or noticing that its values failed to cohere with those received from the so-called Significant Others as a result of primary socialization (Berger & Luckmann, 2010, pp. 189–201), began the path towards creative self-development with the act of conscious loneliness.

Rebellion against the system was manifested in various forms: youth conspiracy (the youth anti-communist underground in the Stalinist years, School Social Resistance Clubs, Federation of Fighting Youth, Student Renewal Movement) (Wierzbicki, 2013; Noszczak 2016; Paleczny, 2016, pp. 39–42; Kołakowski, 2015, pp. 326–345); youth subculture/counterculture (Stalinist bikinis, skinheads, punks, hippies) (Dyoniziak, 1965; Pęczak, 1992; Filipiak, 1999); and youth movements connected with the Catholic Church (the priest Franciszek Blachnicki's overt 'Light–Life Movement', scouting chaplaincy, church groups) (Głowacka-Sobiech, 2013, pp. 120–137, 314–330; Marcinkiewicz, 2011).

These were very diverse groups in social, ideological and organizational terms. However, it can be concluded that their common features were a negative attitude to the existing socio-political reality, and the resulting need to look for their own path to self-realization (Wierzbicki, 2013, pp. 272–273, 276–293). All of the above forms of youth activity can be considered a manifestation of counterculture understood as a contestation of applicable norms, values and patterns (Filipiak, 1999 p. 14; Paleczny, 2016, pp. 17–39). Antonina Kłoskowska wrote:

> Contestation is a manifestation of the action of young people, linked in peer groups and occasionally participating in collective appearances that provide an opportunity for strong expression of attitudes [...] turning against the established order to replace it with their own principles and values, which are opposed to it (1981, p. 547).

Creative loneliness, drawing its reserves from inner freedom, caused young people to profoundly revise the vision of the world that people imposed on them; they were able to build their own value system based on the highest-order values. Often they paid the highest price for it, as exemplified by 19-year-old Grzegorz Przemyk, murdered in 1983 by Security Service

officers. For other young people, he quickly became a symbol of the struggle for freedom and resistance to the system.

5. Conclusions

The analysis carried out above enables the formulation of several basic conclusions:

1. Collectivism, as one of the elements of socialist morality, was imposed as an idea that did not arise from the natural aspirations of the young people.
2. The collective assumed a unity of judgements, attitudes and actions, so it was in principle utopian.
3. Collectivism, as the basis of the educational process, was anti-developmental from its foundation. By giving an apparent sense of security and community, it at the same time denied the natural rights of youth: contestation, rebellion and the need for independence.
4. By using oppressive methods of action and emphasizing the fiction of the imposed vision of the world, the process of collectivization intensified the tendency of young people to oppose the system.
5. Youth rebellion, as a result of oppressive collectivization, in turn led to a sense of rejection and solitude, which in many cases took the form of creative loneliness.
6. Collectivization, therefore, paradoxically provided an opportunity for an emancipatory path to internal freedom and independence, as a factor in the self-development of the individual.

Finally, we can ask two main questions: What we should learn from this history? What is worth remembering and reflecting upon more deeply? The first answer seems to be obvious: socio-educational projects that are not consistent with human nature and do not respond to our developmental needs are utopian. In other words, their full realization is not possible. One example of a utopian project was indeed the idea of collectivization, which served short-term political and ideological goals. Prescribed thinking and acting was not intended to promote internal development, and the use of oppressive methods caused a feeling of solitude and isolation. On the other hand, it is a specific kind of paradox that even in such socio-educational projects that block development, there is a potential for human self-realization. Collectivization caused, as mentioned, solitude and isolation, but rebellion as well, which evolved into creative loneliness. This means that the internal

human need for being free and self-realized may be so strong that even in the most oppressive conditions, people do not want to, and indeed cannot, give up these values.

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In Community, Alone, in Community: Towards an Understanding of Christian Faith for the Post-Enlightenment, Post-Evangelical, Post-1960s Revolution Generation

We wspólnocie, samotnie, we wspólnocie: ku rozumieniu chrześcijańskiej wiary przez pokolenie postoświeceniowe, poewanglikalne, i po rewolucji lat 60.

Abstract: The Christian Creeds outline the central beliefs of Christianity, providing a universal statement of faith for Christians everywhere. This is an account of one perspective on the Creeds, which begins in a narrow Christian community, moves through isolation and solitude, and ends at the edges of a new community; a journey which edges towards the human goal of self-acceptance and understanding. The doctrines are often perceived as fact, but are there grounds for a more nuanced approach? Theologically, some insiders have developed new approaches to Christianity, while traditional Church theology maintains a stubborn outward attitude of non-compromise. Others who have attempted to develop a more existential

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approach have been often vilified and disowned by the Church. But is there a third way? One which encompasses neither theological technicality nor angry emotional rejection, but a gradual dawning, personal realization that we are all moving from one type of community to another, and that the answers lie in doubt rather than certainty. This paper analyses internal and external dialogues the author has experienced, when moving from the confines of a small Evangelical Christian Church community, through solitude, to the tentative edges of a new multi-vocal community. Starting with an analysis of Fowler's methodology as a tool to evaluate the faith narrative, the author will examine the multiplicity of voices that have informed her journey. She will stop on the way to challenge and encourage the young adult who has become an outsider, to acknowledge the voices of dissenters, to accept a different form of spiritual friendship, and to encounter an evolving community which accepts new voices of gender, doubt and radical interpretation. Finally, she will visit a new creed and ask whether, in the famous words of T. S. Eliot, '... the end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time.'

Keywords: Christian; faith-development; faith-modelling; community; isolation; dialogue; doubt.

Abstrakt: Chrześcijańskie Credo wylicza główne prawdy chrześcijańskiej wiary, zapewniając jej uniwersalne wyznawanie wszystkim chrześcijanom. W tekście przedstawiono stanowisko autorki, perspektywę ujmowania wiary narodzonej w wąskiej chrześcijańskiej wspólnocie, przeniesionej przez izolację i samotność na brzeg nowej wspólnoty, mająca za cel osobową samoakceptację i zrozumienie. Doktryny są zwykle postrzegane jako fakty; czy istnieje jednak miejsce na światłocienie, na bardziej zniuansowane interpretacje? W teologii niektórzy „wtajemniczeni" rozwijali nowatorskie podejścia do chrześcijaństwa, podczas gdy tradycyjna kościelna teologia pozostaje zewnętrznym, upartym stanowiskiem braku kompromisu. Ci, którzy próbowali rozwijać bardziej egzystencjalne podejścia byli często szkalowani i usuwani z Kościoła. Jednak czy istnieje trzecia droga? Taka, która zakłada nie teologiczny formalizm czy wściekły, emocjonalny bunt, ale stopniowe przebudzenie świadomości, że wszyscy wyrastamy z jednego typu wspólnoty ku innemu, a odpowiedzi leżą bardziej w wątpliwościach aniżeli w pewności. Artykuł analizuje wewnętrzne i zewnętrzne dialogi, które autorka prowadziła w okresie przechodzenia z granic małego Ewangelikalnego Kościoła, poprzez samotność, do niepewnych brzegów nowej, wielogłosowej wspólnoty. Rozpoczynając od analizy metodologii Fowlera, jako narzędzia ewaluacji religijnych narracji, autorka bada wielość głosów, które oddziaływały na jej wewnętrzną podróż. Przystanki na tej drodze wynikały z potrzeby: wsparcia i zachęty wobec młodych dorosłych „outsiderów", umocnienia

głosów „odszczepieńców", akceptacji różnych form duchowej przyjaźni i wreszcie napotkania rozwijającej się wspólnoty, która zdolna jest pomieścić nowe głosy „gender", wątpliwości i radykalne interpretacje. Ostatecznie przygląda się „A New Creed" i zastanawia się – słynnymi słowami T. S. Eliota – czy rzeczywiście „…pod koniec wszystkich naszych odkryć dotrzemy tam, skąd wyruszyliśmy i poznamy to miejsce po raz pierwszy".

Słowa kluczowe: chrześcijaństwo; rozwój wiary; modelowanie wiary; wątpliwości; izolacja; wspólnota; dialog.

1. Introduction

In my beginning is my end. In succession
Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended,
Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place
Is an open field, or a factory, or a by-pass.
T. S. Eliot, *East Coker*

T. S. Eliot observes that the end of life can be found in its beginning. Eliot's observations refer to a deep-rooted tradition in society, in which 'the same sort of people do the same thing in the same place from generation to generation' (Asher, 1995, p. 101). In that cyclical life was a communal certainty that allowed and protected individual incursions into aloneness. The greatest Christian mystics, whose work stemmed from solitude, were nurtured by church communities that sustained and protected them. They lived lives of solitude, which Eliot had been drawn to around the time of his conversion in 1925 (Gordon, 2012). In this circle of life, the exploration of faith beyond safe doctrinal boundaries was either regulated by the Church in monastic communities, or was branded heretical. Is this still the case today? I argue that it is not. This article follows one 'Christian' journey, from a doctrinally bounded community, through wading in 'heretical' waters, to acceptance of a different kind of understanding – one that involves inter-religious permeable membranes (perhaps considered heretical by some quarters of the establishment), which allow the interfusion of dangerous 'heretics' with established doctrines.

I argue that Christian faith for Post-Evangelicals, from the post-1960s Cultural Revolution and beyond, need not be dismissed as irrelevant. By fusing traditional approaches to belief with those dangerous alternatives, we can create a space which provides room for dialogue between traditionalists and

'heretics'. This paper is not a challenge to traditional doctrine, nor do I intend to stereotype different forms of Christian belief by polarizing traditionalists against a post-modern consciousness (however that is defined). Rather, it is a common shore where people of different approaches can paddle in the shallows together, towards a new understanding based in dialogue.

As Walter Brueggemann observes, we live in a world in which the 'old-imagined' Christian world has vanished, and the new one provides no clear path for a new imagination. For Brueggemann, the task of the church is to 'provide materials and resources' from which people can piece together new configurations of faith. The point at which liturgy and proclamation meet is '... a place where people come to receive new materials, or old materials freshly voiced, that will fund, feed, nurture, nourish, legitimate and authorize a *counterimagination of the world*' (Brueggemann, 1993, p. 20). Since then, there have undoubtedly been Church-led initiatives which seek to bridge the divide between faith and doubt, though writers who have challenged mainstream approaches from outside the Church are still often vilified. There is still a long way to go.

To address the gap between literal faith and one which questions and challenges the literalist approach, I invite James Fowler into the shallows. A pioneering work of the 1970s, *Stages of Faith* draws on the work of developmental psychologists[1] and a number of recent theologians; among them H. Richard Niebuhr, who observed that faith requires loyalty to common 'centers of value and causes', and that human searches for 'truth' are likely to be seen as meaningless if not centrally grounded. This common centre is understood as 'gods, not as supernatural beings but as value-centers and objects of devotion' (Niebuhr, 1960, pp. 22–23). For Fowler, faith is a means of learning about and making sense of life through engagement with those value-centres and objects of devotion. He approaches faith as a verb, a dynamic system of images, values and commitments that guides individuals through life. John McDargh (2001, p. 186) notes: 'Fowler is concerned to render an account of faith as a human universal, a kind of talent or potentiality given with human nature', suggesting the possibility of bridging the gap between undifferentiated belief in God and belief which is grounded in reflective doubt. Notwithstanding the critiques,[2] Fowler justifies his model of faith in relation to increasing secularization that threatens the stability

[1] Notably Piaget, Erkson and Kohlberg.

[2] Fowler addresses some of the concerns in: Stages of Faith From Infancy Through Adolescence: Reflections on Three Decades of Faith Development Theory (2006, p. 43 ff).

of religious and moral authority on the one hand, and the growth of both fundamentalist and conservative practices *and* 'non-religious' approaches to spirituality on the other (Fowler & Dell, 2006, p. 44) This indicates the need for new religious spaces based in shared values and commitments. I hope we can unite both approaches, and reconcile the beginnings in literal belief with a more nuanced, 'adult' approach, which will '[At] the end of all our exploring' return us to the space where we started, and know it for the first time (Eliot, 1963, p. 222).

This article uses two narratives: the author's own faith development narrative (written in italics), and reflections on that narrative; these aim to establish common connections with other readers' own narratives.

2. A personal narrative explored

This is the author's story; she was born with a Christian blueprint, reinforced in a Creed. She embraced, then questioned, despised, rejected, and eventually reappraised these beliefs in perhaps heretical yet liberating ways. Born into an Anglican family, she grew up in the 1960s and 70s, a time of liberation and changing values in society.[3] *Sheltered from the harmful effects of 'anti-scriptural' approaches which could threaten the foundations of Christian society, she grew into a world which was increasingly rejecting Christian norms, and found she was becoming alienated from the Church, society and herself. As she became a young adult, with all the trappings – falling in love, marriage and family; the Christian ideal – her life was outwardly connected, communal, and relational. Eventually there was a moment of crisis which led her out of that world into a profound sense of alienation; but gradually, through chance encounters, she learned new pluralistic forms of understanding, and found herself 'Arriv[ing] where she started / And know[ing] the place for the first time' (Eliot, 1963, p. 222). There is nothing remarkable in her story – it is a common story of human development from birth into a faith community, to aloneness, and back to the edges of a new counter-imagined Christian community, based in a 'doubtful faith' which enabled old creeds to take on new meanings.*

[3] The 1960s baby boom, flower power, and feminist, black and gay rights movements all contributed to the dawning of a new era of acceptance and the breaking down of White Western norms.

The process of 'becoming' meant reappraising my literal childhood faith; this was facilitated by an encounter with Fowler's work. Originally published in 1976,[4] this text has become a modern classic that offers a new perspective on belief. Here at last was something that put flesh on the bones of a faith being prepared for burial; Fowler made sense. Yes, it was pseudo-scientific; nevertheless it defined what half a generation of Church teaching had failed to do: the ideas worked. It answered the unverbalized questions about belief, and treated them not as failure, but as part of a process of human development.

Fowler (1995, p. xiii) builds on educational and moral development theories[5] to develop a new approach to faith that enables us to 'grasp, clarify and work effectively with the most vital processes of our lives', while taking the theory with 'a serious playfulness and a playful seriousness' (Erikson cit. Fowler, 1995, p. xiii). He identifies five stages which roughly equate to educational, moral and physical development, recognizing discernible patterns that move beyond conventional symbols of faith and belonging, into self-examination and encounter with the other, community and self.

Fowler's concept of self, however, fails to address gender perspectives. Nicola Slee (2003) notes the importance of feminine voices in faith development; this is particularly salient to my own discussion, writing as a woman who grew up in a patriarchal Christian community.[6] Nevertheless, his model remains a useful instrument for evaluating the challenge of faith maturation within institutional churches. This is further underpinned by Adrian Coyle (2011, p. 21–22), who observes that despite the notable shortcomings of Fowler, particularly in relation to the 'invariant, sequential and hierarchical nature' of his model,

> In a Western culture in which religious faith is increasingly appraised negatively, such an understanding constructs religious faith not as a bizarre phenomenon but as arising from and being an expression of a universal human meaning-making orientation. It also allows the conceptualization of faith development to draw upon 22 theories from the psychological mainstream, reducing the risk of its ghettoization.

[4] Re-published in 1995.

[5] Notably the works of Piaget, Erikson and Kohlberg.

[6] Fowler himself acknowledges this in his subsequent research: Faith Development at 30: Naming the challenges of faith in a new millennium (2004).

This journey starts with the early sense of trust transmitted by my parents, which enabled the development of nurturing and sustaining healthy relationships in family, church and school (Erikson, 1980). There was what Fowler identifies as 'the inevitable anxiety and mistrust that result from the … emotional experiences of separation and self-differentiation which occur during infant development' (Fowler & Dell, 2006). However, when I grew up in a faith environment, these bonds of attachment reinforced Christian mutuality and helped develop a sense of personhood, as both a separate entity and as a member of a bounded community. The world was viewed through a glass clearly, within a structured and evangelically framed God-consciousness. Concepts of 'good' and 'bad' were also enclosed within the same God-shaped boundaries (with very little differentiation between the ultimate authority of God and of parents), thus giving parameters for living and believing, which controlled both reward and punishment. Belief was the stuff of myth and legend, 'appropriated with literal interpretations' (Fowler, 1995, p. 149). Moral rules and attitudes were similarly literally shaped, with the Bible as the backbone of understanding, in which the fantastic and the mundane fused together seamlessly as fact. Parental authority was a safe space within which a growing sense of separation and self-differentiation was subjugated (Fowler & Dell, 2006, p. 36). Hence belief in God the Father Almighty equated to belief in the patriarchal family structure.

Fowler (1995, p. 173) emphasizes the dangers of these constraints, noting that without careful nurturing, literalness can result in the construction of an environment constricted by the need for stilted perfectionism – a comment which post-Evangelicals may well embrace. As a young adult, discussions about faith with my father (whose religion was built on systems and structures of belonging) brought about my first conscious encounter with doubt, shaking the foundations of literal belief. His authoritative persona had previously helped build a world of stability and trust, yet it had belied his doubt and uncertainty. Gradually the literalness which had formed the child's narrative was exposed as a myth. Seeing below the surface of another person brings us face to face with the realization that we are not what we believe ourselves to be; that 'even after a deeper level ... appeared ... below a vanishing surface ... that deeper level itself becomes a surface' (Tillich, 1949, p. 63). His questions about the nature and existence of God, and the inadequacy of Church structures to help him in his faith crisis, caused shock waves as I realized that he was 'not waving but drowning' (Smith, 1957), alone in a sea of institutionalism and literalness.

3. Alone in the Church

The words of the Creed sounded the warning: 'I believe in Jesus Christ ... who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary'. At the end of this arose a question mark. 'Do I really believe that?' And the more she questioned, the more the answer came back a resounding 'NO'. Now struggling to maintain a sense of collective and personal identity in her religious community, the author has rejected the 'mythic-literal' roots of her childhood. She needs to conform to gain peer acceptance, yet she cannot, driven by a sense of profound dissonance. But she cannot break free; her 'self' is far from being fully formed. There is conflict between her communal and personal identities, and the evangelical community is unable to accommodate her growing sense of anxiety and doubt. The messages she receives from authority figures further alienate her from developing a more differentiated approach to faith; she reaches a point where she can no longer hold together the conflicting demands of communal and personal identities. Her communal identity is in shreds, her personal identity is not yet strong enough to sustain her; doubt forms her internal dialogue while the outward appearance of faith is maintained in her communal identity; there is a deepening sense of isolation and incongruence.

