

## ЄВРОПЕЙСЬКІ НАУКОВІ СТУДІЇ

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**THE RECEPTION, COMPARATISTICS AND TIMELINESS  
OF SERGEI HESSEN'S PEDAGOGICAL THOUGHT**

Blessed is he who visits this life  
at its fateful moments of strife:  
the all-wise sent him an invitation  
to speak with them at their celebrations.  
He is the witness of high affairs,  
Knows their councils, sits on them,  
and a living god while there,  
has drunk immortality with them.

(F. Tyutchev, translated by F. Jude, 2000)

**Introduction**

Let me start with Sergei Hessen's favourite poem by Fyodor Tyutchev, entitled "Cicero", and focus on its last verse, in which the poet encourages to "drink" also the immortality of his thought. The one who came into this world in a totalitarian state is happy, being able to experience the mechanisms of its rule over citizens and of harnessing them by the ruling doctrinal socialists, Marxists and partially communists. This results from the chance to undertake or observe the fight against depersonalization, leading to the fall of the ill-minded system. Such a life experience was also given to an eminent philosopher, theoretician of law and educationalist Sergei Hessen — a professor working in the University of Lodz (founded in 1945) and, within its structure, in the Chair of Pedagogy. Having left Russia in 1922 as a result of the civil war and war communism, he lectured in Germany for two years and then, for ten years, he educated and wrote his works in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic of Czechoslovakia, collaborating with such eminent scientists as Vaclav Příhodou, a psychologist and author of an experimental school, or Jan Patočkou, a world-famous philosopher.

In 1934, Hessen accepted Bogdan Nawroczyński's invitation to take over the Chair of Educational Philosophy in Free Polish University (Wolna Wszechnica Polska) in Warsaw. He stayed in Poland till

the end of his life — having hard experiences of Nazi occupation (during which he lectured at underground university) and being persecuted by Stalin's security service. Hessen died in 1950 in the prime of his creative power. Very aptly, Wincenty Okoń compared the biography of this outstanding humanist to "a wanderer's fate" (W. Okoń 1993), even before Zygmunt Bauman used this category in reference to the situation of people living in the post-modern world (Z. Bauman 2004). Hessen acquired the languages of the countries in which he stayed and lectured and he learned Polish owing to his wife Maria Niemyska. His most important works came into being in the last period of his life. In the times of the People's Republic of Poland, the dissertations published before the war were not available for students of philosophy, law or pedagogy. The collections of works scattered all over the world were published only in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Republic of Poland (Hessen, 2003), similarly to the re-editions of his pre-war works. This does not seem surprising as he revealed there the problems of socialism, the closeness of bolshevism and conservatism, as well as the hopes associated with new liberalism.

**The counterrevolution in the Polish politics  
of the late 2010s**

A cycle of history has been completed — the cycle of ideological influences of the ruling powers, also

in the unconsolidated democracy of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Republic of Poland. Therefore, what seems worth doing in the face of the European retreat from liberal counterrevolution is reaching for some thoughts of S. Hessen. This should raise the awareness of critical situations which might be disastrous for the society. Once again another socio-political change, maybe involving the whole political system, is likely to take place. It seems to contradict the thirty-years-long striving of Poles for life in self-governing, democratic Poland. The change affects not only the state school system but also science — for the development of both, the fundamental values of liberty and democracy mean (...) *empty words in the best case and cruel irony in the worst* (ibid., p. 29). The essence of democracy cannot be understood when autocracy is omitted. *If we want democracy to survive, we have to understand what factors cause that its opposition: autocracy appears* (Zielonka, 2018, p. 65).

By shifting more and more power (beyond any democratic control) to the Ministry of National Education and/or the Ministry of Science and Higher Education as state authority institutions, liberal politicians from centre-right and centre-left parties have in fact deprived voters of influence on educational and academic policy and the policy aimed at science. Moreover, they have not been able to admit to their mistakes up till now. As Jan Zielonka confirms and I have indicated in some dissertations on educational and academic macro-politics (Śliwerski 1996, 1998, 2001, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2017; Nowakowska-Siuta, Śliwerski 2015), (...) *liberals themselves substantially contributed to disinformation, exaggerating the facts, creating political brands and fake news* (Zielonka 2018, p. 60). What is unceasingly going on is the destruction of the democratic order (built since 1989) by right-wing counterrevolutionary powers. By using the policy of fear, hate and revenge towards the previous ruling elites, the right-wing leaders (...) *know better what they fight against than what they fight for. The details of their programmes do not compose a coherent whole and are rather general* (ibid., p. 43). In this way, those who set the new legal order not only attack and disdain the people of the former establishment, but also stand against the order set by the “Solidarity” revolution.

