Children, Youth and Family in the Face of Civilizational Challenges.

Editor's Introduction

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When Edward St Aubyn provided in a collection of biographic novels *Patrick Melrose* a detailed description of rape on himself perpetrated by his own father, a taboo has been broken that some cases taking place in higher realms are not to be discussed in public (2017). By making a detailed description of the events he justified them, allowing witnesses who were still alive to confirm them. There, he unleashed pangs of conscience for the failure to act at the time. He showed how he perpetrator's cruelty, unimaginable and thus considered unbelievable may prevent the victims' opportunity of being saved. He accused his own aristocratic circles of being responsible for his suffering that continued until he turned eight and their painful consequences later in life. He suggested that the circles' silence regarding rapes, sophisticated violence and the use of social status for ensuring one's bodily integrity does not stem solely from the lack of knowledge in the said environment, but rather stands for a cruel tolerance of a kind of eccentric 'afflictions' among people from these circles.

As an already well-known writer, Edward St Aubyn showed how a taboo within a specific environment undermines victims' chance of being saved by means of covering perpetrators. His suggestive description of drastic family violence that went on for years overlying luxurious living conditions of all actors of these events makes the said violence even more absurd, incomprehensible and cruel. It shows that nothing protects victims against their perpetrators. It is rather the latter who benefit from protection stemming from their social status built on a belief about moral superiority of people from that realm. Victims are doomed to solitude. They cannot even count on solidarity of other victims, who may at most be willing to avoid being persecuted themselves and seek occasion for revenge.

Descriptions of family violence and also various manifestations of structural violence (Bourdieu, Passeron 1990) arising from varying social statuses are numerous not only in the scientific literature but also in literary fiction. Works of popular culture happen to address this problem (for instance, the song “My name is Luka” by Susanne Vega. Or books: Paxman 2007; Mantel 2010). However, at present, disputes on abuse, violence and exploitation in various socio-family situations are based on reliable scientific data. Never in the past has the society had such a high awareness of consequences of this type of experiences for the entire life of victims. There is much evidence indicating that recently, the cup of bitterness has been filled to the brim the society has begun overflowing with bitterness and the society manifest willingness to defend victims. Undoubtedly, there has been a considerable rise in the society’s responsiveness to the issue of violence and sexual abuse. When cases of aggrieved minors or exploited dependent persons that took place even many years earlier are brought to daylight, the authority of circles entangled in the said dealings becomes crushed.

A search for the causes of violence used among family members, at school, educational care facilities or at workplace brings different answers. The climate of violence may be caused by various factors. Some societies talk about the morally destructive effect of war situations, others discuss poverty that leads to violence, while others address the impact of institutionalized upbringing based on rigor and subordination. In the United Kingdom, the blame for tension and violence spread by grand political personas has been recently attributed to nothing else but the education system at boarding schools where material wealth becomes mixed with emotional poverty. The hardening of the body and soul was supposed to create a man who was persistent, adamant, emotionally distant and capable of any radical decision. In reality, education of children from the upper class in this semi-totalitarian system takes place simultaneously with oppression. This stems from the child’s separation from his or her family and being subject to strict rules and the said violence that is applied to the child not only by his peer group but in many cases, as recently found, also by perverse adults. It comes to light that in these secure institutions, sexual exploitation and pedophilia were a norm. Effects of one’s stay at these institutions are referred to as the boarding school syndrome, which is manifested in an atrophy of positive emotions, a sense of abandonment combined with pressure to gain character traits valued in the new group, such as emotional coldness, total resourcefulness when left on one’s own, ability to deceive oneself and to deceive others, and the said learned ability to use violence. Children in care may continue to be stuck in a culture

of violence and exploitation through adulthood, the shell of their eccentricity and charming manners concealing both anxiety and rage. Domination over others, enforcing obedience are means for confirming values recognized by the authority structures and a continuation of their validity.

Presenting social problems in literature has a long tradition. It preceded both the formation of social sciences and the development of psychology as a discipline that systematically examines an individual. With the rise of social sciences, the role of literary fiction and artistic works has changed but not disappeared. Literary utterances are not considered diagnostically exhausting or even reliable in all aspects. They are read from the perspective of a convention characteristic of art. However, that which maintains the power of literary utterances is the sending of a specific (oftentimes orally important) message to wide audiences that do not use scientific theses. Society's attention can be drawn to the problem of tolerance of evil in its structures easier by applying many different media. Scientific analyses based on a legitimized methodology can be supported by artistic messages where exaggerated means of expression are used. The thing is to obtain the effect of a good intervention. I hope that articles contained in this volume will contribute to this very aim.

At present, the subject of abuse perpetrated on children and adolescents, particularly sexual exploitation, use of various forms of violence also stemming from the guardian neglecting the minor is widely discussed among psychologists and therapists. There are many guidebooks and reliable scientific publications that analyze these matters in the view of causes and consequences. Many of them is focused mainly on supporting actions aiming at providing aid to affected individuals (Anderson 1992).