Questioning literal belief can isolate people from the communities that nurtured their early development. After the conformity of infancy and youth, in which community, identity and belief are sustained by significant authority sources, an encounter with doubt can lead to either a physical or emotional 'leaving home'. As Fowler (1995, p. 173) notes, as a young adult[7] encounters the breakdown of trust in familiar patterns, symbols and norms, this 'precipitates the kind of examination of self, background, and life-guiding values that gives rise to transition at this point'. 'Leaving home' is accompanied by the conflict between intimacy and isolation which occurs during this time (Gold & Rogers, 1995, pp. 79–85). The need for committed, emotionally fulfilling relationships can leave the sense of self scarred by an inability to continue social relationships in a religious community which no longer accommodates the emerging self; thus, communal and personal identities become conflicted.

[7] Fowler notes that the challenge to synthetic-conventional (stage 3) faith typically happens in young adults, but can happen in the late thirties or forties.

Alan Jamieson (2002, p. 62) identifies this process of isolation and leaving the EPC[8] church as a normal part of the changing nature of faith. He uses the term 'Reflective Exiles' (REs) to describe people who undergo a fundamental shift of consciousness through questioning their core beliefs and values; he identifies a common pattern which begins with 'meta-grumbles':

> They are not grumbling about specifics within the church but about the function, role and place of church itself. Grumbles about what it means to be a Christian. How much are we left to do our own thing in life? What is prayer? How do we understand and use the Bible? Even, who is Jesus? And for some Does God exist? ... Meta-grumbles question the deep-rooted foundations of the faith itself. For these people it is the core of their faith that is being shaken in the process. (ibidem, p. 61)

This process culminates in a new sense of self:

> In the process of deconstructing and reflecting on their faith, many of the Reflective Exiles develop a new trust for their emotions and intuitions, which they use as part of the judgement they bring to each segment of the faith they are evaluating. Although for most the weighing of their faith involves thoughtfulness and the search for new understanding, many also mentioned a renewed trust in their own emotions and intuitions. (ibidem, p. 71)

Jamieson also highlights the resulting loss of identity, confidence and self-esteem in leaving an EPC community. His work, like Fowler's, provides a liminal safe-space for REs to recognize that, although 're-examination can be a deeply painful process' (Fowler & Dell, 2006, p. 41), it is part of the process of maturation.

One solution for Jamieson (2009, p. 222) comes in the form of 'post-church' groups;[9] these are fluid organizations which exist solely for the ben-

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[8] Evangelical, Pentecostal and Charismatic.

[9] Jamieson notes a common feature of post-church groups: 'they were formed to provide a forum for people to discuss topics and issues that were "out-of-court" in the EPC church environments they had left. They are places where doubts about faith, anger and disappointment with the church (or with God) can be expressed, and where questions can be raised which address the foundational core of the theology, practice, beliefs and worldview of the EPC churches... Safe places are places where there is no censorship of feelings, intuitions, doubts and ideas.' (Jamieson, 2009, p. 222)

efit of their members, providing a place where there is 'no censorship of feelings, intuitions, doubts and ideas', and which can continue to nurture faith identities. That is all very well for REs who maintain an allegiance to Church, but for some the trauma of leaving imparts a potentially lasting legacy of anger and antipathy. Post-church groups fail to address disaffected, unaffiliated church-leavers who nevertheless wish to maintain a tenuous grasp on Christianity in a post-Christian society; there is no safe space for their doubt. So what role is there for REs who abandon organized religion and yet cannot quite shake it off?

Richard Holloway (2001, p. 185) observes that conservatives in the Christian tradition are:

> People who find themselves in these guardian roles often have a high practical intelligence, but they are rarely reflective or open to doubt; there may even be a strong genetic predisposition in them to the unquestioning acceptance of system and order... Further down the chain of authority from these strong types we find the ... rather shallow beneficiaries of the prevailing system who have done little to protect or extend it, but they offer it the homage of their uncomprehending benediction... The strong types end up as fundamentalists who can only 'defend tradition in the traditional way'.

These are harsh words that reflect the danger of stagnation in traditions which Holloway believes can only be truly mitigated by reflective doubters: 'the very people who are persecuted by the system for their heresy and corruption may be the agents that preserve whatever is enduringly sound in the tradition in question' (ibidem). He uncompromisingly seeks a space for those who have lost the support of their religious communities, and while he acknowledges that it is fundamentally important to educate the young by 'their inculturation into the tradition of the community in which they belong', there must also be a radical second part to the process, to deconstruct the tradition that has initially been internalized (ibidem, p. 186). They 'need subversives who have mastered the tradition so thoroughly that they know instinctively that it must constantly be undermined if it is to have any hope of enduring' (ibidem, p. 187), and a new community which instils 'emotional confidence that will enable them to adapt to the changes their lives will encounter', rather than a traditional community that 'arm[s] them with fixed and solid certainties that are likely to collapse under the pressure of events' (2004, p. 192). They need a safe space for rebellion which affords vital breathing space in which to mature and grow. To avoid the nihilistic despair of which Fowler (1995,

p. 173) writes, upon the loss of conformist faith, Holloway invites his reader to abandon defensiveness and fear, and to live honestly, 'dancing on the edge' and 'not being afraid' (1997, p. 200), by allowing the 'edge' to become a permanent home. It is about *allowing* ourselves to be at the edge, rather than being *impelled* – either by intellectual struggles with 'doctrinal elements of the Church', or the 'moral disapproval of prominent Christians because of the way we live or the kind of people we are', or because of the mistakes we have made (1997, p. xi). Holloway has been variously called prophetic, controversial, a compassionate critic, a barmy bishop; but his nuanced approach to faith and doubt opens up a safe place for REs to explore.

4. Alone in the Wilderness?

When the forms of an old culture are dying,
the new culture is created by a few people
who are not afraid to be insecure. (Rudolph Baro)

The decision to leave the Church is not easy, but membership of a group in which the author now feels an outsider is increasingly unsustainable. The confines of the community are no longer tenable, and in seeking to find meaning, the myth of the Christian narrative implodes. She is aware that her conflict and doubt can find no resolution within this community and knows she must leave; leaving is painful, but staying is impossible. There is deep sadness, loneliness and alienation, but it is mitigated by the exploration of 'the edge', which begins to open up new horizons and perspectives on faith. She is able to ask difficult questions of new mentors who propose alternatives, none of which she had encountered in her faith community; all these mentors are pushing boundaries while remaining profoundly Christian.

In our search for meaning, 'we look out on life and in on ourselves, and that act gives rise to religion, which is a way of connecting ourselves to the mystery of what is beyond ourselves' (Holloway, 2001, p. 54); and letting go of organized religion is part of that search. The breakdown of early 'authority sources' and the process of 'leaving home' (emotionally or physically), while painful, opens up space for deeper examination 'of self, background and life-grounding values' (Fowler, 1995, p. 173). This 'aloneness' requires the presence of significant mentors to help configure a more nuanced faith.

It is clear for today's exiles that there needs to be a safe 'religious' space in which to counter-imagine life beyond the boundaries of organized religion. For Brueggemann (1993, p. 20) the task is:

> ... to *fund* – to provide the pieces, materials and resources out of which a new world can be imagined. Our responsibility, then, is not a grand scheme or a coherent system, but the voicing of a lot of little pieces out of which people can put life together in fresh configurations ... the work of funding consists not in the offer of a large, ordered coherence, but in making available lots of disordered pieces that admit of more than one large ordering.

If organized religion (including the post-EPC Church) cannot do this for REs, then we need new mentors who *can* offer those fragments, materials and resources with which to piece together a new form of religious consciousness.

One such mentor was Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk and civil rights activist who exemplified Fowler's description of 'universalizing faith'. Merton creates and sustains 'zones of liberation' which invite us to partake in 'visions of universal community [which] penetrate [the] obsession with survival [and] security' of so many religious institutions. He discloses what Fowler (1995, p. 200) calls 'the partialness of our tribes and pseudo-species', and creates universal themes of love, care and compassion which transcend the partiality of institutionalism. For the RE who no longer sees any good in the institutional Church, it is tempting to harbour resentment for the structures that upheld their early community. But for Merton (1961, p. 56), that hatred belies a lack of sense of self:

> There is in all weak, lost, and isolated members of the human race an agony of hatred born of their own helplessness, their own isolation. Hatred is the sign and the expression of loneliness, of unworthiness, of insufficiency. And in so far as we all are lonely, are unworthy, we all hate ourselves. Some of us are aware of this self-hatred, and because of it we reproach ourselves and punish ourselves needlessly. Others who are less conscious of their own self-hatred ... project it onto others.

For Merton (ibidem, p. 61), recovery of the self comes through solitude and contemplation, not by 'travelling but by standing still'. It was the integrity born of contemplation with which he wrote, that led the Dalai Lama to reflect that Merton's spirituality was embodied in his person, and that what Merton said and wrote was in fact who he was (Bochen, 2000, p. 21); furthermore,

his fusion of interior and exterior worlds extends a hand to REs whose identities have become fragmented and lost. If one is used to a life of religious routine and structure grounded in superficial certainty, breaking free requires wading into deeper waters. Merton's writing provides just such a framework of solitude and silence. He acknowledges the 'importance of freedom from the routines and illusions which keep us subject to things [whether material or spiritual], dependent on what is outside us' (Merton, 1994, pp. 329–30); a freedom which gives rise to creative and redemptive power (Merton, 1985, p. 159). He offers an alternative community in which the illusory self, the 'false self' with which we have lived and grown, is recognized as being outside of reality and outside of life (Merton, 1961, p. 33). He invites us to take part in a new story, which begins in and tests us with a wilderness 'full of uncertainty and peril and humiliation and fear', in order to enter the dark night and move on to a new form of living. This is a living which Fowler (1995, p. 182) notes is grounded in the self's awareness of its 'own boundaries and inner-connections' rather than the communal restraints of the previous community; it is a place where the myths can be demythologized and translated into concepts consistent with a growing awareness of our deepening maturity.

Merton (1961, pp. 92–93) provides a different freedom for the RE to restructure the Creedal formulae:

> If instead of resting in God by faith, we rest simply in the proposition or the formula [of the Creed], it is small wonder that faith does not lead to contemplation. On the contrary, it leads to anxious hair-splitting arguments, to controversy, to perplexity, and ultimately to hatred and division... The importance of the formulas is not that they are ends in themselves, but that they are means through which God communicates his truth to us ... we must not be so obsessed with verbal correctness that we never go beyond the words to the ineffable reality which they attempt to convey... Faith, then, is not just the grim determination to cling to a certain form of words, no matter what may happen ... [it] is the opening of an inward eye, the eye of the heart, to be filled with the presence of divine light.

Nevertheless, it has to be acknowledged that for most people a life of solitary contemplation is problematical, and that Merton's writings are born of the privileged hegemonic model of the Western white, solitary male. From the author's particular gendered perspective, as a woman brought up in an EPC environment, and standing in the ruins of a post-EPC world, this life is seen as ideal but unattainable. Inevitably, without alternatives which provide

a more practical model of Christianity, the initial euphoria of having found a space in which to grow recedes quickly, as it becomes evident that this particular vision is impossible given the constraints of daily living.

5. Finding friends and dancing on the edge

The author is now increasingly aware of her context, that her attempts to model a solitary life are problematical. She is unable to make space for the contemplative life, and disillusionment begins to creep in. Contemplation, it seems, is for the few, and life is too busy. She realizes that her gender may be part of both the problem and the solution.

The historical meta-narratives were constructed a world in which everything had its order (including the hierarchically structured Church), but there are inevitable casualties in that system: marginalized voices such as the poor, women, LGBTQ, Black-African and Asian people, as we know all too clearly now, are drowned out in favour of these narratives. The author too, belongs to one of those marginalized groups,[10] only ticking some of the boxes of the white, Western, solitary male norm. And therein lies the problem: the possibilities and opportunities that open up in the form of Merton's solitude and Jamieson's alternative churches have their roots in the old meta-narratives which favoured the norm. So, as we splash around in the shallows, the sea floor is littered with debris from the effects of marginalization.

The past has a place, but a dawning awareness of gender-roles means reconfiguring understanding by taking into account new narratives. Owning gender is an important aspect of realignment for women emerging from patriarchal Christian meta-narratives. While the early second-wave Christian feminists, in the 1970s and 80s,[11] undoubtedly paved the way for gendered dialogue, they did little to address the norms of everyday living for women whose lives revolved around care, nurture, family and home.

A possible model which accepts the role of women as carers and extends it to encompass both female and male caring as an act of moral reciprocity,

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[10] Albeit, the author acknowledges, a privileged one with access to medical care, education, and equal rights in the public arena.

[11] Mary Daly, Rosemary Radford-Ruether, Elizabeth Schussler-Fiorenza and Carol Christ are among the early Christian voices who sought to advocate women's voices in the Christian narrative.

is that of Nel Noddings: she rejects the idea of a universal ethical judgement, and focuses instead on the 'uniqueness of human encounters'. As so much depends on the subjective experience of ethical encounters, conditions are rarely 'sufficiently similar for me to declare that you must do what I must do' (Noddings, 2003, p. 5). She posits a different form of universally accessible morality – 'the caring attitude, that attitude which expresses our earliest memories of being cared for and our growing store of memories of both caring and being cared for' (ibidem) – and proposes that we are mutually dependent even when striving for 'personal goodness':

> How good *I* can be is partly a function of how *you* – the other – receive and respond to me. Whatever virtue I exercise is completed, fulfilled, in you... An important difference between an ethic of caring and other ethics that give subjectivity its proper place is its foundation in relation. The philosopher who begins with a supremely free consciousness – an aloneness and emptiness at the heart of existence – identifies *anguish* as a basic human affect. But our view, rooted as it is in relation, identifies *joy* as a basic human affect ... it is the recognition of and longing for relatedness that form the foundation of our ethic. (ibidem, p. 6)

Noddings' ethics of caring and relatedness bridges the divide between Merton's approach to love, care and compassion through solitude and contemplation, and the 'Marthaesque' approach through service, busyness and doing.[12] In defending caring, she identifies the problem of the male norm in institutional churches, and offers a space to explore a less hierarchical and isolationist approach to community:

> If it is the case that females have easier and more direct access to caring through biologically facilitated factors, this does not imply that males have no access, but it might help to explain why men intellectualize, abstract and institutionalize that which women treat directly and concretely. It might also explain why organized religions are so often created and dominated by men. The longing for that which is not quite within reach is deep and constant. (ibidem, p. 130)

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[12] Luke Chapter 10: Martha's busyness in preparation for welcoming Jesus is contrasted unfavourably with the stillness and contemplative nature of the attentive Mary, who is seen as the ideal woman. This mirrors the solitudinous, contemplative approach to spiritual fulfilment of writers like Merton, who actively choose 'the better way'. For a fuller explanation, see Barbara E. Reid (1996).

Her resolution that 'human love, human caring, will be quite enough on which to found an ethic' is centred in the awareness that this form of caring is not 'a form of agapism', and there is 'no command to love nor, indeed, any God to make the commandment' (ibidem, pp. 28–29). Noddings' rejection of the external, commanding 'male' God of Christianity, however, leaves this particular exile with the challenge of resolving fragments of faith with a new awareness grounded in feminine ethics of caring. Her approach is limited to caring for the intimate other; and, as Eileen Sowerby (2019) notes, this fails to address relations with the 'non-intimate' – an aspect which will be of significance for REs forming new communities of care. Nevertheless, this is a useful starting point for exiles to consider their own approaches to post-EPC faith. To span the divide between the commanding God and human caring as being sufficient to itself, another voice is needed.

In 1968, Dorothee Soelle published *Phantasie und Gehorsam*,[13] which questioned the role of obedience in both national and religious life. Her experience of the blind obedience of 'idealistic or stupid young Nazis', which led them to commit 'the greatest crime in the history of my people' (1995, p. x), caused Soelle to question historical models of Christian obedience, and to suggest instead a 'creative disobedience' situated in the figure and context of the earthly Jesus. For Soelle (1995, pp. xvii–xviii), male theological language 'is insensitive to what people experience', and 'has no appeal to change the world'. The God-image as 'father, begetter, ruler and manager of history' left her as a woman feeling incomplete in a powerful patriarchal society, so she created a new theological language of inclusivity and communality rather than power and domination. The male authority model reinforces the EPC ideal which subjugates the question 'why?'. Soelle notes that:

> When obedience concentrates itself completely on a higher and guiding 'other', it becomes blind, that is, blind to the world. It hears the voice of its master in a very narrow and exclusive sense but it sees nothing. It accomplishes the act of obedience for its own sake, recognizing no additional significance... An obedience that is blind to objective concerns and to the world, that merely listens to what it is told, has divested itself of all responsibility for what is commanded. Obedience and not what is to be done is the sole motivation. (ibidem, p. 16)

[13] Originally published in English as *Beyond Mere Obedience*, later changed to *Creative Disobedience* (1995).

Soelle does not see belief as an ideology unconnected to real life, that has ossified into a tradition. Blind obedience is not the action of belief, but the *obstruction* of it and of the domain of oppression. In excising the traditional theologies of obedience[14] she embraces REs, offering a new form of obedience – not 'the carrying out of commands intended to maintain ... an unchangeable order' (ibidem, p. 27), but obedience to the self, rooted in fulfilment; a concept she coins as 'phantasy':

> The self-evident 'right to enjoy the earthly life' for all human beings, lies on a different level of thought, a level attested to in the Bible, but suppressed in the tradition of the church. In the Bible the world is viewed as being changeable and the possibilities for fulfilment thus provided cannot be limited by the unforeseen envy of the gods... Liberated humans are builders of well-being, they are in control of all the possibilities at their disposal and not only experience but also create it. (ibidem, pp. 46–47)

Soelle offers REs a 'thinking' approach to Christianity, freed from the old norms of authority and obedience, and advocating life on the boundaries, a space to explore both the old world and the potentials of a new one. Her insistence that we can learn from Christ is not based on his blind obedience to a powerful omnipotent God, but rather because Jesus of Nazareth is 'of all the humans who ever lived ... the person most conscious of his own identity. And ... the strength of his phantasy [fulfilment] must be understood as rising out of his joyous self-realization' (ibidem, p. 56). Here is the possibility of personal fulfilment in social action, grounded in Jesus of the Gospels.