So far, conservatism has been installed in the Polish education and science policy — in 1992-1993, 2005-2007 and since 2015. For its representatives, only the national state, appealing to Christian values and religious orthodoxy, can ensure appropriate existence and righteous living standards, as well as the rule of law and individual liberty. Poles have not had enough time to build a civil society, focusing on and making efforts to gain the financial resources to survive — to live with dignity in the conditions of market economy, growing unemployment, increasing antagonisms in interpersonal relations,

the revealed corruption and moral fall of consecutive political elites. Those elites have applied moralizing rhetoric, full of cynical promises, to fulfil their own goals by using political manipulation, the art of institutional or social engineering. *No wonder that a growing number of European citizens abandon us (liberals — BŚ), choosing the outdated but home-grown visions of national glory, ethical communities and the walls separating particular groups* (ibid., p. 74).

What seems to be an illness troubling procedural democracy (in which any political option can rule as long as it gains the parliamentary majority) involves the following:

- personnel character of political parties, financed from the state budget and by donors, only in a small extent from membership fees; this alienates politicians from their voters, who are treated as “consumers”, those who express the public opinion but have no chance to execute from parliament members the fulfilment of declarations made in their campaign;
- political parties do not form a bridge between the state and the society as they use state institutions to finance their own activity (through positions in state administration, state-owned companies, etc.) and provide remuneration for their activists in the form of privileges and resources;
- members of parliament do not control the executive authority, they only approve its projects of acts or enable avoiding the duty of social consultations in the case of controversial acts;
- the parliamentary majority shifts the ruling power to democratically non-elective institutions, yet — in the case of taking over the control over judicial authorities by executive authorities, the balance of powers in democracy has been infringed in favour of possible partiality of the ruling party and its representatives in these institutions;
- democratic institutions are neither objective nor impartial as (...) *judges and experts have their political allies and political prejudices* (ibid., p. 94).

### **Ideological determinants of pedagogy**

While discussing the illness of democracy, S. Hessen’s thought should be recalled that it is very difficult in democracy to overcome subjectivism and relativism. Under the influence of Wilhelm Dilthey’s sociology, Hessen discredited the aspirations of philosophy to objectivity and scientific nature in the positivist sense of this word. He indicated that teachers and scientists are guided consciously or pre-reflectively in their influences, choices or studies by their own worldview. In his opinion, positivists

wrongly rejected metaphysics in order to achieve the allegedly objective, scientific status of studies by avoiding values. In this way, they only supported the belief in neutrality of science, and at the same time — neutrality of education. However, there is no science free from values, prejudgements, beliefs — science free from ideology, religion, philosophy or art, because they are all present in every culture.

A worldview — for this philosopher — is an overall attitude to the world in which humanity exists, experienced as an obligation, an order of the will to enrich the world with interiorized values. This attitude is anchored in the existence of personality and the existence of the epoch. As Hessen wrote: *A worldview is never only the cognition of the world within its existence, but it is always also the discovery of its sense and the values which turn into reality within it.* He stated that:

*Thus, man is a living creature, who not only is in an organic relation with the biological environment but also outside it has an attitude to the world as a whole, which means man is a being with a worldview. Only because persons are able to absorb the whole world into themselves, they become a small world themselves. (...) A person absorbs the whole world obviously not in a real way (as the organism does with its environment) but an ideal way, as a spiritual being. If only the person is a micro-cosmos, i.e. has a worldview, this individual is a personality, spiritual creature, who while possessing an irreplaceable value, can give value to the world by creating the world of history in nature, which is independent from humanity and indifferent to values (Hessen 1968, p. 72).*

### **The worldview in the school system and educational policy**

The topicality of Hessen's political thought results from his ability to analyse school systems in Europe as the sphere of culture which has been exposed in history to deep crises of liberalism, socialism and conservatism. He was also convinced that (...) *what has constituted the "eternal truth" of this culture will be saved as nothing gets lost in the kingdom of objective, absolute values, which "scan" history and give it a sense* (Walicki 1968, p. 6). In the 1920s, Hessen warned of the danger of imposing (on teachers and learners) a particular worldview by school authorities with the simultaneous banning other worldviews. While analysing school systems, he indicated that in democratic countries this problem could be solved in various ways. As it takes place in France, it is possible to ensure ideological neutrality to state education, at the same time creating proper conditions for private schools to develop their educational models, also the ideological one, though without state subsidizing. The case of Holland and Belgium can be followed as well — school education has religious autonomy though there are lay local authority schools and each model is financed from public sources

(according to the same principles) subjected to state control. As it takes place in England, it is also possible to ensure, alongside state school, the functioning of free schools, totally independent in their teaching models from state or religious school education, based on the authorities' broad tolerance of their educational solutions.

School and higher education as well as science are not liberated from ideological determinants. The period of political transformation was marked by changes in educational policy which were subordinated to imposing on young generations the sense and the duty to fulfil the values compliant with the worldview of the ruling party leaders. Concordantly with the dominance of ideological interests of educational authorities as the lengthened arm of state rule, these worldviews can be specified in the following way:

1989-1992 — new liberalism  
1992-1993 — conservatism  
1993-1997 — centre-left  
1997-2001 — centre-right  
2001 -2005 — centre-left  
2005-2007 — conservatism  
2007-2015 — new liberalism  
2015 — conservatism.