The presented publication contains articles that address the issues of social functioning of minors who have experienced acts of violence and aggression in their short life, but also delivered it themselves. The dispute concerns those who fell victims to crime but also pursued criminal activity themselves. Analytical and empirical studies conducted in the field of social sciences dedicated to minor victims of and criminals, focused on determining factors and circumstances that contribute to the breaking of rules of law are highly important both from the perspective of prophylaxis and social rehabilitation.

The presented volume includes a highly important article by Professor Antonia Bifulco, who has been addressing the issues of child exploitation and neglect in her work for many years. They constitute the main area of her professional interests as a person specializing in conducting studies in Lifespan Psychology and as a member of the Centre for Abuse and Trauma Studies (CATS) [Bifulco, Morgan 1998; Bifulco, Geraldine 2012; Webster, Davidson, Bifulco 2015]. The author presents the issue of vast consequences of sexual exploitation of young individuals and their neglect in adolescence referring to rich English-language scientific literature and findings of her empirical studies. She systematizes the knowledge about the problem and shows the necessity of taking many aspects into account in research, not only those whose nature pertains to psychology, but also social studies, culture or economics. For many readers, this article may constitute a substantive support and aid in directing their own research.

Grzegorz Kudlak's article presents an analysis of impulsivity, empathy and risk seeking among minors who found themselves under the control of the system of justice due to having committed a crime (37 participants) and a peer control group (60 participants). The author has found that in population he studied minors who committed a crime showed a clearly higher impulsivity level and simultaneously, a lower level of empathy compared to the control group. In turn, the third investigated variable, risk seeking, was at a similar level. The author stressed complexity of the examined phenomena and recommended carefulness and diagnostic diligence when conducting further studies that would add to the findings he has obtained. When foreseeing further research, he puts forward a hypothesis about the significant role of empathy as a psychological factor that intervenes in the process of impulsive reactions that lead to the delivery of criminal acts.

Paweł Kozłowski's article dedicated to aggression, auto-aggression, self-harm and acts of destruction directed towards substitutive objects is based on research on a considerable population of minors. The author took into account data concerning 147 minors including 77 individuals on probation for an offence or a crime they committed. He conducted a multivariate comparison analysis of causes and effects of aggressive behaviors and seeking various forms of violence by the minors supervised by a probation officer and their peers from the control group. His analysis links psychological factors with the socio-economic and cultural ones. It explains phenomena such as the process of displacing aggressive reactions onto substitutive objects and basing one's self-esteem on achievements in the field of non-

legislative actions. The sense of familiarity with the subject in the presenting of cases of aggressive behavior of minors one has when reading Kozłowski's article stems from data from a structured fragment of empirical research complemented with knowledge about these phenomena acquired in the course of his work as a probation officer. It can be described as a long-term participant observation. In a discrete manner this knowledge permeates into the description, enriching it with important details. In the article, attention is drawn to the precise language of description that avoids discrediting evaluation and to the attention given to the concealed side of the studied phenomena. These include, among others, the observation that neglect, molesting or exploitation of minors is not only condemning them to be experiencing literal aggression and violence. It is also condemning minors to be experiencing symbolic, structural violence.

In their article, Martina Urbanova, Jan Holas and Pavel Tvrdíkov explain differences between two forms of mediation conducted in the area of disputable social matters, particularly in social work. Their usage is determined by the type of conflict situation and the goal mediating parties seek to attain. Narrative mediation is different to solution-oriented mediation in that which those who conduct it wish to achieve for their parties and whether they are dealing with a one-time situation or could further contact between the parties who participate in the mediatory event be foreseen (Morton, Coleman 2000; Dahrendorf 2008; Królikowska 2009; Simmel 2008). This article can be regarded as important for this volume in the context of considering problems of violence as related to a conflict, infringing the moral, legal and social order, and hence, calling for reactions broadly defined as mediation and corrective reactions.

The presentation of articles written by authors originating from different countries must be accompanied by a reservation that the discussed social-psychological problems are grounded in specific material conditions and specific historically shaped social and family relations. Analyses conducted in a given country should give due account to similarity of some issues, yet one should also bear in mind the different nature of others. In all conditions one ought to choose analytical categories proper for a given situation and take into consideration proper hierarchy of the weight of problems. This matter is of particular significance when it comes to issues from the field of psychology (Galasiński 2008). Cultural, social and material conditioning is highly important especially in the age of globalization where it is easier to take note of similarities between some situations than to notice the meaning of differences that characterize them. Nonetheless, when thinking about remedies in matters significant for a

young person experiencing oppression, particularly a minor who is being neglected, molested, abused and consequently experiences also structural violence, all factors must be scrupulously analyzed.

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