Notwithstanding the fact that Soelle is rather one-dimensional in her critique of patriarchal power as 'obedience to an omnipotent tyrant and to the male hierarchs who interpret his laws' (Orens, 2002), her deconstruction of ecclesial power opens up possibilities for new communities of faith grounded in human self-actualization. To believe in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit does not mean submitting to patriarchal dominance; rather, in the biblical sense, a sharing of diverse people – those with whom we agree and disagree, whom we like and dislike, and who are at the edges of community:

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[14] Most notably Baumgarten (1706–57), who writes that 'most assuredly the time will return when obedience – that is, the submission to authority, full compliance without questioning motives, the simple telling and presenting of holy things rather than the endless asking and answering of questions – will freely be acknowledged and practised as the basis of all religious training.'

> Jesus ... ate with those who were on the margins of society: cheats and prostitutes, toll collectors, all members of 'disreputable professions'. He ate with those who 'followed' him: men, women and children. He accepted invitations to meals in the homes of Pharisees precisely because on some individual questions relating to the required loyalty to Torah he thought differently from many Pharisees. There were discussions and friendly disputes at the meals... (Soelle & Schotroff, 2002, p. 82)

The recognition that 'life is more complex than the logic of clear distinctions and abstract concepts can comprehend' leads me to a more 'dialectical and multileveled approach to life' (Soelle, 1995, p. 183); thus, Soelle offers a space to breathe and permission to converse with the dissidents, the non-patriarchal voices who sit at the edges.

I was, and had been all along (to misquote Stevie Smith), not drowning but waving; the certainty of early childhood had given way to dissident voices which allowed me to find a multiplicity of meaning, and have begun to shape a new congruity and understanding.

6. Alone Together

The author says 'I'. I have introduced you to some of the voices which have confronted me in my exile. I have complied, agreed, doubted and challenged. My dialogues with spiritual leaders and dissenters were initially overwhelming and all-consuming, then gradually made way for a more reflective approach to Christianity. I have approached them, often at first exclusively, hoping to find that *their* solutions and propositions are the answers to *my* questions; and later on, as significant voices in the forum of my own inner dialogue.

At each point I find that I have known Christianity for the first time. Holloway's proposition that to understand Christianity is to 'dance on the edge', gave permission for rebellion against a Creed which seemed to assume a supernatural ideology. Merton's approach to the Creeds not as *ends* but the *means* to truth allowed me to deconstruct old ideologies and seek new ones to take their place. Noddings showed me my feminine voice, which spoke of caring and compassion, and gave consent to my deeper self to challenge the patriarchal Creeds. Soelle's radical social doctrine and refusal to be tied down to traditional authoritarian norms afforded the courage to learn to be who 'I am'. But all these people are only partial constructs of the self I am

becoming; I have been given a new imagination with which to reconfigure faith. As Fowler (1995, p. 198) observes:

> *New strength ... comes in the rise of the ironic imagination – a capacity to see and be in one's or one's group's most powerful meanings while simultaneously recognizing that they are relative, partial and inevitably distorting apprehensions of transcendent reality.*

I have wrestled throughout with the problem of how to refer to myself – in the singular third person as 'the author', the first person 'I', or as part of a communal 'we' in acknowledgement of others who share my exile. This dilemma also permeates my interface with the Church – one to which I have found a partial answer, in developing an independent identity within the Church which discourses with diverse Christian voices, while I explore this new space. The old Creeds now have fresh meanings and cannot be returned to their old forms. My complete self is made up of partial others and their contributions, and it will continue to be informed, guided and challenged by them. My early place of certainty has become a place of doubt and contingency; though not one of anxiety and alienation – rather, a profound doubt embedded in a deep core of *human* knowing. Like Eliot, I constantly return to my own Little Gidding, and find it curiously the same yet different: what possibilities arise when at each stage of all our exploring we continually 'arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time'! I invite you to do the same.

I hope this exploration has provided a starting point for discussions, whether in academia, the Church, or beyond those boundaries, which will enable us to explore diverse 'Christian' voices as part of the faith dialogue – something we must surely do if institutional religion beyond the boundaries of the EPC movements is to survive in any meaningful form into the 21st century.

I *am* alone and I *am* in community: this paradox allows for a 'Christian' life beyond the boundaries of, yet in dialogue with, institutional religion, and it allows me to both accept and reinterpret the Creeds. I leave the last word to Dorothee Soelle, whose poem 'Credo' (1975) adopts an alternative vision:

> *I believe...*
> *In the possibility of a meaningful life*
> *For all people*

I believe this world of god's
Has a future.

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Prisoners of Care: The Experience of Loneliness among Caregivers of Individuals with Alzheimer's Disease

Więźniowie opieki: doświadczenie samotności pośród opiekunów osób cierpiących na chorobę Alzheimera

Abstract: Adjusting to an Alzheimer's disease diagnosis is a complex process. Caregivers tend to experience feelings of loneliness and isolation, which in turn may

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have adverse effects on their well-being. Although the detrimental effects of caregiving on psychological and physical health are well documented, more research is needed to give a comprehensive portrait of the caregiving experience, especially in the areas of loneness and social isolation. Loneliness remains a neglected aspect of the caregiving experience. Results from this study offer important insights into the caregiving experience for psychologists and other healthcare professionals.

Keywords: Alzheimer's disease; caregivers; loneliness.

Abstrakt: Przystosowanie się do choroby Alzheimera jest złożonym procesem. Opiekunowie doświadczają samotności i izolacji, co może niekorzystnie wpływać na ich samopoczucie. Mimo iż negatywny wpływ, jaki może wywrzeć sprawowanie opieki na zdrowie psychiczne i fizyczne, został potwierdzony w wielu badaniach, nie udało się jeszcze uzyskać kompleksowego portretu opiekuna i jego doświadczeń, zwłaszcza jeśli chodzi o doświadczenie samotności i izolacji społecznej. Samotność pozostaje zaniedbanym aspektem doświadczenia opiekuńczego. Wyniki tego badania oferują ważne informacje na temat doświadczenia w opiece zarówno dla psychologów, jak i innch osób zaangażowanych w pomoc osobom starszym.

Słowa kluczowe: choroba Alzheimera; opiekunowie; samotność.

1. Introduction

Alzheimer's disease (AD) is a chronic neurodegenerative disorder and the most prevalent type of dementia (Karantzoulis & Galvin, 2011). The most common symptoms of the disease include memory decline, aggression, apathy, hallucinations and depression (Alzheimer's Association, 2019). Because this disease is associated with age, it is estimated that Alzheimer's disease will affect a significant number of older adults, and will consequently impose a burden on health and social care systems around the world. The increasing number of people with AD will also impact many families because the majority of patients are cared for at home by informal caregivers, mostly family members (Lepore, Ferrell & Wiener, 2017). Due to the fact that the symptoms of AD worsen with the progression of the disease, older adults affected by the disease become more dependent on their families to provide assistance with tasks such as personal hygiene and eating (Fauth, Femia & Zarit, 2016). The physical and emotional demands associated with attending to the needs of an individual with AD can have adverse effects on caregiv-

ers. In fact, studies demonstrated that caring for a person with dementia is more stressful than caring for a person with a physical disability (Brodaty & Donkin, 2009). Caregiving has been associated with increased levels of anxiety, stress, depression, and with a diminished immune response, which leads to frequent infections (Lavretsky, 2005). Caregiving can also contribute to a higher risk of developing mental and physical health problems (Vitaliano, Zhang & Scanlan, 2003). Additionally, caregivers are less likely to engage in preventative health behaviours than non-caregivers, which may further contribute to their poorer health outcomes (Grunfeld et al., 2004).

It is projected that by 2030, the global number of individuals with AD or other types of dementia will increase to 65.7 million (Prince et al., 2013). In the context of increasing numbers of older adults with Alzheimer's disease, the predictors of caregiver burden have become the subject of considerable research (Pinquart & Sörensen, 2003). Thus, researchers have been trying to identify factors that can negatively impact the experience of caregiving. Among the established predictors of caregiver burden are certain sociodemographic characteristics such as being female, lower levels of education, and residing with the care recipient. Other factors that contribute to caregiver burden include depression, financial stress, higher numbers of hours spent providing care, and lower levels of social support (Adelman, Tmanova, Delgado, Dion & Lachs, 2014). Although a few studies have pointed to social isolation and the experience of loneliness as significant predictors of caregiver burden (Lee, Martin & Poon, 2017), little research has focused on the experience of loneliness and social isolation among caregivers of individuals with Alzheimer's disease.

Although loneliness is a common human experience and can occur across the life span, loneliness has traditionally been thought of as being prevalent in late adulthood (Victor, Scambler, Bond & Bowling, 2000). Loneliness is commonly defined as an emotional distress resulting from a person's perceieved dissatisfaction with the quality or quantity of their social contacts (Perlman & Peplau, 1981). It is different from aloneness, which is defined as an objective absence of social ties (Ayalon, Shiovitz-Ezra & Palgi, 2013). Weiss (1973) suggested two types of loneliness: emotional loneliness (when a person lacks intimate and close relationships) and social loneliness (a consequence of an inadequate integration with social networks or a rejection by the community). More recent literature on loneliness emphasizes that this state of loneliness is not driven by the number of friends or the amount of contact a person has with others, but is instead caused by their subjective perception of the situation (Rokach, 2012).

Investigating the experience of loneliness among caregivers seems to be of high importance, because of its negative consequences for mental and physical health and the overall quality of life (Richard et al., 2017). Loneliness is predictive of depression, sleep problems, increased coronary heart disease, stroke and mortality risk, and suicidal ideation (Holt-Lunstad, Smith & Layton, 2010). Studies conducted in the general population also indicate that loneliness has been associated with engaging in maladaptive behaviours such as smoking and alcohol consumption (Nieminen et al., 2013).

The diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease can significantly affect all aspects of the life of the dyad, including social interactions. As the couple has to adjust to their new roles, the disease forces both caregivers and care recipients to withdraw from previous habits, social activities and relationships. Reasons for their shrinking social network might be different. For example, some individuals might avoid social interactions because of being embarrassed by their declining memory and cognitive function (Singleton, Mukadam, Livingston & Sommerlad, 2017). Isolation can be also caused by social withdrawal, which is one of the most common changes in behaviour in Alzheimer's disease. As the disease progresses, the disease-affected individuals start avoiding friends and family members. In addition, care recipients become less interested in routine activities they used to enjoy, which may result in fewer social activities. Difficulties with language may further negatively impact interactions, because individuals with AD have problems with starting and maintaining a conversation (Alzheimer's Association, 2019). Caregivers may also experience a reduced social network because of the accumulation of caregiving duties. Furthermore, they often report feeling overwhelmed by their caregiving responsibilities. As a result, they often do not have the time and energy to visit with friends and family, or to engage in other activities (Schulz & Eden, 2016). Last but not least, the diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease is also very challenging for employed caregivers to receive. As the amount of tasks accumulates, many caregivers feel incapable of performing work activities, and decide to reduce their working hours or stop working (Skira, 2015). Considering the above-mentioned examples, Alzheimer's disease can significantly reduce social interaction and, therefore, can be a trigger for loneliness.

There is growing evidence that Alzheimer's disease is associated with loneliness and having fewer close relationships in later life (Rafnsson, Orrell, d'Orsi, Hogervorst & Steptoe, 2017). However, little research has been conducted to investigate the experience of loneliness among caregivers of individuals with Alzheimer's disease. In order to address this gap, we con-

ducted a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews, to gather detailed information from primary caregivers of people diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. This study is important because it offers more insights into the caregiving experience, and provides a preliminary view of the experience of loneliness among older caregivers.

2. Methods

The present study analyses 30 qualitative interviews conducted with spousal caregivers of individuals with Alzheimer's disease. The study was conducted in Szczecin, Poland. Eligible participants were the primary caregivers for a person with Alzheimer's disease, living with the patient, and with no diagnosis of dementia. The median age of the interviewees was 78.3 years, with a range of 72 to 84 years. Similar to other studies that indicate that women predominate among caregivers (Sharma, Chakrabarti & Grover, 2016), the majority of participants in our study were also female (73%). Twenty-two of the respondents were caring for their husbands; eight were caring for a wife.

Participants were recruited from a group of caregivers who signed up to receive financial aid from the local government. The research team obtained a list of individuals who were eligible to receive this financial aid, and who agreed to be contacted by the research team. In order to be eligible to receive financial help, a care recipient had to demonstrate they were physician-diagnosed with AD (by a neurologist or psychiatrist), and were at least 75 years old. Prior to recruitment, letters describing the study were sent out to caregivers, inviting them to participate. Of 124 potential participants who fulfilled the eligibility criteria, 30 (24%) agreed to participate in the study. All caregivers who participated in the study provided written informed consent. Upon providing the consent, a semi-structured interview to facilitate a discussion was used. All interviews were conducted face-to-face in the caregivers' houses and lasted between 90 and 120 minutes. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. The main purpose of the interview was to acquire information about the experience of caregiving. Topics included the challenges of caregiving, changes in the relationship, current caring needs, the caregiver's needs, reaction to the diagnosis, and plans for continuing care.

We employed a thematic analysis (a qualitative analysis technique) which aimed at identifying common themes in responses given by the participants (Boyatzis, 1998). Each excerpt cited in this article ends with a letter indicating gender (W for a woman and M for a man), and a number which indicates

the participants' age; C stands for a caregiver. Thematic analysis revealed three key themes that emerged from the transcripts, which could be encompassed under an overarching theme of 'being prisoner in your own house'. This describes the caregivers' constant struggle to balance their duties, such as grocery shopping, with providing care to their recipients. Other important themes that emerged from the interviews were related to changes in the social network, and feelings of loneliness in the relationship (emotional isolation); these were mostly due to the behavioural changes caused by Alzheimer's disease, including (but not limited to) social withdrawal and problems with language.

3. Results

A large majority of respondents (n = 27) described the length of time since the diagnosis as an important factor that significantly increased the amount of time they spent at home. A dominant theme was social isolation related to the challenges of performing daily activities, with the fear or inability to leave the house. Caregivers reported difficulties leaving the house because of their care recipients' reactions.

> I am busy all the time. I don't have free time. Just quick grocery shopping, and I have to be back because my wife is worried that I've been gone for too long. I can't stay too long anywhere. I used to go out to play cards, but I don't anymore because I don't have time. [C03_M, 86]
> We don't go outside. I can't run errands. [C06_W, 85]
> I have no freedom. I can't go shopping. Just like with a child – he wants to go everywhere with me. [C12_W, 82]

Some caregivers were able to perform daily activities, but they were accompanied by the fear that something unfortunate might happen when they were not at home with the care recipient.

> I can't leave him alone … I mean I can, but I'm shaking because I don't know what he might do … turn on the tap, burn the house? I do the grocery shopping like a crazy person – really, really fast. [C07_W, 83]

A few caregivers were able to leave the house but had to carefully plan when to do so. For example, one caregiver said, 'I go out only during the daytime

just to do some shopping, because in the evening she is very anxious. I can't leave her alone' [C22_M, 85].

> Well, a lot has changed. I take care of him round the clock, do everything. If I need to go somewhere, or I want to visit someone or go to the hairdresser's, I need to ask my sister for help or have to ask somebody else. It's hard. [C09_W, 78]

Another dominant theme was described in changes related to the activities caregivers used to enjoy and their social activities. Providing care, and the symptoms of the disease, made it difficult or even impossible to continue maintaining their activities and hobbies.

> Everything has changed since the diagnosis. We don't go out. Friends don't come to visit us. Most of our friends are already dead. [C17_W, 82]
> I broke contact with my friends, with my lifestyle in general. You see ... I used to drive to different places, go on trips. People stopped visiting us. When my wife was fine, they would visit us. […] We used to meet for coffee every single Sunday. My social life has changed. Now when I call, they find excuses not to meet me. [C26_M, 82]
> I can't go on holiday. I'm a prisoner in my own house. This is like a voluntary marital house arrest. [C18_W, 82]
> I've become a homebody. We used to have an active social life before, and we really enjoyed spending time with other people, but now our social life doesn't exist. [C20_M, 86]

Only one caregiver mentioned that the reason why their social life changed is because she did not want to bother other people. Another caregiver mentioned that she would love to have guests more often, but it is difficult for her to pay attention to her guests' needs and her husband's needs at the same time.

> Sometimes when we have a guest, I don't know what to do. Should I stay with my husband or should I focus on that person? The house feels like a hospital. [C11_W, 84]

Another dominant theme that emerged from the analyses was related to a feeling of loneliness due to changes in the relationship between the caregiver and the care recipient. When talking about their decreasing social network, most

of the caregivers expressed sadness yet understanding at not being visited as often as they had been. However, losing contact and the ability to exchange information with their spouses was challenging, and evoked various different emotions, ranging from sadness to anger.

> He asks me the same questions all over again. It drives me crazy. I've become more stressed. […] I don't know why he gets upset, he was different before. It [the relationship] has changed significantly. I don't know if he listens to me, if he understands what I say. [C19_W, 84]
> I can no longer talk to him like with an ordinary person. I miss having regular conversations. Sometimes I need to make a decision and I would like to consult with him, but I know it's now impossible [C18_W, 82]
> I used to have a friend, a partner. He was a normal person. Now I have nothing left. [W, 79]
> It's like night and day. He always loved people … he used to be the life and soul of the party. Now I have to encourage him to say something. He is socially withdrawn. [C05_W, 72]
> The fact that there is no contact with him, that he doesn't understand me … is terrifying. [C14_W, 79]

One caregiver indicated that the symptoms of the Alzheimer's disease are the biggest obstacle in communicating with her spouse.

> Our relationship … well, he keeps getting worse … and now we can't get along; it's difficult … now I don't understand what he is trying to say. Sometimes I get really angry because it's so hard to understand him, and then I have to remind myself that this man is sick, it's not his fault. [C21_W, 79]

When asked if participants had ever considered placing a spouse in a nursing home, a consistent response across all participants was that they would not do that. Some caregivers voiced the importance of family ties, but the majority believed that the admission to the nursing home would cause a quick deterioration of the AD symptoms. None of the caregivers used financial costs as an argument for not placing a care recipient in a nursing home.