The involvement of educational policy in the processes of clashing worldviews and the related democratic or centralist orientations leads to establishing the kind of democracy which today is referred to as *anocracy*. It is (...) *as an entity, unstable and inefficient government which constitutes incoherent mixture of democratic and autocratic practices and qualities* (Zielonka 2018, p. 83). Anocracy results from imposing on the society by leaders of the ruling party their own worldview as the one questioning or excluding other ideologies in the space of public education and science. Thus, in spite of declaring the openness to pluralism of values, freedom of speech and choice by the ruling authorities, each consecutive change in the Ministry of National Education or the Ministry of Science and Higher Education has rejected the political programme of the previous authorities, or even discredited their achievements by promoting convenient ideological contents and statistical data (more: Nowakowska-Siuta, Śliwerski, 2015). As Hessen clarified this almost a century ago: *The worldview orders: it has to be in this way. The worldview does not reflect the world but wants to specify and process what it recognizes as the essence of reality (...). Generating the spiritual contents of personality and the whole epoch, the worldview constitutes the power which determines the historical existence of humanity* (Hessen 1968, p. 75). To various degrees, the worldview activates people to act according to the recognized system of values — from apparently selfless views, through passive opportunism, to revolutionary aspirations to amend the world.

### The Czech edition of Hessen's dissertation on worldview

It has not been known in Poland so far that in 1937 S. Hessen wrote and published a book on ideology and pedagogy as the 379<sup>th</sup> item in the unique publishing series entitled "Dědictví Komenského [Comenius's Heritage]" (Hessen 1937a). What seems interesting is that the philosopher wrote this book already in Warsaw and submitted it for translation on 4<sup>th</sup> November 1936. It was translated into Czech from Polish, Russian and German by Žofia Pohorecká. Hessen himself did not mention this dissertation in the autobiography written at the end of his life — its translation into Polish was done by his doctoral student Aleksander Kamiński (Hessen 1937a, pp. 11-69). This monograph is not comprised as well in the selection of Hessen's dissertations (prepared by his wife — Maria Hessen), which contained the bibliography of his major works published by the Committee of Pedagogical Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences in 1973 (Bibliografia, 1973). Hessen's stay in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic of Czechoslovakia remains open to historical and pedagogical studies on the life and works of this humanist.

### Hessen's Czech dissertation on ideology and pedagogy

In a short foreword to this edition, Hessen admits that the book is a selection of articles which came into being and were issued in 1933-1936 in many scattered Russian, Polish and German publications. What linked them all in terms of contents was the issue of interrelations between ideology and pedagogy. Hessen was interested in the inner autonomy of human education. As he wrote:

*A study of this problem itself entails the necessity to define accurately and to deepen philosophically*

*the notion of teaching, as well as to explain the interrelations between teaching and the goals which in contemporary times constitute education and school: morality, state, national economy. On the other hand, the analysis of current complex issues of education raises a question concerning the leading principles of pedagogical thought, especially pertaining to its whole and its structure, which might lead pedagogy into the pathways compliant with the new synthesis — which also hides in itself the temptation of totalitarianism* (Hessen 1937a, p. 3).

In this dissertation, Hessen stands up against simplifications in pedagogy which reduce its thought either to positivist individualism or to totalitarianism. In his opinion, the solution in this situation may be the dialectical approach. Hessen considered pedagogy as applied philosophy. What is of crucial significance in his approach to education and, at the same time, has still a very topical message in the context of the texts comprised in the discussed book, is the view on human personality and liberties which takes into account both the determinants of the outer world and of the expectations and tasks imposed on the individual.

*Human personality constitutes itself and human freedom increases in tragic overcoming the fate, or sometimes in individualist experience of the own Self. The standpoint of personalism, which I defend in this book, has nothing in common with optimistic individualism but assumes natural harmony between the individual and the aiming at the fullest self-satisfaction* (ibid., p. 4).

Two first chapters of this monograph were entitled: "What is a worldview?" and "Worldview and pedagogy". The author devoted them to the key phenomenon in his further research into the essence of education and teaching in regard to educational macro-politics and the developmental state of humanities.

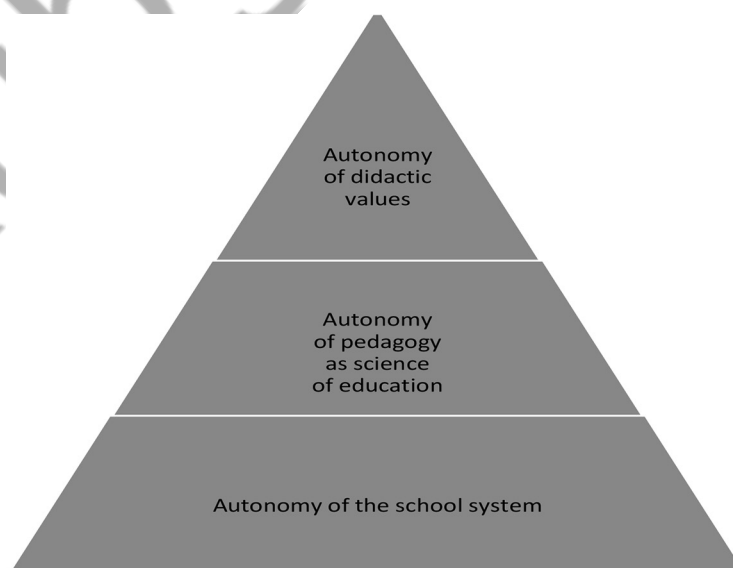


Figure 1. Three layers of the autonomy of education according to Sergei Hessen (source: own elaboration based on S. Hessen 1937a, chapter 3)