> I can't imagine that [placing him in a nursing home] … he would be terrified. He would die quickly. [C09_W, 78]
> I'm not considering placing her in a nursing home. We are a family […] She would go downhill quickly. [C25_M, 80]

4. Discussion

Loneliness among the spousal caregivers of individuals with Alzheimer's disease has received little attention, and it remains unexplored in existing research on caregiving. Previous studies indicated that a majority of older adults can expect a decline in the overall size of their social network and the frequency of their social contacts (Pinquart & Sörensen, 2003). Older adults may experience loneliness because their friends die, or because of their own physical health limitations that prevent them from being socially active. The deficit of contact may lead to loneliness, which is believed to be more prevalent in older than in younger adults. However, the ability to maintain social contact is further constrained among spousal caregivers of individuals with Alzheimer's disease. Therefore, they are at higher risk of experiencing the negative consequences of loneliness than other cognitively intact older adults.

This study sought to examine the caregivers' perspectives concerning their experience as a primary caregiver of a person with Alzheimer's disease. The literature consistently shows that caregivers face significant challenges that impact their physical and mental health. As the symptoms of the disease worsen, caregivers tend to focus more on care recipients, and have neither time nor energy to meet with friends and relatives. The disease also has a considerable impact on the relationship between spouses, because it reduces the disease-affected individuals' abilities to communicate. Our findings extend this work by showing that loneliness is a common experience among spousal caregivers.

We examined 30 spousal caregivers of individuals with Alzheimer's disease living in Szczecin, Poland, by conducting semi-structured interviews. Participants were insightful about their experiences, and their responses allowed us to identify three main themes that emerged from the analysis of the interview transcripts. These themes described (1) participants' difficulties in leaving the house (e.g., to do some shopping), and in providing care; (2) changes in their social network; and (3) the feelings of loneliness in the relationship, resulting from reduced verbal contact with the spouse.

For the caregivers interviewed, the caregiving experience significantly reduced the number of interactions with their family members, friends and acquaintances. The reasons varied, but the majority of caregivers indicated that it had become more difficult for them to leave the house because of the care recipients' behaviour (e.g. wandering). Their contacts were also reduced

because it was hard for the caregivers to focus on guests and care recipients at the same time. A few caregivers mentioned that their friends had stopped visiting them shortly after the diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease. We can speculate that friends and family members who have no experience of dementia may *not* know how to *behave around someone with* the condition. Therefore, future research could investigate the reasons why friends stop visiting after learning about the diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease. Future research should also employ a more diverse sample in terms of socioeconomic status, and collect data from more male caregivers in order to compare their experiences with those of female caregivers.

Also shared among the interviewed caregivers was the feeling of loneliness resulting from the changing nature of the relationship with the disease-affected spouse. Marriage is the most intimate relationship for most individuals (Levinger & Huston, 1990). Previous research demonstrated that caregiving causes disruptions in family dynamics and may decrease marital satisfaction (De Frias, Tuokko & Rosenberg, 2005), which is generally defined as a person's overall evaluation of his or her marriage. The presence of Alzheimer's disease in one partner can significantly affect marital satisfaction and cause the feeling of loneliness, as both members of the dyad have to adjust to their new roles. The burden of providing care to a spouse poses a threat to marital satisfaction and increases loneliness, mostly because of the behavioural and physical changes related to Alzheimer's disease, such as apathy and problems with communication (De Vugt et al., 2003). Our findings indicate that the disease also impacts emotional intimacy, defined as a deep sense of caring, expressions of liking and loving, sharing of private thoughts, and the capacity to communicate about the relationship (Waring & Chelune, 1983). In our study, caregivers frequently wanted to share their worries, discuss current problems, consult, or simply talk about the past. The caregivers emphasized that their relationship had changed significantly and was no longer as it used to be; or, as one of the caregivers stated, 'the relationship doesn't exist'. It is important to investigate the changes within the relationship, because studies have demonstrated that a lack of intimacy may contribute to a greater vulnerability to depression and feelings of loneliness (Waring, Patton, Neron & Linker, 1986). In addition, due to the spouse's physical impairment, a caregiver performed more responsibilities and had to reduce the number of activities that they had previously performed together. In our study, caregivers mentioned that they used to travel a lot and really enjoyed it. This reduction in activities that were enjoyable may also impact their marital satisfaction.

Even though caregivers mentioned the burden of providing care, none of them, when asked whether they had ever considered placing a spouse in a nursing home, was willing to do that. The participants were afraid that placing care recipients in a nursing home might deteriorate their physical and mental well-being. This draws attention to how important the commitment to caring for a spouse is. Due to increased life expectancy and the increased prevalence of chronic health conditions, a growing number of older couples have to face the transition to a caregiver–care recipient relationship. Because family care is often better than nursing-home care, it is important to support caregivers in a way that reduces their feelings of loneliness and burden.

This study's contribution to the literature should be considered within the context of its limitations. One such limitation is that the data came from a small sample of caregivers located in one geographical area. We used convenience samples of caregivers who were willing to participate in the study. Although convenience sampling is easier and less expensive to carry out than random sampling, relying on available subjects can lead to bias. This method does not allow the researcher to control the characteristics of the sample (e.g. age, race, gender or education). Therefore, the sample may be unlikely to be representative of the population being studied, and findings from the sample cannot be generalized to the population (Saumure & Given, 2008). However, despite the limitations, the study does provide useful insights into the caregivers' experiences. This study offers implications for policy, interventions, future research, and contributes to our understanding of spousal caregivers' experiences in providing care. Caring for an individual diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease can be difficult, and significantly reduces a caregiver's opportunities to leave the house. The interviewed caregivers often feel like they are 'prisoners in their own homes', and the results highlight the need to design interventions that could be applied in caregivers' homes. Previous research has already demonstrated that although caregivers often experience deterioration in their relationship, a sense of closeness can remain (De Vugt et al., 2003). It is therefore important that the interventions not only aim to decrease the burden, but also to foster caregivers' emotional intimacy and enhance the positive aspects of caregiving.

Alzheimer's disease-related symptoms, such as social withdrawal or problems with language, are sources of distress for caregivers. Our results also point to the need for educating caregivers on how the contact with their spouses can be maintained while the disease progresses. While education about the disease and methods of coping may not be sufficient in itself, it has the potential to reduce the feelings of losing contact.

Findings from this study suggest that spousal caregivers do experience feelings of loneliness and social isolation. Given that there is an increasing prevalence of individuals with Alzheimer's disease, a continued exploration of the relationship between caregiving and loneliness is warranted. This study could be used as a stepping stone for other studies to investigate the relationship between providing care and feelings of loneliness among spousal caregivers.

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The Loneliness of Home Care Family Caregivers in Poland. Inspirations from Carers UK regarding Social Education for their Inclusion and Support

Osamotnienie opiekunów rodzinnych osób ciężko chorych w domach w Polsce. Inspiracje z działań Fundacji Carers UK do edukacji społecznej na temat inkluzji i wsparcia opiekunów

Abstract: Over the last 40 years in Poland, we have been able to change attitudes towards patients with cancer and their family carers. We have learnt from the worldwide hospice movement, and have created our own strategies to provide effective social education for end-of-life care. The nationwide project, *Hospicjum to też* życie (*Hospice is also life*), has helped our hospice-palliative care, but also improved the social acceptance of end-of-life care and support for families of cancer patients in Poland. However, the situation of many elderly and house-bound people,

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especially for patients with dementia and their families, is very different in Poland. Most families still feel ashamed of being the family with 'mental problems', often isolating themselves from others. Most of our local communities do not support those who suffer and those who care for them, often for many years, in their homes. Social educators and social workers have to address this issue of the loneliness and isolation of many family caregivers: How can one handle feelings of guilt, isolation and loneliness, when one is a family caregiver for someone seriously ill at home? We can gain useful advice from the experience of the British organization Carers UK. Given that there are already good experiences with cancer patients and their families within the hospice movement in Poland, we can prepare our community leaders, social workers and local communities, to help those other 'lonely heroes' of caring at home to feel more included and supported by us. We can learn from those who have already developed tools and created strategies for supporting family caregivers. Exploring the educational strategies of the successful organization Carers UK (www.carersuk.org) will help to indicate the main solutions to this social and educational challenge in Poland, thus helping to reduce the loneliness of family carers, especially in home care.

Keywords: palliative and end-of-life care; home care; family carer; loneliness; isolation; support; inclusion

Streszczenie: W ciągu ostatnich czterdziestu lat w Polsce byliśmy w stanie zmienić podejście do pacjentów z chorobą nowotworową i ich opiekunów rodzinnych. Od światowego ruchu hospicyjnego nauczyliśmy się opieki, tworząc własne strategie edukacji społecznej w zakresie opieki nad osobami u kresu życia. Ogólnopolski projekt: *Hospicjum to też życie* pomógł opiece paliatywno-hospicyjnej, poprawiając także społeczną akceptację opieki u kresu życia oraz wsparcie dla rodzin osób chorych na raka w Polsce. Sytuacja wielu osób starszych, uwięzionych w domach, szczególnie w przypadku pacjentów z demencją i ich rodzin, jest w Polsce ciągle zupełnie inna. Większość rodzin wciąż wstydzi się bycia rodziną z „problemami psychicznymi", często izolując się od innych wokoło. Większość naszych lokalnych społeczności nie wspiera tych, którzy cierpią w domach, i tych, którzy się nimi zajmują, opiekując się nimi często przez wiele lat. Pedagodzy społeczni i pracownicy socjalni muszą odpowiedzieć na pytania dotyczące samotności i izolacji wielu opiekunów rodzinnych: Jak radzić sobie z poczuciem winy, izolacji i samotności, gdy jesteś opiekunem rodzinnym dla osoby poważnie chorej w domu? Wiele praktycznych porad można zaczerpnąć z doświadczeń brytyjskiej organizacji Carers UK. Po dobrych doświadczeniach zmian w opiece z pacjentami z chorobą nowotworową i ich rodzinami w ruchu hospicyjnym w Polsce, możemy przygotować liderów

społeczności lokalnych i pracowników socjalnych do pomocy licznym „samotnym bohaterom" opieki nad chorymi w domu, aby czuli się bardziej włączani i wspierani przez nas. Możemy nauczyć się wiele od tych, którzy już opracowali narzędzia i całe strategie wspierające opiekunów rodzinnych. Badanie elementów edukacyjnych działań odnoszącej sukcesy organizacji Carers UK (www.carersuk.org) pomoże wskazać główne rozwiązania tego wyzwania społeczno-edukacyjnego w Polsce, wspomagając podejmowane już w tym zakresie działania, mające na celu zmniejszenie osamotnienia opiekunów rodzinnych osób u kresu życia w naszym kraju.

Słowa kluczowe: opieka paliatywna; opieka domowa; opiekun rodzinny; samotność; izolacja; wsparcie; inkluzja.

1. Introduction – a short history of the development and success of the hospice movement in Poland

From the 1970s onwards, the Hospice Movement in Poland continued the informal activities of a group of enthusiasts, inspired by the Polish Nurse Hanna Chrzanowska. It was supported in 1978 by visits of Dr Cicely Saunders, resulting in the creation of St. Lazarus Hospice in Cracow in 1981 (Krakowiak, 2015a, p. 33). From 1983, the Gdansk home care model developed there and in other places, based on the accommodation available within the Church structures, and on the voluntary work of doctors, nurses and others (Krakowiak, 2008). In 1987, a pain clinic and a palliative-care service were started within the oncology department of the Przemienienia Pańskiego hospital, Poznań (Luczak & Hunter, 2000). With the democratic changes in Poland, there were more than 100 home care hospices; these emerged from the voluntary work of medics, chaplains and other volunteers, strictly cooperating with family carers (Krakowiak, 2015a). However, with the development of hospice-palliative care, the professionalization of the service, in line with the requirements of service providers, gave rise to tensions between the grassroots hospice movement based on voluntary service, family caregivers, and professionals. Dialogue helped to resolve some differences and allowed the continued development of the care of terminal patients and their relatives, but 'professional' remained more important than 'integrated' or 'patient and family-oriented' care in Polish hospices (Krakowiak, 2012b). The social education of the general public played an important role in this process.

A new way of discussing end-of-life care was proposed in the 21st century; the promotion of volunteering was an integral part of it. An innovative

programme began in Gdańsk, to reintegrate prisoners into society through voluntary work with hospice patients (Krakowiak, Deka & Janowicz, 2018). The Hospice Foundation had prepared the first nationwide educational campaign, *Hospice is also life*; and integrated care, volunteering and community involvement to help patients and families had started to gain popularity again. By collaborating with hospices from all over Poland, and assisted by mass-media discussions' regarding end-of-life care, family carers and volunteering have made an impact on social education, and have changed attitudes towards family caregivers in hospice-palliative care. In helping families of hospice patients, we are also helping many others, who are still very lonely and struggle to care for elderly and long-term patients at home (Krakowiak, 2012a).

Learning from others has helped us over the years to develop good end-of-life care in Poland. Similarly, we want to learn from those who have developed efficient systems of support for family caregivers, in order to implement it and support it with research and educational resources for social work. In order to understand this process, best practice from the UK will be described here briefly, and then the few first steps in Poland towards helping family carers will be presented. During the whole process, social education will be highlighted as the effective way to bring changes in the community. Finally, the conclusion will show what needs to be done in order to help family caregivers feel less lonely in our society.

2. Carers UK – milestones in a long battle for family caregivers' rights and support

In 1954 in England, at the age of 31, pastor Mary Webster quit a full-time job to take care of her ageing and ill parents, as a family caregiver. Ten years later she wrote a letter to a local newspaper about the difficulties of home caring. Her shared story about the difficult experiences of women carers, struggling financially but also with social isolation, made the first important impact. Further articles then appeared with similar emotional messages, which helped to build social awareness in relation to family carers, focused exclusively on women. In 1965, an organization known as the National Council for the Single Woman and Her Dependents was founded, and the first survey regarding caring at home was conducted. As a consequence of these actions, 1967 saw the first-ever legal rights for carers – the Dependent Relative Tax Allowance – introduced by the British government. Later,

in 1976, the next milestone in supporting family caregivers was the introduction of the Invalid Care Allowance as the first benefit for carers (only for unmarried people) (Carers UK).

In 1981, Judith Oliver founded the Association of Carers, which worked for the extension of the Invalid Care Allowance to married women; this was achieved in 1986, following the victory in the European Court by Jackie Drake, a married carer for her mother. Jackie's case was sponsored by a steering group of more than 50 organizations from the UK. In 1988, Cherrill Hicks, in her book *Who cares. Looking after people at home*, wrote about a growing number of family carers, thus expanding the social knowledge about informal care, and providing an important tool for social education (Hicks, 1988). Another book worth noting was *Carers: research and practice* by Julia Twigg, published in 1992. This book showed the scale of the changes, with the author saying that 10 years ago her book could not have been written, and 20 years ago no one would have even considered family caregivers as a subject of research (Twigg, 1992). Years had passed, research had been presented, and in 1995 the Carers National Association, with the support of Baroness Jill Pitkeathley and Malcolm Wicks MP, secured carers' rights in the Carers (Recognition and Services) Act (UK House of Commons, 1995, pp. 424–426). In 1996, the first-ever legal recognition that carers in the UK have needs in their own right was introduced, making space for the creation of the whole movement of respite care for carers (www.nhs.uk).

The 21st century brought new challenges, and organizations cooperating for the well-being of caregivers in the UK also required changes. In 2001, the Carers National Association was renamed as a nationwide organization, Carers UK. Additionally, and to respond to the devolution process in the UK, partially independent organizations were also announced, and Carers Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were created (Carers UK). Consequently, there were regular press releases, campaigns and provocative questions about carers, to order to identify specific needs for support, areas of research, and for lobbying politicians and communities. The roles of respite care, support groups and social assistance were defined, and strategies for the future were created. As a result of effective lobbying and research, and with new means of social communication and the introduction of Carers' Day, The Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act was passed in 2004. This act recognized the needs of carers beyond their caring responsibilities. For instance, this document secured the right to take time off to deal with emergencies, as well as the right to request flexible working hours, and support from employers and trade unions during caring duties. In *The History of the Carers' Movement*, Timo-

thy Cook praised Carers UK for evolving into an open-minded group which effectively cooperated with over 40 other organizations. Its campaigns over the years were based mainly on research studies and public education, focused on radio, local and national newspapers, and later on television and new media. Professional competences in advertising techniques and press release messages were also very important; they reached many recipients in the UK, by using strong titles, evoking emotions and sharing real stories of carers. The most important act was putting real carers at the heart of all of its media and educational activities (Cook, 2007).

In 2008, Carers UK secured pension rights for family caregivers, meaning that for the first time, the state pension system treated a lifetime of caring as being on a par with a lifetime of paid work. Carers won protection against discrimination and harassment at work, after carer Sharon Coleman took her case to the European Court with the support of Carers UK and other organizations. As a consequence of this campaign, the Equality Act was introduced in 2010, giving family and informal carers protections from any form of discrimination for the first time in the British legal system. In 2012, new rights were announced for most carers, including more responsibilities for local councils in the UK to assess and support carers. In the 2013 Caring and Family Finance Inquiry, a definitive study into the financial impact of caring was published; this recognized Carers UK's important contribution to the understanding of the financial needs of this section of British society. In 2014, after initially being left out of new care laws, parents who were carers won new rights under the Care Act. During the period of austerity, in 2015 the Carer's Allowance was protected while many other working-age benefits were frozen (Carers UK). All those milestones and changes would not have been possible without continuous educational efforts, and without the research that has been conducted over these 50 years, as has been briefly presented here.