The three-layered structure of autonomy of education has not been published in the Polish language, although its fragments were comprised in the article entitled “Idea ogólnego wykształcenia [The idea of general education]”, issued in 1937 (S. Hessen 1937b, pp. 117-135). Therefore, it seems worth to recall Hessen’s major theses, which distinguish his neo-humanistic philosophy. Its foundation is recognizing the autonomy of spiritual life, which is guided by its own rule and is represented by personality of an individual as a spiritual being. *The autonomy of education is self-government, but for this reason it does not have to mean self-sufficiency — autarky* (Hessen 1937a, p. 46). There is no education as a personal value without freedom and spontaneity of every person, every act of education is a spiritual act in which the teacher and the learner meet. If there is distance between them, or even more — when it occurs between the learner or the teacher and the object of learning, the process of education does not take place.

*It is this permanent contact with the inner centre of personality which distinguishes education from forming or training. (...) education is introducing the learner into the world of culture or tradition as a living stream of historical existence. Only through this introduction into the world of culture (which is being created in history) can an individual implement their autonomous personality. (...) education is becoming familiar with the human spirit from human works, deciphering the sense of what humanity has created* (Hessen 1937b, p. 121).

Hessen refers here to Giovanni Gentile’s views, which say that the law and order of the autonomous sphere in spiritual life of a person is implemented in every proper educational act. A person learns when this results from the freedom of their recognition of autotelic values of education. A person is not only a psychophysical but also spiritual being, therefore people grow with every stage in their development to the consecutive layers of cultural life. An appropriate teacher is the one who is a medium of the objective spirit, the one who represents this spirit with their own self, their personality.

*The true master of teachers is the objective spirit. There is no education of individuality, only the education towards the objective spirit. In this dialectical tension between the subjective and objective spirit, the subjective spirit is manifested as a moment of the objective spirit, and conversely. The situation of tension between the two is the essence of the phenomenon of education. Without education, this objective spirit would reproduce itself at best as a biological organism, would not be a carrier of tradition. Yet, it is “tradition” which is a particular kind of its life* (ibid., p. 57).

Thus, the value of education lies in the autonomy of the person who refers to the value of culture, therefore — it determines the character of pedagogy as a science. Here, Hessen points to Ernst Kriek,

who is of the opinion that the autonomy of pedagogy or the “pure” science of education is not possible, because (...) *a young person grows up in different fields of the objective spirit. These fields constitute the subject of subdisciplines of philosophical sciences (logic, aesthetics, ethics, philosophy of law and state, philosophy of religion, etc.)* (ibid., pp. 61-62). For E. Kriek, sciences of education — due to their rules and methods — are close to philosophical sciences. Every attempt of separating pedagogy from philosophy and of subordinating its assumptions to experimental natural sciences results in the loss of its autonomy:

*(...) because then it must stem “from the child”, or frequently from “the goals” set by*

*adults, which makes it dependent on physiology and psychology of childhood — those sciences which treat the child only as a subject of nature. In this way, such a technical understanding of the autonomy of pedagogy leads to excessively broad “pedagogism”, which locates the foundations of pedagogical theory and practice in external influences and teaching aids* (ibid., p. 63).

Such an understanding of pedagogy as a psychophysiological technique was denied by G. Gentile, who criticized the emphasis on solely experimental studies as the only scientific ones, because in their essence they derive from the naturalistic worldview of positivist philosophy.

*A pedagogical problem appears as the own problem of pedagogy only when a child is recognized as a personality, at first as potential personality — when the child is considered only as a spiritual being, not merely a psychophysical organism. We become personalities when we implement timeless values, absolute ones in developing the subjective spirit and in following the rules which allow to control the objective sphere of spirit* (ibid., p. 65).

Therefore, theory of teaching is more than a pedagogical psychotechnique and physiotechnique. According to Hessen, pedagogy will never separate from philosophy to become a pure science as it is impossible to formulate norms of education and teaching on the basis of recognizing the reality of these processes — they are different in regard to every individual who is a subjective medium of the objective spirit. *Pedagogy is a science concerning the course and particular stages of this process. Thus, it is “the criticism of pedagogical experiences”, in the sense of aporia which should phenomenologically describe and explain the “difficulties”, “barriers” that should be eliminated as a result of educational acts* (ibid., p. 70).

Finally, the lowest layer in the autonomy of education is the school system’s autonomy in the light of educational policy. Hessen refers here to the achievements in this field of French and English school policy. In the case of France, he refers to philosophy promoted by Condorcet, who is of the opinion that education should include all citizens without any exception. This ought to be based

on broad tolerance in the state school system (beyond the monopoly of the Church) in order to educate autonomous and responsible citizens of the republic, who are able to understand the world and guide their self-development. Thus, the autonomy of school education should be a derivative of its decentralization and of depriving the state of educational monopoly in favour of providing (by the authorities) citizens with the right to education compliant with their potentialities and aspirations. In a similar way, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the English school system received state support without being deprived of autonomy or without eliminating private or religious schools.

*Neutral autonomy of the school system is a pure utopia, which at best can be only top-down imposed on citizens or carried on by the faith in the omnipotence of science. However, the appropriate autonomy of the school system can be fulfilled only "bottom-up" and only "from outside" — otherwise it becomes wholeness (totality) carried by the spirit of tolerance. It increases if it permeates into the elements of law in the society which organizes it from outside; at the same time, the state permeates into it as well, becoming closer to the society in this way (S. Hessen 1937a, p. 82).*

Autonomization and communization of the school system are inevitably associated with transforming this system. It is impossible to aim at bringing learners closer to life by school education on one hand and making it neutral towards life on the other. *Autonomy as wholeness means that teachers will not avoid arguable problems and will not hide their own views or beliefs, nor will they dogmatically implement the curriculum, because learners have to work out their own opinion and express it as well (ibid., p. 83).* It is not feasible to introduce the autonomy of the school system in the same way in all the countries, as in every state its organizational forms need to be taken into account as well as the level of tolerance of their existence. In this sense, Hessen repeats what Georg Kerschensteiner claims: (...) *the school system should be granted only "relative autonomy", not only because of the necessity of its limitations due to inner contradictions, which cannot be "eliminated" and have to be "maintained", kept. It is the reason why every autonomous school education is an organization of tolerance (ibid., p. 80).*

Chapter 4 "Pojęcie i cel wychowania moralnego [The notion and aim of moral education]" should be particularly interesting for theorists of education. For Hessen, moral education is the core of all educational — scientific, artistic, economic, etc. — processes. Education to morality is achieved neither by clarifying what morality is nor by moralizing in every possible situation in classroom, but by efficient organization of learners' work and life, by learners' experience of self-government, by taking part in social works — learning the rules of games or providing aid to others. *A learner who consciously and independently solves a mathematical task, educates morally more than the one who passively participates*

*in classes on morality, politely listens to moralizing comments of teachers and repeats their words about morality (ibid., p. 85).* If one wants a person to be a moral being, one cannot make morality a goal of this person's activity, as this results in phariseism. A person becomes moral in the course of their own activity, often in an unaware way. Following Wilhelm Flitner, Hessen applies four layers of the general phenomenon of education:

- 1<sup>st</sup> (the lowest) layer of education — the biological one, situated on the border of life and culture, the goal of education within it is the psychophysical development of the human organism — of all its functions and organs;
- 2<sup>nd</sup> social layer — in which the educational goal is a person's socialization, inclusion into the life in a social group, with further extension of social influences onto the social class, nation and state;
- 3<sup>rd</sup> layer of cultural values, such as science, art, law, language, technology and economy. It is the counterpart of Hegel's layer of the "objective spirit". Here is where lower levels of education diffuse with values;
- 4<sup>th</sup> layer of absolute spirituality, the kingdom of spirit. It is the highest level of a person's moral development. Here, subjects are the goals themselves, through implementing the ideas and values existing beyond them and through finding harmony everywhere in the surrounding world — the unity of absolute values. This developmental stage of a person is available as a transcendental or religious experience and as creation, which all are subordinated to the idea of good and love.

The issue of state education is discussed by Hessen in Chapter 5. Here, he indicates viewing the state as either a property of all its citizens obeying the established law as a result of social agreement or as power and authority, where the state is identified with the government which exerts rule and strength over citizens with the help of bureaucracy, militarization, indoctrination or dictatorship and permeates into all spheres of people's life. In the first type of democratic state, state of law, the task of the authorities is protecting the freedom of individuals — rather not so much keeping control over citizens than fulfilling by the authorities the service for the sake of higher spiritual values. It is the state's role to protect citizens' freedom and to support them in the implementation of cultural values in their spiritual life. The essence of moral education is simply the education which respects law and fair play.

*The aim of such education is what Englishmen call the "sense of cooperation", which means shaping collaboration skills, feeling of communality, solidarity,*

combined with the respect for alien individuality and with becoming aware of the own obligation to the whole. (...) The main measure of such education are "corporate activities" — self-government of learners, understood as voluntary associating or collaborating within games and at work (Hessen 1937a, p. 6).

In the second type of state, which today might seem to belong to the past, state education is the forming of citizens who are passive, yielding and submissive to the authorities. Here, implanting the only right ideology in learners comes to the foreground as the main means of indoctrination and ideological standardization. *In dictatorship-based countries, state education uses mostly means of drill, symbolic mass celebrations, propaganda and implanting the obligatory ideology. This education has a more mechanistic and extensive nature, refers rather to the peripheries of the individual than to the centre of the learner's personality* (Hessen 1997, pp. 152-153). State education uses propaganda for masses, appeals to emotions, to the need for imitation and subordination to masses — it leads to getting lost in a group as an individual is only a member of externally steered entity and a tool of the ruling power. The ruling authorities struggle for extending their strength, making this the main aim and motive of the historical process. *For such authorities, law is an order depending on the commanding policy. Also morality, science, art or even religion are rooted in the real needs of the state as a commanding association which has the monopoly to use necessary coercion* (Hessen 1937a, p. 102).