Concluding this presentation of the milestones in the development of care for the carers, one can say that Carers UK was the first charity organization to fight for the rights and recognition of family carers since the early 1960s. Today, after over 50 years of activity, it is the largest UK organization that supports carers, and is also conducting research on the loneliness of carers. In 2017, the media in the UK reported that eight out of ten people caring for loved ones 'have felt lonely or socially isolated', as announced by the carer loneliness research report *The World Shrinks* (Carers UK). Peer-reviewed research regarding the loneliness of carers is available, with protocol**s** helping policy makers gain a better insight into tackling social isolation

and loneliness (Landeiro et al, 2017), and with various specific research areas for those who want to deepen their knowledge of the topic. One can find a great deal of information in Research Briefings, which are available as online resources of SCIE -the Social Care Institute for Excellence (www.scie.org.uk). Research briefing no. 39, *Preventing loneliness and social isolation: interventions and outcomes* deals specifically with issues described in this paper (Windle, Francis & Coomber, 2011). There are also various resources available online that deal with loneliness and isolation for carers, including the regularly updated 'Tackling loneliness' (carers.org). It is worth following the example of these effective actions, in order to understand and help Polish lonely family carers. Organizations supporting them could learn from their battle for carers' acts and rights, as these will eventually change the carers' quality of life, and give them the support they need. The first steps in support of 'lonely heroes' – family carers in Poland – in their daily battles in home care have been already made; these will be presented below, as important elements of the process of social education and inclusion within the patient- and family-centred care model.

3. Volunteers as first support for family carers in palliative home care in Poland

The history of volunteering is as ancient as the existence of mankind, but here we will try to briefly present and understand today's meaning of the voluntary sector, and the value of the educational functions of hospice volunteering in Poland. It is rooted in human and Christian formation. The development of a voluntary commitment to the needy has been an urgent social need in Poland, and was also called an opportunity to discover a vocation for Christian and humanistic activities. My study of the texts referring to volunteering in the Catholic Church, as an inspiration for both clergy and laity in Polish society, has been published and will not be discussed in detail here (Krakowiak, 2013, pp. 165–184). When democracy in Eastern Europe arrived after a long fight with communist regimes, the activities of hospice volunteers had already been developing in opposition to the then-existing mentality in Poland, called *Homo Sovieticus* (Krakowiak, Skrzypińska, Damps-Konstańska & Jassem, 2016, pp. 600–604). From 1981 onwards, the history of modern end-of-life care in Poland was connected to caring communities of voluntary home-care hospice team members. The problems of dying and death, practically absent from the mass media, were not includ-

ed in the education of healthcare and social welfare employees at that time. Those groups of volunteers in local communities made use of the already developed concept of hospice care; even under communism, where patients and families in Poland were cared for in home centres run by volunteers (Krakowiak, 2015a, p. 38). In concluding this brief history of the roots of volunteering within the hospice movement in Poland, it is useful to emphasize that even under communism, Polish volunteers created many hospice home-care teams. By 1998, Poland was leading Central and Eastern Europe in including hospice and palliative care in healthcare systems. According to recent data, there are now more than 400 different centres of hospice and palliative care in Poland, most of them involving volunteers (Krakowiak & Pawłowski, 2018).

When the hospice movement was slowly losing its exceptional character of professionals working together with volunteers, accompanied by considerable involvement of church communities, a new way of promoting hospice volunteering was proposed (Krakowiak et al., 2018). The nationwide educational campaign *Hospice is also life* became a new educational tool to improve social acceptance of end-of-life care and support for lonely caregivers in home care. The National Chaplain of Hospices proposed social education through cooperation with the media, and promotion of public education about the end of human life. The Hospice Foundation, with volunteers, prepared the first nationwide educational campaign. Voluntary service in Poland grew, and started slowly to gain in popularity again. Educational programmes, interviews and reports were launched on the main TV channel in Poland, as well as in other national and regional mass media. In the course of one month, there were around 1,000 media events regarding hospice-palliative care and end-of-life issues (Krakowiak, 2012a). As a result of the national hospice campaign, all the hospices noticed the following: a breaking of the taboo concerning end-of-life issues in the mass media; the consolidation of hospices and palliative care units in Poland; the promotion of voluntary service for those in need, and for their family caregivers. This tradition of public education about end-of-life issues is repeated every year in November, helping to raise awareness and create foundations for local, compassionate communities. In this way, the idea of a public campaign arose, devoted to voluntary service; as a result of which, hospices throughout Poland have received textbooks for volunteers, and they have started preparing and training voluntary service coordinators (Janowicz, Krakowiak & Stolarczyk, 2015).

In 2007–2010, the Hospice Foundation introduced a project promoting hospice volunteering called ‘I like helping’, across over 100 hospices in Poland. The project was aimed at volunteer coordinators, who took part in

training and specialist meetings, and also provided the opportunity to take advice from experts in volunteering. They improved the quality of volunteering in home care, where they have assisted family caregivers in their difficult duties (Krakowiak & Pawłowski, 2018, p. 92). Volunteering in Poland today is thus less involved in medical care and more about supporting roles such as providing company for patients and their families (Pawłowski et al., 2019), which helps those lonely carers, especially in home care settings. Apart from the important role of volunteering, there are other urgent needs in the system of end-of-life care, which will be briefly presented as possible ways of assisting lonely carers in home care. Most important among them is the coordination of care, involving medical and social dimensions, with the involvement of volunteers, as well as faith and local communities. Social workers often coordinate end-of-life care in Europe, but not yet in Poland.

4. Social workers as coordinators and educators of integrated care and support

Since its origins, social work has always been concerned with the seriously ill, dying and bereaved, which reflects the fact that a human being at the end of life has not only medical needs. Apart from the medical aspects of care, there is an urgent need for psychological and spiritual care, as well as for social care. Social work has been part of the modern interdisciplinary hospice team since the beginning (Krakowiak, 2011, p. 246). It might be surprising to hear that a person with a life-limiting illness spends only about 5% of their time with nurses, doctors, specialists, and the full range of hospice services. According to end-of-life expert Allan Kellehear, as much as 95% of their time is spent alone, with family carers, friends, and in the community, rather than being engaged with medical professionals. For most patients, dying is not a medical event. For those facing death in home care, this time alone can breed feelings of isolation and loneliness, worry and despair. Dying is more of a social than a medical event, and thus patients should be cared for by a compassionate community, or through engagement with them, with the help of and by adequately trained social workers (Kellehear, 2005.)

Unfortunately, professional competencies, standards and procedures, as well as the training available in Western Europe, might overwhelm both social workers and hospice-palliative care teams in Poland. There is to date no adequate training for social workers dealing with end-of-life issues in Poland. The interdisciplinary teams, especially in home care settings, are aware

of the importance of social work for patients and their caregivers. It has been especially important since 2008, when social workers were excluded from caring hospice teams, their role being neither compulsory nor paid for by the national healthcare institution, NFZ (Krakowiak, 2012b). With many caring teams always short of financial resources, there is the temptation to reduce social workers, thus precipitating a lack of a social dimension in end-of-life care. Social education and research are needed to support a holistic approach, where both medical and non-medical aspects of care – among them, especially social work – are crucial for the patients and their loved ones; both during the care, and also for those in grief and bereavement (Krakowiak, 2011, p. 248).

Finally, the importance of the need to include social work that supports carers should be recognized, because the tasks of a social worker in end-of-life care do not end when the patient dies, but also include the support of families in mourning. A social worker, through emotional, informational or structural help and support, prevents social marginalization. In an ageing society, in the face of the growing number of dependants, and people who are chronically sick at home and dying, specific steps are needed to improve and integrate care at the end of life; including social work in end-of-life care, which is dominated in Poland by nursing and medical activities. Social workers can effectively implement good practices regarding family carers. Initiatives for integrating medical activities, social assistance, volunteering and religious associations must become a reality as soon as possible, built on the mutual understanding, involvement and cooperation of various groups genuinely concerned about people at the end of life and their loved ones (Krakowiak, 2012b). Adequately trained social workers would help doctors and nurses who feel overwhelmed by the growing number of patients and their needs, which are largely of a social nature; these could be met by local, compassionate communities, as happens in some parts of Europe (Wegleitner, Heimerl & Kellehear, 2016).

5. Caregivers in Poland – research and first steps towards reducing their loneliness

Support for family carers has been developed for many years in hospice-palliative care, and has been recently shared in publications especially prepared for all those who face the burden of caring for adults (Krakowiak, Krzyżanowski & Modlińska, 2010) and for severely ill children (Binnebe-

sel et al., 2013). One of the first books to present research regarding the situation of family caregivers in Poland was prepared and edited by Mariola Racław in 2011. Its provocative title, *Public caring, private care* (*Publiczna troska, prywatna opieka*), shows the growing problems of lonely family members caring for the seriously ill or elderly in their homes (Racław, 2011). The following years brought textbooks dedicated to family caregivers (Krakowiak, Paczkowska, Sikora & Janowicz, 2013), parishes and spiritual caregivers (Krakowiak, 2015b, pp. 43–58). Research and scientific books from the educational sciences addressed the growing problem of dementia for social workers and carers (Nowicka, 2015), and also the problems of solitude and loneliness of carers (Krakowiak & Wasilewska-Ostrowska, 2016). At the same time, sociologists started to publicize changes in life expectancy and ageing of the Polish population. The Polish Government issued the 2014–2020 strategy for elderly and housebound people (Ministerstwo Pracy i Polityki Społecznej, 2014), following European research and the prognosis presented by the Council of Europe (2014). There is also a longer prognosis until 2050, showing how quickly Polish society will age in the future and the necessity for solutions regarding health and social care, as well as adequate support for family carers (Waligórska, Kostrzewa, Potyra & Rutkowska, 2014). It seems that nobody denies the existing and growing problems, but they form only a part of the recommendations, which provide a few practical initiatives regarding family caregivers in home care.

The first of these were the yearly campaigns by *Hospice is also life*, as tools of public education; since 2016, they have concentrated on family caregivers in end-of-life care. In this way, we have started a public conversation about the 'lonely heroes' in our society – family caregivers in end-of-life home care. Discussions and actions continued for the next three years, helping to raise awareness of the needs of family carers in Polish society (Fundacja Hospicyjna); this resulted in the social campaign, *The family carer – does not have to be alone* (Kampania społeczna: *Opiekun rodzinny – nie musi być sam*). The Hospice Foundation carried out three nationwide campaigns, each of which had the goal of drawing social attention to family members who take care of their loved ones at home on a daily basis. The media have helped to show the burdens associated with care, and the possibility of support at individual, local community and institutional level. Through meetings and information in the media and social media, the problem and its scale have been shown, by describing needs in terms of systemic assistance, and building social support networks for family caregivers at local, regional and national levels (Janowicz, 2019, p. 207).

The online Guide created by the Hospice Foundation for family carers contains a great deal of practical support, and is a valued tool for many lonely family carers (www.opiekunrodzinny.pl, 2019). Another organization connected to incontinence issues – the TZMO Foundation – has announced an online educational programme: 'This is a project for family carers whose relatives are chronically ill, disabled and dependent', with a growing number of resources available online (Fundacja Damy Radę). There are other local and regional initiatives for family carers in different regions of Poland, which will not be discussed here in detail. In 2018, for the first time an expert meeting was organized by the Hospice Foundation and Rzecznik Praw Obywatelskich RP (Ombudsman of the Republic of Poland), the purpose of which was to formulate a definition of a family caregiver. The discussion showed many changes taking place in Polish society and families. The meeting was an attempt to create an adequate definition, but also to establish a single term (among those in operation were 'family guardian', 'informal carer', 'unprofessional/unpaid carer', 'actual caregiver', etc.). This discussion will continue, as there is a lack of an adequate and agreed definition of family and respite care (Janowicz, 2019, p. 210).

There has been a sign of hope, as in 2019 the first-ever Polish Government document was issued that provided descriptions of respite care, and the first (very limited) rights for family caregivers of handicapped and disabled children in home care. The 'Respite Care' edition of 2019 is directed at children and disabled people whose family members or guardians require support; this is given in the form of an ad hoc, temporary break in the provision of care, and improvement of their skills and knowledge in the field of caring for these people (Rzeczpospolita Polska). On 2 April 2019, the Minister of Family, Labour and Social Policy in the Polish Government approved the programme entitled 'Respite Care' (2019 edition), which is implemented as part of the Solidarity Fund for Supporting People with Disabilities (Dolnośląski Urząd Wojewódzki). For the first time in Poland, public money has been assigned and distributed for the respite care of family caregivers of handicapped children.

6. Conclusion. Education and research regarding support for family caregivers is needed in Poland

As presented in this article, there are many challenges for researchers and practitioners of health and social care, but also for family caregivers and

the whole society in Poland. Actions already taken in many European countries, and recommendations from the European Union, have already led to the development of plans to support dependent people and their family carers in our country. We need to develop educational aspects of support for family caregivers, at levels ranging from local to national. Furthermore, research is needed from social and medical sciences. There is still a lack of tools to assess the needs of caregivers and their monitoring; these can be adapted from resources available abroad as Research Briefings (https://www.scie.org.uk/) and others. After public education, which has already started with nationwide campaigns (Fundacja Hospicyjna), more practical publications in the Polish language are needed (Janowicz, 2019). Only through educational reading on the solitude and loneliness of family caregivers will we be able to overcome the shortage of regulations in the Polish care system. This system has so far been unable to describe the levels of carers' involvement, and is not responding to the complex needs of carers. If we compare our present situation in Poland, it looks similar to 1976 in the UK, when the first law for family carers and first funds for respite care were allocated (Carers UK) – given that the first ministerial document regarding respite care in Poland was issued in 2019 (Rzeczpospolita Polska).

In terms of research and public education, the educational sciences, and especially social pedagogy and social work, could play an important role in this process, as was described earlier. The valuable role of volunteers in local communities should continue, but new forms of respite care and assistance are needed. Changes in the structure of families and households will soon lead to the reduced caring potential of families in Poland. We have to agree with this opinion: 'Population ageing will have far-reaching social and economic consequences' (Szymborski et al., 2014, p. 24). In the near future in Poland, the implementation of the role of the family carer may also hinder the so-called singularization of old age; this is associated with the loneliness of the elderly, and the risk of social exclusion. Attention should also be paid to forecasts that the population of Poland will decrease, mainly in cities. At the same time, average life expectancy will increase, with a growing number of elderly and chronically ill people in their homes. Anna Janowicz states that the system of support and respite care for family members in Poland, especially in home care, should respond to their different needs. Family caregivers should be able to combine different roles, to prepare themselves for caring by accessing information and training, as well to be allowed the required rest. The development and implementation of support systems, appropriate legal regulations, social education, and raising awareness of the situation of

caring families, are the main challenges for health and social care systems in Poland. All attempts to mobilize social forces in every possible dimension should be considered as important for reducing the stress and burden of family carers. It seems that it is also necessary to intensify social education about the needs of family caregivers of dependent people at home (Janowicz, 2019, p. 204).

In Poland, we need to study and introduce into our society all good practices which have proven successful in achieving the inclusion of carers and reduction of their solitude and loneliness. Those tools which have been developed by Carers UK for over 50 years could be of vital importance for the policy makers, researchers, and practitioners of health and social care. More studies and practical applications from the educational sciences, especially social pedagogy and social work, should follow this initial paper. In particular, reflecting on the recent Carers UK document, called *However caring affects you*, *Our vision for 2021* (Carers UK), will help to prepare the next steps in unifying our effort to give family carers in Poland a less lonely future.

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Prisoners' Alienation and Lack of Contact with Relatives

Wyobcowanie osób odbywających karę pozbawienia wolności z kontaktów z bliskimi

Abstract: No studies have examined contacts between incarcerated persons and their relatives, as well as the forms of those contacts. To learn about these subjects, a survey study was conducted in five penitentiaries, among 478 male inmates. Furthermore, the impact of recidivism on the aforementioned structure of contacts with relatives has been studied. It was determined that most of the incarcerated males had contact with their relatives, usually in the form of phone conversations. The source of those contacts was usually the mother of the prisoner. The percentage of prisoners who maintained contact with at least one relative was higher among those participants who were serving their first sentence, in comparison to repeat criminals. However, when the population of repeat criminals was grouped by the number of served sentences in the penitentiary (two, three, four or more served sentences), it became apparent that prisoners who were imprisoned for the third time constituted the highest percentage of prisoners who had contact with relatives, among the repeat criminals. The change of structure in the source and forms of contact with relatives, which correlated with the increase of served sentences, was noted. The number of

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prisoners who declared contact with their mothers, fathers and wives decreased, while the percentage of prisoners who had contact with their partners was relatively stable. However, an increase in the contacts with their offspring (only through phone calls) was noted. Ultimately, it has been shown that the percentage of persons who stay in contact with at least one person outside prison is highest among those serving their first sentence and lowest among repeat criminals; and that repeat criminals have the fewest sources and forms of contact among all of the subpopulations distinguished in the study.

Keywords: situational alienation, imprisonment, contact between the imprisoned and the outside world.

Abstrakt: W Polsce nie istnieją badania na temat tego, z kim spośród bliskich kontaktują się skazani oraz jakie formy przybierają te kontakty. Poznanie tych faktów było celem badania ankietowego, w którym uczestniczyło 478 mężczyzn odbywających karę pozbawienia wolności w jednym z pięciu zakładów penitencjarnych. Zbadano również, jak na strukturę kontaktów skazanych z bliskimi wpływa recydywa penitencjarna. Ustalono, że większość uwięzionych mężczyzn miała kontakt z bliskimi, zwykle w formie rozmów telefonicznych oraz że źródłem tych kontaktów najczęściej była matka. Odsetek utrzymujących kontakt z przynajmniej jedną bliską osobą był wyższy dla uczestników badania, dla których aktualny pobyt w zakładzie karnym był pierwszym niż dla recydywistów penitencjarnych. Kiedy jednak pogrupowano populację recydywistów w zależności od liczby pobytów w zakładzie karnym (dwa, trzy oraz cztery i więcej pobytów) okazało się, że najwyższy odsetek posiadających kontakt z bliskimi odnotowano w subpopulacji pozbawionych wolności po raz trzeci. Zauważono, że wraz ze wzrostem liczby pobytów w zakładzie karnym zmieniała się struktura źródeł i form kontaktów z bliskimi. Zmniejszyła się liczba skazanych deklarujących kontakt z matką, ojcem i żoną. Względnie stabilny był odsetek utrzymujących kontakt z partnerką, natomiast wzrost odnotowano w odniesieniu do kontaktów z potomstwem, co jednak dotyczyło wyłącznie rozmów telefonicznych. Ostatecznie wykazano, że odsetek posiadających kontakt z choćby jedną osobą na wolności jest najwyższy wśród odbywających wyrok po raz pierwszy a najniższy wśród multirecydywistów oraz że multirecydywiści mają najmniej źródeł i mniej form kontaktu ze wszystkich wyróżnionych w badaniu subpopulacji.