Two next chapters of Hessen's Czech monograph concern the issues more broadly discussed in the book *"Škola i demokracja na przełomie [School and democracy in the turn]"*, which has been also published in Poland, and pertains to school of working, education through work and shaping school systems. Therefore, this will not be discussed here. The volume is completed by a chapter on the principle of uniformity of totality and pedagogy — as the issues of the totality of the state and nation are undertaken by science, it needs to be thought over whether this feature should not comprise pedagogy in its new historical situation. As Hessen writes, the principle of uniformity was introduced into pedagogy by neohumanists — J.J. Rousseau, J. Herder, W. Humboldt, F. Schleiermacher — and it constitutes the legacy of modern morally educating didactics, which refers to the philosophy of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

*In modern pedagogy, the principle of totality has two different meanings, one right and the other one — false. In the first sense, often called the structural one and in practice taken over by the movement of new education (the so called active and diverse uniform school), this principle stands out in the structure of the new type of school. At the same time, the principle of totality is contrasted with the principle of abstract*

*generality. This can be easily explained with the case of the "integrity" of a school class. In the old passive religious school, the school class was atomistic: it was only a set of children sitting side by side, each of whom was to imitate the conduct of the teacher, as a role model, or of coursebook heroes. Active school — just the opposite — wants to turn the class into a community, in which one learner's activity completes the activity of another. Thus, the class as a whole generates something new and every learner has their irreplaceable, and therefore individual, place in this community* (ibid., p. 171).

Both in educational theory and practice, Hessen opposes any totalitarianisms and monisms, especially in their ideological dimension. Experienced by totalitarianisms and ideocracy of the states he had left in search for freedom, he affirmed the idea of dual education — of socialized individualities. Totalitarianism cannot serve the authorities' greed or their will to rule over the others. Pedagogically appropriate totalitarianism is a manifestation of the dialectics of integration and individualization, which will not question relativism, individualism and subjectivity. Thus, integral, holistic education is civil education to active participation of individuals in social life by opening learners' souls and enlivening their inner powers.

#### **Worldview in the translations of Sergei Hessen's dissertations**

Hessen dedicated two articles to the phenomenon of worldview and its relations to pedagogy in the annual founded by Bogdan Suchodolski "Kultura i Wychowanie [Culture and Education]" in 1933 and 1934 (see: Hessen, 1933, pp. 9-29; 1934, pp. 121-138). The Chief Editor explained the significance of Hessen's article in the following way:

*Professor Hessen's dissertation expresses the yearning for acquiring a worldview, but at the same time, it shows the roadlessness and dangers of this wish. The conclusions flowing from here for education will be presented by the same author in the second booklet. Then, we will be able to undertake the issue of the rights to impose a worldview in education* (From Editors, 1933, p. 108).

Two years later, Hessen submitted to translation into Czech his book "Światopogląd a pedagogika. Studia problemu autonomii [Worldview versus pedagogy. Studies into the problem of autonomy]". It was published in 1937 but has not been translated to Polish, therefore — it is not known to the researchers exploring the contemporary pedagogical thought of this period (Hessen 1937a).

While comparing the Czech and Polish versions of the dissertation on worldview, it occurred to me that the Czech edition of 1937 substantially differs from the Polish explanation of the phenomenon. In the Prague edition, some fragments or footnotes were deleted — either



by Hessen or the translator. What is missing in this version is the paragraph on the dual attitude of fighting against — for the Catholic worldview — and of defending — for liberalism — the principle of freedom in teaching and tolerance in education. Why did this happen? Was — in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic of Czechoslovakia — the truth about the positive engagement of the liberal wing of Catholicism in respecting pluralism in education unacceptable

to scientists and politicians? Expressing his firm conviction, Hessen wrote for the Polish reader: *Even for Catholicism, which holds to one eternal truth and believes in one universal authority, the existence of different worldviews, specifying detailed rules of didactics and pedagogy, is an undeniable fact. Catholicism also knows that in the current historical epoch this can be prevented only through education, not compulsion* [Hessen 1933, pp. 12-13].

Table 1.

**A comparison of the paragraph on the significance of the worldview in relation to pedagogy in S. Hessen's dissertations in the Polish and Czech language**  
(source: own elaboration based on the 1933 article and the 1937 book)

Polish version of 1933 (p. 121)	Czech version of 1937a (p. 26)
The most urgent issue of today's pedagogy is the one of worldview and its relation to school education and educational practice. The solution, according to which school should have a particular worldview is widely-spread today and is considered as self-evident.	In pedagogy, there is no more urgent problem than the one of worldview and its association with school education and educational practice. The leading idea that school education should be ideologically governed seems to me too far-reaching to be so often considered as self-evident.
p. 122	p. 27
Also in the theory of pedagogy, the belief that science of education depends on the worldview is repeated with growing frequency.	Also in pedagogical theory, the ideologically determined theory of teaching is becoming a more and more popular headword.
p. 122	p. 27
Thus, it seems that both liberalism and anti-liberalism stand up against neutral school, defending ideological school, which is increasingly often felt as a need of the epoch.	Liberalism and anti-liberalism seemingly support the neutrality of school and the defence of ideological schools, which face more and more widely seen expectations.