Słowa kluczowe: wyobcowanie sytuacyjne; kara pozbawienia wolności; kontakty osób pozbawionych wolności ze światem zewnętrznym.

1. Introduction

Many research papers have been created to study the concept of 'alienation', such as those of Seeman (1959), Kmiecik-Baran (1988, 1993, 1995) and Korzeniowski (1986, 1990), which discussed the Polish aspect of the issue. Furthermore, this topic has been researched by Niewiadomska (2009) and Niewiadomska and Chwaszcz (2010). When reading the aforementioned works, one might consider that the interpretation of alienation depends on the cognitive context of the interpreter. On the one hand, alienation can be considered as a psychological category, and compared with mindsets based on individualism and subjectivity, as well as in terms of expectations with regard to life. On the other hand, alienation can also be analysed with structural conditions of social life in mind (Czerwińska-Jakimiuk, 2013, pp. 359–361), as a characteristic of the situation rather than the subject. At the same time, the perception of a given area of outside reality and its subjective evaluation can lead a person to the realization that he or she is detached or disconnected from it. This realization or feeling is professionally known as 'alienation' (Kmiecik-Baran, 1995, p. 17).

A classic example of structural alienation is being incarcerated in a prison. From the moment a person is imprisoned, he or she is disconnected from the source of many sensory stimuli; and, more importantly, from the culture and society in which that person has functioned so far. From that moment, such a person has to obey the administrative decision which compels him or her to stay with a group of inmates, who sometimes are vastly different from themselves, both in terms of their behaviour and personality. This facilitates the process of becoming a part of the informal life of a prison (Łuczak, 2012, p. 41). Furthermore, the structure of contact between the imprisoned and their relatives outside also changes. The form, time and frequency of such contacts are being regulated, which can lead to being disconnected from reality. Such a situation can lead to a feeling of alienation, a phenomenon which risks the development of the following negative personality traits: an irrational judgment system, lack of forward thinking, being susceptible to suggestions from other people, a tendency for wishful thinking, rigid beliefs and authoritarianism (Otto & Featherman, 1975, p. 702). The feeling of alienation also triggers emotions which often lead the person to resolve this issue in a destructive manner: e.g. through addiction, rebellion, sickness, suicide, or creating communities with destructive characteristics (Biegasiewicz, 2011, p. 116). Taking away the ability of the imprisoned to contact their relatives

is a negative phenomenon, as it is considered a factor of penitentiary recidivism. Researchers state that more visits by relatives to a prisoner means fewer arrests or subsequent imprisonments (Parsons & Warner-Robbins, 2002, p. 7; Williams, Papadopoulou, Booth & Ministry of Justice Analytical Services, 2012, p. 15).

According to both international[1] and domestic laws,[2] keeping in contact with relatives from the outside is an inviolable right of the imprisoned. The implementation of those laws is dependent on the type of the penitentiary facility.[3] The possible forms of contact with relatives and loved ones mentioned by the documents are visits, correspondence, phone calls, post parcels, money orders; and in some justified cases, if the director of the penitentiary agrees, other forms of communication (art. 105. § 1 of the Executive Penal Code), such as instant messaging via the internet.

The frequency of the aforementioned forms of communication, and their potential censorship or supervision, is dependent on the type of penitentiary facility, as follows:

a) Persons serving their sentence at an open type of prison are allowed an unlimited number of visits, which can be supervised by the administrative staff of the prison (excluding conversations during the visits); no censorship by the administrative staff as regards correspondence; and no supervision of phone calls (art. 92 of the Executive Penal Code), which are made from a coin-box telephone with a frequency determined by the internal order of the penitentiary facility (§ 24. 1 Regulations…) (usually unlimited);
b) Persons serving their sentence at a half-open type of prison are allowed up to three visits per month, which are supervised; correspondence and phone calls may be supervised (art. 91 of the Executive

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[1] For example: Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, *Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the European Prison Rules* (adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 11 January 2006 at the 952 meeting of the Ministers' Deputies) recommends communication between the imprisoned and their families and other people via postal services and phone, as well as visits from such persons (art. 24).

[2] For example, the *Act of 6 June 1997*, *Executive Penal Code* [Polish Kodeks karny wykonawczy], Dz. U. [Journal of Laws] 1997 No. 90 item 557 [kkw], in which communication with relatives is considered as one of the rights of the imprisoned person (art. 102).

[3] The matter is governed by the Executive Penal Code and the *Regulation of the Minister of Justice from 21 December 2016 on the regulations concerning organization and order of the execution of a custodial sentence,* Dz.U. [Journal of Laws] 2016, item 2231.

Penal Code) (their frequency, as in the case of an open prison, is determined by the internal order of the facility);

c) Persons serving their sentence at a closed type of prison are allowed supervised visits, censored correspondence, and supervised phone calls, not more than once a day (art. 90 of the Executive Penal Code; § 16.4 i § 24.1. Regulations…); in the case of prisoners who pose a serious social risk or a safety risk for the facility, visits are supervised with enhanced security, and can occur in such a way that the visitor cannot come into direct contact with the prisoner (art. 88 b of the Executive Penal Code).

Among the few exceptions to the aforementioned rules are the right to an additional monthly visit for juvenile offenders serving their sentence at closed and half-open prisons (art. 91a of the Executive Penal Code), and for prisoners with custody of a child of up to 15 years of age (art. 105a§ 3 of the Executive Penal Code).

Detailed regulations concerning the contact of prisoners with relatives are defined in the penitentiary facility's provisions regarding internal order. This governs the determination of days of the week and hours of the visits, days without visits, and the priority for visits.

Temporarily detained persons also have the right to sustain relationships with relatives. Standards regarding this right can be found in Recommendation Rec (2006) 13 of the Committee of Ministers to member states, on the use of remand in custody, the conditions in which it takes place, and the provision of safeguards against abuse;[4] and also in the Act of 20 February 2015 on the amendment of the Penal Code,[5] under which the complete ban on a temporarily detained person using a telephone by was repealed.

While the laws regulating the organization of incarcerated persons' contact with their relatives are clearly defined, little is known about the state of such contacts in Polish penitentiary facilities. However, Western researchers have for decades been dealing with the issue of contacts between prisoners and their relatives. According to Nigel Walker (1983, pp. 61–71), the number of visits and received correspondence from the wives of imprisoned men diminishes over time, and the seventh year of the sentence seems to be critical. Siennick (Siennick, Stewart & Staff, 2014, p. 373) indicates that because of restricted contacts and the change in their form, married prisoners form a group who are particularly liable to undergo divorces while serving their

[4] Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 27 September 2006.

[5] Dz.U. [Journal of Laws] 2015, item 396.

sentence or shortly after. On the other hand, in regard to contacts between an imprisoned parent and their children, Western researchers came to the conclusion that in a state prison, the dominant form of contact was exchanging correspondence (70% of respondents). A smaller number of prisoners talked with their children on the telephone (53%), and even fewer were visited by their children (42%). In a federal prison, these percentages were 84%, 85% and 55% respectively (Glaze & Maruschak, 2010, p. 6). Similar results were acquired by Monika Badowska-Hodyr, as regards the population of imprisoned women in Poland and Czech Republic. According to her research, 75% of the imprisoned mothers corresponded with their children, 68% talked with them on the phone, 47% of the mothers were visited by their children, and 3% used an online communicator (Badowska-Hodyr, 2017, p. 63).

However, there are no studies comparing the state of contacts between repeat criminals and persons serving their first sentence. This topic seems to be interesting enough to warrant research. It poses a question: Does penitentiary recidivism strengthen alienation, lessen contact with relatives, and limit the sources and forms of contacts?

2. Methodology of the research

The aim of the conducted research was to formulate an answer to the question: **What is the structure of contacts between males serving their first sentence and their relatives, as well as between repeat criminals and their relatives? On that basis, is it possible to conclude that penitentiary recidivism is a factor in alienation and the lessening of such contacts?**

Since the term 'structure of contacts with relatives' is quite wide, the following elements were chosen for research purposes:

- Having a least one source of contact in the outside world, or having none
- Having a source of contact (such as their mother, father, child, wife, partner, distant relatives, friends, acquaintances or other persons)
- Forms in which the imprisoned keeps in contact with his or her relatives

A survey study was used, with a specially prepared questionnaire. This consisted of several questions with answers to choose from, and was a part of a bigger project. The questions were used to gather data regarding socio-demographic characteristics of the survey participants, such as age, education, marital status, type of sentence, and number of stays in penitentiary isolation.

Later, the participants were asked to choose from a table, to indicate which relatives they stay in contact with, and in what way.

The research was conducted in the period between January and March of 2019, among 556 males imprisoned in all possible types of prisons, that is:

- in a closed type prison in Goleniów, used for repeat criminals;
- in a prison in Stargard with closed and half-open units for males serving their first sentence;
- in half-open units at the Detention Centre in Szczecin;
- in a closed type prison in Nowogard, used for repeat criminals, and in the external unit of the same prison in Płoty, which is an open type prison.

Imprisoned males were asked to take part in the study. Recruitment of volunteers was performed by the penitentiary workers leaving leaflets in living cells. Potential participants were gathered into groups and moved into places designated by the prison management (e.g. common room of the living unit, meeting room, gym) where the researchers stated the aim and conditions of the study. Next, with the researchers present, participants filled in the questionnaires.

After preliminary assessment of the answers, around 15% of the questionnaires were rejected because of incomplete data. The analysis presented in this article is based on data from 478 imprisoned males. The results have been analysed and presented as a table with different categories. Analysis was performed using the Statistica 13.1 software (StatSoft).

3. Results of the study

The conducted study allowed the researchers to define the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants. Before being imprisoned, most of them lived in cities (n = 383; 80.1%). Their age was between 16–68 years (the largest group among them were persons aged 31–40 years, n = 184; 38.0%), usually with primary (n = 162, 33.9%) or basic vocational education (n = 168; 35.1%). There were slightly more persons who were in a relationship (usually informal, n = 197; 41.2%; there were fewer married persons, n = 66; 13.8%; in total, 55.0% of participants were in a relationship). The biggest group among the participants consisted of prisoners with a sentence of 3 to 5 years (n = 115; 24.0%). Ten prisoners were sentenced to life imprisonment. There were more repeat criminals (n = 274; 57.3%) than persons serving their first sentence.

Contact with relatives

The percentage of prisoners who maintained contact with at least one relative was high for both participants serving their first sentence and repeat criminals. The highest score was noted among prisoners who were imprisoned for the third time (n = 70; 98.6%) (table 1). It was demonstrated that there are prisoners who have no contact with any relative outside of the prison (n = 40; 8.4% of all participants).

Table 1. Contact with at least one relative according to the numbers of stays in prison

	NUMBER OF STAYS IN A PRISON								Total n = 478	
	First stay n = 202		Second stay n = 100		Third stay n = 71		Fourth or subsequent stay n = 105			
	L	%	L	%	L	%	L	%	L	%
HAS CONTACT	187	92.6	90	90.0	70	98.6	91	86.7	438	91.6
HAS NO CONTACT	15	7.4	10	10.0	1	1.4	14	13.3	40	8.4

Own study

Sources of contact with relatives

Among both prisoners serving their first sentence and repeat criminals, their mother was the most frequent source of contact (n = 333; 69.7% of all survey participants; n = 161; 79.7% of the prisoners serving their first sentence; and n = 172; 62.3% of the repeat criminals). Other sources include distant relatives, friends and acquaintances (table 2). After comparing the data between the two most diverse subpopulations, separated on the basis of the number of stays in a prison (i.e. those who served their first sentence and those who had stayed in prison four or more times), it was noted that the percentage of participants declaring contact with the following relatives dropped: mother (from 79.7% to 53.3%), father (from 43.6% to 24.8%), wife (from 19.8% to 7.6%) and – to a lesser degree – with members of extended family, friends and acquaintances. The percentage of participants who had

contact with their partner was largely unchanged. However, the percentage of contacts with children had risen (from 36.1% to 40.9%). The largest number of sources of contact per one participant was noted in the subpopulation of prisoners serving their first sentence (3.4), and the smallest amount among those prisoners who were in prison for at least the fourth time (2.7).

Table 2. Sources of contact according to the number of stays in prison

SOURCE OF CONTACT	Stays in prison								Total participants having contact with a given source	
	First stay		**Second stay**		**Third stay**		**Fourth or subsequent stay**			
	PARTICIPANTS HAVING CONTACT WITH A GIVEN SOURCE									
	L	%	L	%	L	%	L	%	L	%
MOTHER	161	79.7	73	73.0	43	60.6	56	53.3	333	69.7
FATHER	88	43.6	41	41.0	24	33.8	26	24.8	179	37.4
WIFE	40	19.8	9	9.0	9	12.7	8	7.6	66	13.8
PARTNER	73	36.1	44	44.0	28	39.4	38	36.2	183	38.3
CHILD	73	36.1	40	40.0	23	32.4	43	40.9	179	37.4
DISTANT RELATIVES	126	62.4	58	58.0	36	50.7	60	57.1	280	58.6
FRIENDS AND ACQUAINTANCES	110	54.4	52	52.0	41	57.7	50	47.6	253	52.9
OTHER	10	4.9	6	6.0	1	1.4	6	5.7	23	0.5
Total sources of contact	681		323		205		287			
Sources of contact per one participant	3.4		3.2		2.9		2.7			

Own study

Forms of contact with relatives

The leading form of contact with all of the aforementioned categories of relatives was phone calls (table 3). Participants of the study used this com-

munication form to mostly contact their mothers (n = 305; 64.1% of all the participants). The second most used form was visits (usually by mothers), the third was letter correspondence. The highest percentage of prisoners declaring contact by phone was noted among prisoners serving their first sentence (30.7%).

After comparing the data of those prisoners serving their first sentence with those who had stayed in prison four or more times, it was noted that the percentage of participants declaring contact through visits, letters and phone calls with their mothers, fathers, wives – and, less dynamically, members of extended family, as well as friends and acquaintances – was reduced. Particularly noticeable was the decrease in regard to wives (from 14.3% to 4.8% in the context of visits, from 12.4% to 3.8% in the context of correspondence, and from 17.8% to 5.7% in the context of phone calls). An increase has also been noted. The percentage of prisoners declaring contact with their children on the phone was higher among repeat criminals than among prisoners serving their first sentence (33.3% and 28.7%). A similar tendency was noted in regard to phone calls to a partner.

Table 3. Forms of contact for each source according to the number of stays in a prison

SOURCE OF CONTACT	FORM OF CONTACT	Stays in prison								Total number of prisoners with a given form of contact
		First stay		Second stay		Third stay		Fourth or subsequent stay		
		PARTICIPANTS WITH A GIVEN FORM OF CONTACT								
		L	%	L	%	L	%	L	%	
MOTHER	VISITS	126	62.4	54	54.0	25	35.2	39	37.1	244
	LETTERS	89	44.1	44	44.0	20	28.2	31	29.5	184
	PHONE	147	72.8	66	66.0	40	56.3	52	49.5	305
	SKYPE	6	3.0	8	8.0	2	3.0	3	1.9	19
	Contacts with mother in all forms									752
FATHER	VISITS	63	31.2	32	32.0	11	15.5	16	15.2	122
	LETTERS	40	19.8	22	22.0	9	12.7	16	15.2	87
	PHONE	78	38.6	36	36.0	23	32.4	24	22.9	161
	SKYPE	1	0.5	1	1.0	1	1.4	1	0.9	4
	Contacts with father in all forms									374

Table 3. Forms of contact for each source according to the number of stays in a prison

SOURCE OF CONTACT	FORM OF CONTACT	Stays in prison								Total number of prisoners with a given form of contact
		First stay		Second stay		Third stay		Fourth or subsequent stay		
		PARTICIPANTS WITH A GIVEN FORM OF CONTACT								
		L	%	L	%	L	%	L	%	
WIFE	VISITS	29	14.3	7	7.0	7	9.9	5	4.8	48
	LETTERS	25	12.4	6	6.0	7	9.9	4	3.8	42
	PHONE	36	17.8	7	7.0	9	12.7	6	5.7	58
	SKYPE	6	3.0	4	4.0	1	1.4	5	4.8	16
	Contacts with wife in all forms									164
PARTNER	VISITS	63	31.2	29	29.0	25	35.2	25	23.8	142
	LETTERS	56	27.7	34	34.0	21	29.6	25	23.8	136
	PHONE	63	31.2	35	35.0	25	35.2	35	33.3	158
	SKYPE	6	3.0	8	8.0	1	1.4	4	3.8	19
	Contacts with partner in all forms									455
CHILD	VISITS	55	27.2	27	27.0	15	21.3	24	22.8	121
	LETTERS	34	16.8	23	23.0	11	15.5	27	25.7	95
	PHONE	58	28.7	32	32.0	21	29.6	35	33.3	146
	SKYPE	6	3.0	7	7.0	2	3.0	7	0.7	22
	Contacts with children in all forms									384
DISTANT RELATIVES	VISITS	97	48.0	41	41.0	24	33.8	43	40.9	205
	LETTERS	70	34.6	32	32.0	13	18.3	30	28.6	145
	PHONE	119	58.9	52	52.0	32	45.1	58	55.2	261
	SKYPE	9	0.4	5	5.0	0	0.0	4	3.8	18
	Contacts with members of distant family in all forms									629
FRIENDS AND ACQUAINTANCES	VISITS	46	22.8	23	23.0	15	21.1	22	20.9	106
	LETTERS	58	28.7	28	28.0	20	28.6	27	25.7	133
	PHONE	104	51.5	43	43.0	37	52.1	48	45.7	232
	SKYPE	1	0.5	1	1.0	1	1.4	1	0.9	4
	Contacts with friends and acquaintances in all forms									475

Table 3. Forms of contact for each source according to the number of stays in a prison

SOURCE OF CONTACT	FORM OF CONTACT	Stays in prison								Total number of prisoners with a given form of contact
		First stay		Second stay		Third stay		Fourth or subsequent stay		
		PARTICIPANTS WITH A GIVEN FORM OF CONTACT								
		L	%	L	%	L	%	L	%	
OTHER	VISITS	1	0.5	1	1.0	0	0.0	1	0.9	3
	LETTERS	8	4.0	7	7.0	1	1.4	5	4.8	21
	PHONE	16	7.9	7	7.0	1	1.4	5	4.8	29
	SKYPE	2	1.0	0	0.0	1	1.4	1	0.9	4
	Contacts with 'other' people in all forms									57

Own study

4. Discussion and conclusions

The conducted study, which aimed to understand the structure of contacts between prisoners and their relatives, provides grounds for stating that most of the prisoners have contact with a person from the outside world. Most prisoners declared that they keep in touch with their mothers, usually in the form of phone calls (which were the most common form of communication between prisoners and their relatives).