Both these translations raise awareness of how difficult it is to reflect the literality of the author's thought and the spiritual essence of his message. However, a significant difference can be seen between making the worldview the key tool for steering the school system and the standpoint which promotes possessing a worldview by school. The same takes place in another statement concerning the alleged dependence of pedagogy on the worldview, when Hessen writes about ideologically determined didactics. How topically current it is when Hessen draws attention to the degeneration of worldview into ideology while it becomes "a sword in the hands of practice". In the Czech edition, the philosopher refers to the standpoint of an eminent psychologist and reformer of school education Vaclav Příhoda, who in his dissertation of 1936, entitled "Ideologie nové

didaktiky" [Ideology of new didactics] used the term ideology in quite a different sense than the one which Hessen rejected. *Although he also refers in his notion of ideology to acting, but for him it is driven by the motive of power. Příhoda makes an assumption that the truth and moral conduct are in their last level identical. Therefore, ideology determines not only the criterion of conduct but also of the truth in its moral aspect* (Hessen 1937a, p. 23).

Moreover, in the next subchapter of the Czech edition devoted to overcoming the worldview in practice and to the temptations of ideocracy, Hessen makes his standpoint more precise in comparison to the contents published four years earlier in Polish. What follows is a comparison of another fragment of Hessen's publications, which differ in their contents.

Table 1.

**A comparison of the paragraph on overcoming the worldview in practice in S. Hessen's dissertations in the Polish and Czech language** (source: own elaboration based on the 1933 article and the 1937a book)

Polish version of 1934 (p. 26)	Czech version of 1937a (p. 24)
It is in this Christian love, evoking the feeling of common human responsibility, where the overcoming of worldview takes place, the overcoming of a "standpoint", thus — also of the dependence of acts from the incomplete, fragmentary reality.	In what real love, in the sense of Christian love of others, the overcoming of any dogmatic "standpoint" takes place. This is also the overcoming of fragmentary activity rooted in being and manifested in the awareness of complicity which this love contains.

It can be clearly seen that Hessen in an unambiguous way opposes the use of worldview by authorities for ruling people. He also contradicts promoting ideology with the help of which others are ruled under the guise of "objectivity". In their

activities, ideocrats are guided by greed for rule and will of power. *Hubris — as the majesty of power is the foundation of its existence and ideocracy is its ultimate motive* (Hessen, 1937a, p. 26). Hessen's study is the elevation of pedagogy to a philosophy-related



science, whose judgements result from valuing judgements, not affirmative ones — such that refer to someone's unaware or hidden worldview. Educators, teachers educate others with their own self, also by revealing (...) *most often covered roots of pedagogical theories, consolidated in the worldview, in spiritual structure of the environment from which they come* (...) (Suchodolski 1933, p. 6). Educating the young also bears signs of someone's worldview, which might get degenerated into ideology if the rulers want to consolidate its one-sided character as a dogma compulsory for all. How prophetic those statements were in the times of the (moving towards the centre) ideology of national socialism and later — fascism and communism.

As Hessen wrote, the power of such a degenerated worldview:

*(...) required by acting, should consist in motionlessness and solidifying. The one who acts has to stand for any party, must decide, and a decision always means one-sidedness. Therefore, this individual desires ideology which will remove all doubts and show everything as sure and clear. A worldview degenerated into ideology becomes a sword in the hands of practice* (Hessen, p. 25).

The lack of philosophical reflection in the life of societies and their elites makes these societies subjected to the sociotechnical impact of ideology as ideocracy — imposed on the society as necessity and eternal truth doing away with all doubts, the feeling of uncertainty or lack of support in the decisions taken as the only right ones.

*The task of ideology in practical life is the excusing of one-sidedness of acting and the liberation of the acting person from the feeling of guilt. As if a theoretical argument is to replace this person's lack of moral strength and depth. Anxiety of conscience of the one who feels guilty is to be calmed by eliminating the doubts, as if the feeling of guilt did not differ at all from intellectual doubts, as if this feeling was not equally necessary to purify and harden the deeds as doubting for the sake of knowledge* (ibid., p. 27).

### **Topicality of Hessen's philosophy — otherwise, about how little has changed**

Those who write dissertations on the topicality of their predecessors' humanistic thought face the dilemma how to explain it. Irena Wojnar has applied Hessen's perspective in viewing the category "topicality", reflecting its cultural dimension in an outstanding way: *"Topicality" is not only "modernity" itself but a living tradition, linking the past with the present in such a way that the past liberates within it from the disappearance in time and the present — from getting lost in daily routine* (I. Wojnar 1997, p. 56). However, in my opinion, topicality should not comprise only the present for which we read anew the still recognizable and inspiring (for the living) value of others' thoughts or achievements. In compliance

with Hessen's spirit, topicality should be also perceived in the dimension of timelessness — thus, taking into account the vision of future as well, if one wants to preserve what is taking place now in the universal sphere of senses also in the future. There is still another important issue associated with the topicality of pedagogical (not only Hessen's) thought which appears after many years when an author, preparing a new edition, deletes the fragments or parts which seem not necessary any longer.

This occurred in Hessen's case when in 1946 he submitted his book *Struktura i treść szkoły współczesnej [The structure and contents of contemporary school]* (which was a summary of his lectures in Free Polish University and in the University of Warsaw in 1936-1939) and decided to delete (...) *mostly critical comments on school education of fascist Italy and Germany as no longer valid* (S. Hessen 1947, p. 5). Yet, this is contradictory to his own vision of the history, tradition and significance of comparative studies in pedagogy, in the light of which the continuity of these processes is a social phenomenon, passed down with the help of education. It is impossible to predict whether what seems an already completed part of history will not return in the future in another or even identical form. Hessen himself wrote:

*The species and the social group, in contrast to the person and the individual, have an incomparably longer life period, which seems to be immortality. A well-known proverb says that "individuals pass away, nation is immortal". Whereas biological immortality is an act of reproduction and heredity, (also relative) immortality of a social group is an act of education* (S. Hessen 1973, p. 6).

In 2018, it can be said that the idea of fascist education and fascist state does not belong to the dead past. In Germany, there is a special zone for the inhabitants who do not recognize the end of the Third Reich. Therefore, they do not respect the German constitution and its legal regulations, they follow fascist pedagogy and the organization of Nazi state. What is also changing is the way of understanding and constituting democratic systems not only in Europe. In the same way that Hessen described in 1938, writing about the crisis of democracy and school education: (...) *which as every historical crisis may end either with complete fall or complete recovery* (S. Hessen 1938, p. 7), similar doubts about the direction of political transformations and the sense of school education are experienced today. The belief, common at the beginning of the Polish transformation of 1989, that it is enough to proclaim a new political system and it will somehow constitute itself — after almost 33 years — makes Poles more aware. Their lack of commitment to democracy, a weak level of civil responsibility, lack of political and civil engagement in building the civil society and social control over the institutions of state education will undermine such democracy in which

it is only enough to follow the procedures and formal rules without the spirit of solidarity. As Hessen wrote: *In this case, both a separate person and whole nations easily yield to the temptation of simplicity, the utopian belief that the whole misfortune comes from an outer circumstance and that it is enough to eliminate it in order to obtain the solution to all difficulties* (S. Hessen 1938, p. 7).

Hessen remarkably combined developmental psychology with philosophy of education. For 80 years, very little has changed in the relation between the process of youth's becoming mature enough to shape independently their own worldview and the process of education.

*If in this time period a worldview aspires to complete rule, the process of "inclusion" or "training" will contradict the need for personal autonomy; and if it gets destroyed then, the education itself will get perverted. It will change into propaganda, in the same way as the worldview which determines this education dries out into ideology — a mechanistic degeneration of education. It aims only at linking outer human masses, not at educating individuals as bastions of tradition — this can only take place through going beyond tradition towards eternal values, which set tasks requiring personal autonomy* (S. Hessen 1934, p. 132).

Is it not still the same that the most serious threat to youth's education is ideocracy, as a result of which the worldview gets petrified in rigid ideology that disregards human personalities and closes it for the dynamics of the changing world? Do people not experience the politics which is negatively defined as leading to the destruction of the opposition, as struggle for rule to fulfil the lust for power, instead of positive politics, appealing to chivalric fight, recognizing the value of rivals, but defeating them through the superiority of spiritual values? According

to Hessen, pedagogy should be ideologically neutral to become independent knowledge about education (ibid., p. 1336). What has come back along with the political transformation of the Polish society, implemented by right-wing parties of 2005-2007 and 2015-2022, is the issue of state education which is the opposite of liberal democracy and building a self-governed and open society.

### Ending

It can be seen how politicians' worldview is written by consecutive counter-revolutionists into their political programme, which at the same time suits their interests. As Jan Zielonka, a political scientist, writes:

*They laugh at alternative ideas and calm down those who promote inconvenient truths. Unfortunately, there is quite a lot of truth in counter-revolutionists' statement that democracy is increasingly more oligarchic: the relatively small elite makes attempts to rule in compliance with their own vision of the world, not making efforts to listen to their voters* (Zielonka 2018, p. 97).

From dreams about deliberative, participatory democracy, which Polish education experienced only in the first three years after the political transformation, it has passed to anocracy or dictatorship democracy, in which minority rights are not obeyed any longer, the voice of opposition and tri-partite rule are reduced. The will of the sovereign increasingly becomes illusory, which means that education and science will be a subject of the next bargains between the ruling party and citizens. A crisis of democracy and school education, as Hessen wrote in 1938, (...) *as every historical crisis may end either with complete fall or complete recovery* (S. Hessen 1938, p. 7). Do contemporary people not experience similar doubts about the direction of political transformations and the sense of school education?

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