The increase in number of stays in a prison usually led to a change in the structure of contacts, both in the number and composition of sources, as well as forms of realization. It became apparent that the percentage of participants who had contact with at least one relative from the outside was larger among those serving their first sentence, in comparison to inmates who were being imprisoned for the fourth or a subsequent time. The largest percentage, however, was seen among those incarcerated for the third time – almost all such prisoners had contact with a person in the outside world. A closer analysis showed a slightly different structure of the sources of contacts in this subpopulation, in comparison to the other groups. Among

prisoners serving their third sentence, regarding who they kept in touch with, most mentioned their mothers, and after that their friends and acquaintances. In all other subpopulations the most numerous answer was mothers, then distant relatives, and lastly friends and acquaintances.

It was demonstrated that the most sources of contact per participant were seen in the group of persons serving their first sentence. This number of sources decreased in other groups, with the lowest number seen in the answers of repeat criminals.

As the number of stays in a penitentiary grew, the number of prisoners who declared contact with their mothers and fathers decreased; this can be attributed to the higher mortality among older generations. There were considerably fewer persons who stayed in touch with their wives among the repeat criminals than among prisoners serving their first sentence. This observed direction may result from the tendency of repeat criminals to use tactics such as 'allowing her to go', 'breaking up' and 'releasing' in regard to their partners; these have been described in the source literature. These tactics lead to severing the relationship, and allow men to build or recover their image as 'honourable', which controls the events outside the penitentiary (Szczepanik, 2017, pp. 196–197). The percentage of prisoners who maintained contact with their partners was relatively stable. It is worth considering that this result may be affected by other relationships that men have created during their stay in prison or during intervals between sentences. Those types of relations, despite their different statuses and duration, are often treated by prisoners as a way of treating another person in a possessive manner, as an antidote to the boredom in the prison, which excludes the possibility of creating a valuable and long-lasting relationship (Kowalczyk & Adamowska, 2014, p. 247). An increase was also noted when comparing contacts between prisoners serving their first sentence and repeat criminals. The percentage of prisoners contacting their children was higher among repeat criminals than in the case of prisoners serving their first sentence; this increase was noted in the 'phone' and 'letters' categories.

The percentage of participants who declared contact in the form of visits, letters and phone calls with mothers, fathers, wives, distant relatives, and friends and acquaintances, was lower among those prisoners serving their fourth or subsequent sentence than for persons imprisoned for the first time (most frequently, this was the lowest of all percentages among the subpopulations categorized in the study). Particularly, the decreases in relation to wives stand out. A few increases have also been noted: the percentage of inmates declaring phone contact with a partner was higher among repeat

criminals than among persons serving their first term. A similar tendency was seen in regard to phone contacts with a child. Among prisoners who declared that they maintain contact with their children, some realized this contact only by means of intermediate forms. There can be various reasons for children not visiting imprisoned parents; the most common one is hiding from the child the place where the parent is being held, or partially revealing the truth in regard to this topic (which, according to researchers, happens in the case of two-thirds of their children (Shaw, 1992, pp. 41–49)).

A comprehensive study has allowed identification of the quantitative characteristics of prisoners' contacts with their relatives. This creates a basis for stating that compared to persons serving their first sentence, among repeat criminals there is a smaller percentage of persons who stay in contact with at least one relative on the outside, and that repeat criminals have the smallest amount of sources and forms of contact, among the subpopulations distinguished in the study. It can be presupposed, then, that repeat offences correspond with alienation and a lack of contact with relatives outside. It cannot be stated, however, that the sources and forms of contacts with relatives decrease steadily with the number of stays in penitentiary isolation. Such a trend is not supported by the observation that the highest percentage of persons staying in touch with at least one relative on the outside is among prisoners serving their third sentence.

However, the relation between the feeling of alienation and lack of contact with relatives from the outside, on the basis of number of sources and forms of contact, is still a separate and unstudied issue. The feeling of alienation can occur as a consequence of situational alienation, but it is not inevitable. For example, there are situations where the inmate before his or her imprisonment had no ties with his or her own family, or compensates his or her lack of contacts by build relationships with other inmates. The above issues are suggested directions for further studies. It would be interesting to study these problems separately among female and male prisoners, to determine if sex and social roles influence the network of contacts and if they correlate with feeling of alienation. Those types of studies, however, are not easy to conduct, especially when using qualitative study techniques. Some of the problems would include the movement restrictions regarding visitors in prisons, including the researchers and the disproportion between male and female prisoner populations.

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The Exile's Lament. Solitude and Togetherness in Ovid's Later Works

Lament wygnańca. Samotność i wspólnota w późnych dziełach Owidiusza

Abstract: This article is a solitude-focused interpretation of the later works of Publius Ovidius Naso (43 BCE–AD 17/18: *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*. A celebrated poet in his heyday, in AD 8 Ovid was exiled from Rome by Augustus, never to return to his homeland again. The circumstances and causes of such a harsh sentence have never been explicitly stated: neither by Ovid himself, nor by any of his contemporary authors. Some historians speculate that the causes are related to another of the poet's works – the infamous *Ars Amatoria* that had once shocked the citizens of Rome. Others would argue that moral outrage was but a convenient disguise of Augustus' actual motives, quite possibly related to scandalous affairs of a political or personal nature. Although an exploration of the aforementioned themes is made, as well as some considerations regarding the legal implications of exile in ancient Rome, the main subject of the article is the reading of Ovid's later works as introspections that provide insight into his exile, understood as a period of loneliness. While removed from his home and from those close to his heart, the poet remained a Roman citizen, keenly identifying as part of that community. Though his proximity

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to other peoples never became togetherness, his loneliness, as evidenced by a copious body of introspective works, seems to have eventually evolved into solitude.

Keywords: Ovid, exile, solitude, loneliness, reading.

Abstrakt: Artykuł ten jest poświęconą problematyce izolacji i samotności interpretacją późniejszych dzieł Publiusza Owidiusza Nazo (43 BCE-17/18 CE) – *Żalów* i *Listów znad Morza Czarnego*. Mimo sławy i uznania, jakimi poeta cieszył się w szczytowym okresie popularności, w 8 roku n.e. został wygnany z Rzymu przez Oktawiana Augusta. Nigdy nie zezwolono mu na powrót do ojczyzny. Powody tak surowego wyroku i okoliczności jego wydania nigdy nie zostały opisane: nie wspomina o nich ani sam Owidiusz, ani inni współcześni mu autorzy. Według niektórych historyków, przyczyny należy poszukiwać w *Sztuce Kochania*, niesławnym poemacie, który Rzymianie uznać mieli za cokolwiek nieobyczajny. Inni sugerują, iż rzekome zgorszenie było jedynie pretekstem, jakim posłużył się August, by ukarać Owidiusza za udział w politycznym lub osobistym skandalu. W artykule zostają rozwinięte powyższe wątki, omówiona zostaje także kwestia wygnania w prawie rzymskim. Osią rozważań pozostaje jednak odczytanie późnych dzieł Owidiusza jako opisu przeżyć wewnętrznych osoby zmuszonej do życia wśród obcego sobie ludu. Nawet z daleka od domu poeta pozostał obywatelem rzymskim, czyniąc ten fakt kluczowym elementem swej deklarowanej tożsamości. Choć nie stał się w pełni częścią wspólnoty, do której został przywiedziony przez los, jego pierwotny stan – pełna żalu izolacja – zdaje się stopniowo przechodzić w świadomie wybraną, sprzyjającą przynajmniej częściowemu pogodzeniu się z losem samotność.

Słowa kluczowe: Owidiusz; wygnanie; samotność; izolacja; interpretacja.

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Cumque alii causa tibi sint graviore fugati,
Ulterior nulli, quam mihi, terra data est:

Longinus hac nihil est, nisi tantum frigus et hostes,
Et maris adstricto quae coit unda gelu.

Though others have been exiled for weightier cause,
A more remote land has been assigned to no one;
Nothing farther away than this land except the cold, and the enemy,
And the sea whose waters congeal with the frost
(Ovid, *Tristia* II, 193–196, in Wheeler, 1939, p. 68).

This is how Publius Ovidius Naso, once perhaps the most celebrated poet of his time, writes of his banishment from Rome. Having fallen out of favour with the emperor Augustus for reasons never explicitly stated, he was relegated to the settlement of Tomis, known to the modern world as the city of Constanța in Romania. It is a place far from the Eternal City, even by today's standards. Connected now, in the 21st century, by motorways, it is still a substantial journey over 2,000 kilometres to the east of Rome, enough to take more than 24 hours. In Ovid's time, the two locations were divided by a distance so vast it was nearly unimaginable.

How unexpected and heart-wrenching this exile must have been, after a lifetime of comfort and recognition. Born in 43 BCE, in Sulmo, to a family of landed aristocrats, Publius Ovidius Naso quickly became known as a talented poet. It is possible that he achieved a measure of fame as early as his 18th year, having given his first public recitation at that age. Though the poet might be considered an unreliable narrator where his own life is concerned, as most information on his life has been derived from his own works, we rely on his literary legacy (Knox, 2009; McGowan, 2009). It is important to note that both relative and absolute chronologies of Ovid's earlier works, as well as the authorship of some of the letters in *Heroides*, remain uncertain and provoke much debate (Hardie, 2006; Knox, 2002). For the sake of clarity, the chronologies presented here are those that are most generally accepted. After *Amores*, a collection of love poetry, Publius Ovidius Naso went on to publish an array of successful works, *Heroide*[s] and *Metamorphoses* being the most notable. Having secured the patronage of Augustus, he began to compose *Fasti*, 'The Book of Days': this is a calendar of sorts, detailing the best-known myths of Rome and their various and vivid aetiologies in relation to traditional holidays, customs and astronomy. It was a traditional work, fitting seamlessly with the Augustan celebration of Roman customs and the emperor's will to see them brought back to life. Surely, the author of a poem

so valuable would live on to enjoy an existence of recognition, privilege, and support from the Augustan court?

Not so. In AD 8 – how ironic that this was also the year of *Fasti*'s publication! – by the decision of the emperor, Ovid was banished from Rome (Hardie, 2006). The causes of such a harsh sentence were never named: not by the poet himself, nor by any historians contemporary to him – not even, perplexingly enough, by the man who so wished to see him banished (Hardie, 2006; Knox, 2009; McGowan, 2009). This banishment, its legal and political contexts – but most of all, its anthropological, cultural and psychological implications – are the main subjects of this article.

The Romans, during the times of the republic and early principate, distinguished between three types of banishment. *Relegatio* was an order to temporarily leave Rome. The place the *relegatus* was to spend their time away from the city was sometimes also mentioned in the edict issuing the sentence, yet not in all cases. Unlike another type of banishment, *deportatio*, *relegatio* did not require the presence of armed guards to ensure that the person sentenced reached their destination and remained there. A subtype of *deportatio* was *deportatio in insulam*, where the exiled was to live out their days on a specific island, usually with no company but the guards sent to prevent their escape. Such was the fate of Augustus' own daughter, Julia the Elder, and his granddaughter, Julia the Younger – the latter sentenced in the same year as Ovid. The third and harshest form of banishment was *exsilium*: an alternative to the death penalty, though it bore the same legal consequences. The *exul* would lose their belongings and their citizenship, along with what was seen as the most basic of human rights at the time: *hospitium*, the 'guest's right'. Rather than offer shelter, anybody whom the *exul* might turn to for aid was legally obliged to do them harm (Kelly, 2006; Rich, 1875).

Of these sentences, Ovid's was the least severe: he was merely a *relegatus*, retaining his citizen status, his marriage – to a third wife, never named, yet often praised in his work – and his right to maintain correspondence with friends and family still in Rome (Helzle, 1989; McGowan, 2009). Most of all, he retained the status that was not Augustus' to give or take: he remained a poet, detailing his bitter experiences in two notable works: *Tristia* (Sorrows), dated to AD 8–12, and *Epistulae ex Ponto* (Letters from Pontus), a later work dated to AD 8–16 (Hardie, 2006).

As for the mysterious causes of such a fate, Publius Ovidius Naso never mentions them, in spite of the vast body of works written in exile, and plentiful opportunity to do so. There are merely vague hints, the most notable of which cites the causes of his exile as *carmen et error*: a poem and a mistake.

The poem in question would seem to be *Ars Amatoria* (The Art of Love), yet it seems a rather flimsy pretext. It was published, to instant popularity, between 2 BCE and AD 2; even the latest date places it years before Ovid's exile (Hardie, 2006). Would the Emperor be so unaware of the works of his poet that he remained ignorant of the existence of *Ars Amatoria* until seven years after its publication? The works of a popular author would surely be discussed at court; any scandal they might have initially caused would likely have lost its impact after such a long time. Why, then, a sudden change of heart? And why, most of all, would *Ars Amatoria*, a work mild by Roman standards, be so unacceptable during a time when works such as *Priapea*, detailing far greater obscenities, were celebrated and encouraged – and by a personage no less than Gaius Cilnius Maecenas, the Emperor's confidant and friend?

Such questions will probably remain unanswered forever. What remains is an extensive account of Ovid's exile itself. The personal nature of the works, their introspective narratives, the autobiographical theme, and most of all, the language – vivid, yet far less formal and conventional than that of Ovid's contemporary authors – allow a glimpse into the psychological processes accompanying the state of exile. The letters also provide a valuable insight into its anthropological status as an atypical experience of living in a community and then being forcibly removed from it into the context of another one. A transition from togetherness to loneliness … and from loneliness, perhaps, to solitude.

> Barbarus hic ego sum, qui non intellegor ulli,
> et rident stolidi verba Latina Getae.
> Here, I am the barbarian no one comprehends,
> The Getae laugh, foolishly, at my Latin words
> (Ovid, *Tristia* V, X, 37–38, in Kline, 2003).

Those words, a quote from a fairly late work – book V of *Tristia* – offer a concise and moving description of a changing status: as a *relegatus*, Ovid became a rare example of a member of the dominant culture suddenly finding himself viewed as the Other. The bitterness of this experience is projected upon his surroundings. The climate is described as harsh, the surroundings uninhabitable, the people malicious and indifferent to his plight. The poet wrote in book I of *Tristia*, while comparing his journey to that of Odysseus: 'Nos freta sideribus totis distantia mensos sors tulit in Geticos Sarmaticosque sinus' – 'I, after traversing seas whole constellations apart, have been

carried by fate to the bays of the Getae and the Sarmatians' (Ovid, *Tristia* I, V, 61–62, in Wheeler, 1939, p. 32). The reality of exile, one imagines, was made even more difficult to bear by the only methods of travel available to a man of his times: by land and by sea, at a pace slow enough for the journey to take many months. Ovid departed from Rome in December of AD 8, to finally arrive at Tomis in the summer or autumn of the following year (Green, 1982; Hendren, 2014; Wheeler, 1939). It appears that such a voyage would enforce a state of awareness. Ovid seemed to have no choice but to be completely mindful of the distance travelled, each mile observed, each day of the perilous journey taking him further away from the city he had never wanted to leave. Such an experience takes a toll on the ability to notice anything else; and any reader of Ovid's exile works finds plentiful proof of this.

> Siquis adhuc istic meminit Nasonis adempti,
> et superest sine me nomen in urbe meum,
> suppositum stellis numquam tangentibus aequor
> me sciat in media vivere barbaria.
> If there still be any there who remembers banished Naso,
> If my name still survives in the city,
> Let him know that beneath the stars which never touch the sea
> I am living in the midst of the barbarian world
> (Ovid, *Tristia* III, X, 1–4, in Wheeler, 1939, p. 136)

The first three books of *Tristia* speak of unmitigated despair, detailing loneliness and illness, misery and isolation: a deep depression – a stage of grief, if you will, lasting for many years before a glimmer of hope appears. By book IV, Ovid begins to write poetry again.

He still bemoans his current state, asking with a characteristic sense of futility: 'Cui nuc haec cura laborat? An mea Sauromatae scripta Getaque legent?' – 'For whom this careful toil? Will the Sauromatae and the Getae read my writings?' (Ovid, *Tristia* IV, I, 94–93, in Wheeler, 1939, p. 164); yet the poet also begins to describe his surroundings – perhaps as he gradually becomes aware of them again. He gains respect and status by learning the local languages, and taking up arms to defend his adopted land. By book V, his account of the *Getae* and the *Sauromatae*, while still revealing an unmistakable ethnocentrism, becomes much more mellow than the initial reports: it details the customs of those peoples, their virtues, and gives accounts of some of the conversations held with them, wherein they are portrayed as a sensible and to an extent learned people, capable of deep and refined feel-

ing. In *Epistulae ex Ponto*, he writes to an enemy that the wild *Getae* wept at his account of his own misfortunes: why cannot the addressee summon a touch of compassion for his plight as well? Whether such a reaction was true, whether there really had been barbarians weeping upon hearing Ovid's tale, we shall never know. What we can see, however, is how vastly different this portrayal is from the initial image of the exiled poet being shunned and mocked by an alien people.

However, a sense of pervasive melancholy remains, never to dissipate. Even after becoming adapted to his new life, the poet remains a Roman citizen, firmly identifying with the city and expressing hopes of returning there. By book IV of *Epistulae ex Ponto*, after nearly ten years in exile, and with no end in sight, Publius Ovidius Naso senses that he might die soon – yet, though he keeps requesting that his remaining friends use their influence to persuade Caesar to revoke the sentence, he appears to have discovered a cure for his mental anguish. 'Mente tamen', writes Ovid, 'quae sola loco non exulat' – 'I shall use my mind, which alone is not in physical exile' (Ovid, *Epistulae ex Ponto* IV, IX, 41, in McGowan, 2009, p. 1).

Only in spirit would witness his friend Graecinus assume the mantle of a consul. His sentence would not be revoked, neither by Augustus nor by his heir: and yet, among fears of death and the bitterness of exile, a slightly more hopeful tone is struck, with unmitigated despair giving way to an experience explored, an identity renegotiated. His eyes opened to the realities of the world he found himself in: from his loneliness among the *Sauromatae* and the *Getae*, Publius Ovidius Naso appeared to have ascended into a state of solitude – a chosen and self-aware response to his new situation that was probably vital to his sense of self: a Roman citizen among a people not his own, a poet of gentle sensibilities among warlike tribes. No longer portrayed as uncomprehending and malicious barbarians, his adopted countrymen are simply different. 'Nulla est mea culpa, Tomitae', he wrote to the Tomitians after having been accused of insulting them, 'quos ego, cum loca sim vestra perosus, amo' – 'I am not at fault, Tomitae, for you I esteem, though I detest your land' (Ovid, *Epistulae ex Ponto* IV, XIV 23–24, in Wheeler, 1939, p. 480). No longer blamed for their qualities, they just are. We can say the same of Ovid: by the end, he simply is – alone, yet no longer irreversibly isolated; thus, in solitude and not loneliness.

Exile can, perhaps, become an eye-opening ordeal, allowing the subject to completely recontextualize their vision of the self and the world, causing both to become deeper and more nuanced. It can also be construed as a liminal stage between togetherness and loneliness. Whether the latter ever

becomes solitude is dependent on the subject's ability to cope with their experience.

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Solitude of the United Kingdom towards Europe – Notes from my Diary

Samotność Zjednoczonego Królestwa wobec Europy – notatki z mojego pamiętnika

Abstract: Referring to autoethnography, I contemplate the consequences of Brexit in the individual dimension. I do not consider this process as affecting only the life of UK citizens; rather, I treat Brexit as an impulse to form the concept of solitude policy.

Key words: Community; United Kingdom; Brexit; solitude; dialogue.

Streszczenie: Odwołując się do autoetnografi, zastanawiam się nad konsekwencjami Brexitu w wymiarze indywidualnym. Nie uważam tego procesu za mający wpływ na życie jedynie mieszkańców Wielkiej Brytanii. Traktuję Brexit jako asumpt do sformowania koncepcji polityki samotności.

Słowa klucze: Wspólnota; Zjednoczone Królestwo; Brexit; samotność; dialog.

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1. Introduction

Let me briefly introduce myself. I have always been fascinated by British culture. British popular music is the love of my life; I also love British movies. And what I found great in this culture, I have transferred to other spheres of life, including politics. Another aspect, and perhaps the most important issue for me, was learning English. At primary school, my class was one of the first to have switched from learning Russian to learning English. This had a symbolic dimension: in the early 1990s, it was an unambiguous declaration that we were in favour of English culture.

The island seemed an oasis of peace, stability and reason. But we live in the world of VUCA (Gläse, 2018) – volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity – so nothing can last forever. As Bob Dylan sang, *The Times They Are A-Changin'*; for me, Brexit is an example of this. Moreover, it is another proof of the correctness of Bauman's concept of *liquid modernity (Bauman, 2000)*.

In my opinion, one of the reasons why the Poles wanted to join the EU was because the UK was already part of it; Britain appeared to be an island of stability, certainty, simplicity and unambiguity. This is my introduction to my considerations regarding the solitude of the UK in relation to Europe. I remember perfectly well that in the symbolic sense, both learning English and moving towards a united Europe were expected to promote individual and general well-being (Wilk, 2014). But now we have reached the next level in our shared experience of history. But, unfortunately, it is more serious than a computer game.

My question is: What does Brexit teach me in post-truth times? These are times in which emotions are sovereign, and the only certain thing is change. Therefore, I give voice to my emotions. While preparing for 'Alone Together' – our international pan-disciplinary symposium on solitude in community (York, April 2019) – I decided to keep a diary throughout February, in which I would note my comments on Brexit. It is the feelings contained in the diary that are my main catalyst for treating this topic in such a way.

Why February, and not March? Because I had predicted that in February everything would be settled; that all matters related to Brexit would be completed. As you know, I was wrong. Now it seems to me that I was naive, and that the worst is ahead of us. We are probably heading towards the UK's final exit from the EU (I'm writing this at the end of January 2020); but to

use sports terminology, the ball is still in the game, and it is and will be an extremely brutal game.

In my text, I would like to propose two stages of analysis: the first, in which I refer to my diary entries; and the second, in which I refer to the concept of solitude in politics. I would like to emphasize that my paradigm (worldview) is shaped by belief in the significance of community, and in the positive impact of collective actions on development in all spheres of social life, including upbringing and education. This is my justification for taking up the indicated topic in *Paedagogia Christiana*, a journal which deals with contemporary conditions of human education.

In addition, I choose not to present the events in chronological order. Brexit, understood as the process of the UK leaving the EU, is happening right in front of our eyes, and there is no need to list all its stages in precise detail.

2. Background, or why I decided to use autoethnography

I decided to use autoethnography because I consider it relevant to the subject. Arthur P. Bochner points out:

> We autoethnographers believe that research on human life should be oriented not only toward facts but also toward meanings; not only under the rules of scientific rigor, but also under the inspiration of moral imagination; not only for the purpose of attaining better predictions and more control, but also to achieve peace of mind and to alleviate injustice and suffering; not only from the stance of neutrality and distance, but also from the position of caring and vulnerability; not only for the purpose of producing conventional, received texts, but also with the goal of performing evocative, creative, and dialogic expressions of lived experiences. (Bochner, 2017, p. 78)

Such thinking liberates. It justifies spontaneous writing. It legitimizes keeping a diary and then using it for scientific purposes – in order to be able to research human life.

The following recommendations are a development of the above:

> Our understanding of others can only proceed from within our own experience, and this experience involves our lived histories. […] We come to know others through ourselves, but also to know ourselves by knowing others. [...] Autoeth-

> nography appeals to the conscience of the human sciences, offering an ethical design for a social science of meanings, sense making, social justice, and bodily experience. [...] This means not coloring over lived experiences with concepts organized into systems of thought of interest to elite researchers but of little relevance to wounded or marginalized people. […] Greater self-awareness and self-reflexivity are both the gifts and the afflictions of autoethnography […]. (ibidem, pp. 69–71)

I would particularly like to emphasize the transition from the individual to the public sphere:

> Autoethnography is not only a work of memory; it is also a work of narrative. […] Autoethnographers must recount what they remember, retelling events and experiences usually in the form of a written, spoken, or performed story. […] The truths of autoethnography exist between storyteller and story listener. […] Autoethnographies move events and situations of private interest into the public domain. […] Autoethnography is a genre of doubt. In practice, autoethnography is not so much a methodology as it is a way of life, one that acknowledges contingency; finitude; embeddedness in storied being; openness to otherness; dedication to justice, ethics, and moral imagination; and a desire for edification to keep the conversation going. […] To be alive is to be uncertain. (ibidem, pp. 73–77)

A characteristic feature of autoethnography is a situation in which the roles of the researcher and respondent are entrusted to one person (Jagieło, 2015, p. 35; Urbańska, 2012, p. 35). The purpose of such a solution, adapting Anglo-Saxon models, was aptly expressed by Oskar Szwabowski:

> Preserving experiences, learning through experience, reconstructing experience, developing reflectiveness and empathy, immersing in tides are ways to know, understand and process, and to interact. An attempt to understand yourself, others, relationships. Creating a space for discussion and self-development. […] I see in it [autoethnography] the possibility of self-development. (Szwabowski, 2019, p. 100)

These words seem to be in line with the postulates of Carolyn S. Ellis and Arthur P. Bochner, claiming that autoethnography is not an objection against traditionally perceived science, but another way of trying to understand social processes (Ellis & Bochner, 2006, p. 443). I chose the above

quotations not only based on their substantive value – for my intellectual development – but also because of their emotional charge, which was like that which accompanied me when writing the diary. This emotionality manifests itself in my statement that I would like to have been the author of the above quotes.

3. Action, or what I experienced

I remember that when I was writing the diary, I was tired and irritable (because of the workload), but also mindful. This means that although they were not long entries, I consider them valuable. I usually made entries late in the evening, after a full day's work.

First of all, I would like to point out that, under the influence of Brexit, I began to identify myself as a Europophile – that is, someone who is a devotee of what is European or favors participation in the European Union. It started at the very beginning of my examination of the subject. Incidentally, I discovered that the word 'Europophile' is not in the Polish dictionary, while there is, for example, a 'Rusophile' (a supporter and enthusiast of what is Russian) or 'Germanophile'. Noticing this attitude (identifying myself as a Europophile) is my first, and perhaps the most important, discovery from writing a diary. It's a process where I notice something only when I see a change.

When analysing my entries, I noticed that they related to the relationship between politics and emotions. Here are examples which, according to Arthur P. Bochner's postulate, are the inspiration of moral imagination (Bochner, 2017):

– entry from 05/02/2019:

And maybe they are experiencing this rebellion for us, against something that seems distant and imposed? And paradoxically, maybe it will save the EU? Brexit as a cold shower for everyone, something that makes us think. Maybe this is the role of the island?,

– entry from 08/02/2019:

Maybe such a breakup is like between people, lovers, spouses? Sometimes calm, by mutual consent, and sometimes with a fight. Tusk said something about hell. Emotions begin to emerge. It turns out that this is not parting in peace. Will we hear grievances in the near future? About who owes or has lost what to whom?

Probably so. This metaphor of lovers again leads to the concept that the island and Europe are like people.

Other examples are oriented towards meanings (not facts) (ibidem, 2017):

– entry from 13/02/2019:

What has Brexit taught me so far? Maybe nothing is permanent. Even agreements in such large structures as the EU. And that you can relate what happens in politics, to what happens in private and personal life. I cannot help it, but in my opinion, there is chaos in this stable country. I am writing the word 'chaos' and I'm thinking about the loneliness of the island in relation to Europe,

– entry from 18/02/2019:

'What does PM Teresa May think about, when it is late, and she has a moment to rest?'.

My intention is not to fill the text with diary quotes. Indeed, I have quoted auto-ethnography researchers abundantly, but I would like to point out this is due to my admiration for their concept. Rather, I would like to focus on what Brexit has taught me. That I objectify – that is, I visualize – the subject of my analysis; this makes it comprehensible to me. The image I see is simple. There are the moving contours of the UK and Europe. I see, therefore, a map of our continent, where dynamic processes take place. But this tectonic movement is not the result of natural forces, but of human emotions. That's how I experience it. The metaphor for the island is a ship that is sailing away, but no one knows where she will arrive. The physical distance between London and Paris, Berlin or Warsaw does not change, but the distance changes in the mental sphere. The effects are therefore difficult to predict. I have been to London several times, and I can see the streets of this city getting further and further away from me. I emphasize that this is not a metaphor: in fact, there are walls rising between neighbours, members of the same community. I am aware that this sounds pompous and weird, but politicians seem to be acting like a team of bricklayers at work. Or, returning to the metaphor of a ship leaving the shore politicians are sailors who with no concern about difficult circumstances – they sail on cheerfully while singing their song.

Due to this, Brexit teaches me also that it is naive to believe in the durability of the EU and in politicians' common sense. The scale of this phenomenon is a shock to me. I am aware that a referendum took place (a decision

of ordinary people), but at the same time it is difficult to resist the impression that voters were being manipulated by politicians (Cadwalladr, 2017). We truly live in the world of VUCA. Durability turned out to be a delusion. Just as much a delusion is faith in politicians, their rationality, their care for the interest of voters. In general, the only certain thing is that something unexpected is going to happen. That the future will provide us with surprises. It cannot be predicted. I recollect one of my trips to Europe, when I had gone to Romania and Bulgaria just before they joined the EU. My presence here is a journey (to the UK) in the other direction. I am surprised.

I am aware that connecting the two roles of researcher and responder may be risky – especially since the described situation is still taking place – given that emotions may prevail; but it is still chance for self-development. Also, by expressing emotions, anarchist thoughts appear in my head. The crisis in Great Britain affects how I perceive the Polish political scene. Divisions and disagreements make me think about our leaders, generally, not as statesmen, but as participants in constant fun. People who are also having fun at my expense. That's how I started to see politicians: fighting for power, and all the time trying to tell us that they are fighting for truth. In this context, the high price of the ironic painting *Devolved Parliament* by Banksy – a work of art that criticizes the political class – doesn't surprise me (Reyburn, 2019).

I will end this part with poetry; specifically, the first thought that came to my mind when I learned the title of the conference ('Alone Together'). It reminded me of the beautiful song by the band Crowded House, 'Together Alone'. This is a unique combination of rock music and the Moorish tradition. The words of this song go as follows:

> Together alone
> Above and beneath
> We were as close
> As anyone can be
> Now you are gone
> Far away from me (Crowded House, 1993).

The song is probably about love and death; Eros and Tanatos. An eternal, divine life cycle. So, we have a mystical lyric. Of course, I have other associations; these are caused by political events related to Brexit, the separation of the EU and the UK. Well, our present influences our understanding of cultural texts. In conclusion, I want to say that the process of Brexit seems unimaginable from the point of view of a 40-year-old resident of Szczecin,

a city in Central Eastern Europe, in a post-communist state like Poland. I am interested not only in the solitude of individual people, but – perhaps more – that of whole communities, nations and states. In this case, Solitude of the UK towards Europe, I think that Brexit is not only a matter for the inhabitants of the Island, just as solitude does not only affect the person who experiences it.

I would like to sum up this part of the discussion as best I can. I admit that I am a bit helpless (I am writing these words on February 1, 2020). So, I reach for the diary. Maybe there are some words there that were first the subject of analysis, but which are now suitable for performing meta-analysis. Words in which I look for raw information, and at the same time, words that explain everything else. A diary entry through which I induce, but which is also the nucleus of deductive reasoning.

The following entry catches my attention – the one which I made during my stay as part of the Erasmus programme at the Sankelmark Academy, at a workshop on the perception of a shared history:

– entry from 26/02/2019:

Two thoughts today about Brexit and I'm still at the international workshop. After a few days, after the initial integration, people strived to speak their own languages. And it worried me. But then the evening came, we were sitting in the bar and some remained in their own linguistic company, but some integrated again, went beyond nationality self-restrictions. It usually works like a pendulum. So Brexit had to happen, and it could have been the Netherlands, Portugal or Sweden. But it happened to the Island.

The integration process will deepen and paradoxically weaken at the same time. Thinking in black or white categories in politics is a mistake. At exactly the time I am writing these words, I recall Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, with its main thesis: there are too many variables to predict, the world is too complex.

4. What's going on – The politics of solitude

In attempting to explain to myself the political process we are witnessing, I created the concept of solitude in politics; I then included Brexit in this scheme. This is my reflection, born of the autoethnographic practice of keeping a diary.

The politics of solitude can be defined as activities performed by an entity that aims to isolate itself or another entity from the international community (i.e. with respect to other states or international organizations), and thus create a distance. Due to the fact that this solitude influences the functioning of individuals (psychological aspect) and communities (sociological aspect), it is not only an issue belonging to political science, which is understood as researching activities related to the exercise of political power.

The politics of solitude is a process which occurs in two model types:

1. Active model – based on the state isolating itself. In this model, processes directed inwards (social, ideological, cultural, economic and military activities) are aimed at isolating the state. Nowadays, isolation can only have a limited effect, and this seems to be most often the case; nevertheless, consequences can still stem from this.
2. Passive model – a state being isolated by other ones. Realization of this model is based on influence being applied by external entities, towards the isolated one.

It is possible for a state to operate a policy of solitude in both described models. Although it never leads to breaking all ties that connect it with the world, nevertheless it is a process opposed to globalization – which is understood as limiting the sovereignty and increasing the interdependence and integration of states (and consequently of societies, economies and cultures).

Brexit is an example of the active model. The UK's geographical position may influence the isolation process, as it can be said that islands have a predisposition to isolation (Great Britain in the context of Brexit). I must admit that an extreme form of solitude – leaving the EU without a trading agreement, or cutting ties connecting the island with Europe – could cause huge problems: 'Among them: fuel, food, and medicine shortages, rising costs of social care, significant port disruptions, and a hard border with Ireland' (Shendruk, 2019).

Both models (active and passive) can be further divided into sub-categories: positive and negative. I have subjectively selected respect for human rights as a basis for this division. When assessing the models in question, it is helpful to refer to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which, although it is not universally binding, is a set of basics of rights:

- positive – does not take away rights resulting from the Declaration or policies intended to protect these rights (example: international community policy towards South Africa in the times of apartheid),
- negative – deprivation of human rights (example: China's policy towards Tibet).

It is difficult to say unequivocally whether these negative expected consequences allow us to conclude (regarding Brexit) that we are dealing with a negative active solitude. If the economic and social consequences of Brexit lead to a weakening of respect for human rights, this will confirm that Brexit belongs to the 'negative active' category of solitude. However, if there is no violation of human rights, Brexit will be assigned to the 'positive active' category of solitude.

5. Latest news:

'Boris Johnson promises Brexit will lead to national revival' (Stewart, Boffey & Syal, 2020).

Only questions, no answers.

… The ball is in play, so I have to make some assumptions. Referring to my worldview, I assume that the division will bring the aforementioned negative consequences.

It is true that my thinking is shaped in some way by the Holy Father Francis. According to the apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*:

> The whole is greater than the part.
> An innate tension also exists between globalization and localization. We need to pay attention to the global so as to avoid narrowness and banality. Yet we also need to look to the local, which keeps our feet on the ground. (*Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium Of The Holy Father Francis*, 2013, [EG] 233, 234)

In my opinion, the world-view that the Pope presents is apt. The extension of the above words is a fragment of the Pope's address to the members of the diplomatic corps:

> As a reaction to a 'spherical' notion of globalization, one that levels differences and smooths out particularities, it is easy for forms of nationalism to re-emerge. Yet globalization can prove promising to the extent that it can be 'polyhedric', favouring a positive interplay between the identity of individual peoples and countries and globalization itself, in accordance with the principle that the whole is greater than the part. (Francis, 2019)

These words are not the unconditional praise of globalization. Globalization is good when it allows small states to survive and maintain their indi-

viduality. The European Union seems to be structured according to this postulate. Thus, based on my diary notes (autoethnography), solitude of the UK towards Europe – is on the one hand informative (it allowed me to formulate a concept of solitude in politics), yet it is also unexpected and disturbing.

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