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Hagit Mishkin – Towards the Pedagogy of Care and its Values

Introduction

This issue is dedicated to the memory of our colleague Dr. Hagit Mishkin, with whom we share not only our activities in the International Association for Intercultural Education, but also respect and work for the great humanistic values and their implementation into pedagogical practice. Dr. Mishkin's activities are presented in detail in the texts by her colleagues published below. At this point, we only allow ourselves to mention that she focused her activities on the social inclusion of the marginalized groups in Israel, especially immigrants from Ethiopia.

Racially and – to some extent – culturally different, they have come to Israel, which they perceive as their homeland. However, their entry into a new society is not always easy: they often encounter problems of adaptation to the new living conditions, challenges of acculturation, and the lack of social acceptance due to their racial distinctiveness. Children and young people are in a particularly difficult situation as they are not always able to cope with growing into a new, unknown to them country and a new society.

Dr. Hagit Mishkin dedicated her life and work to the groups which are the weakest and most sensitive among immigrants to Israel. However, her life as well as her activities have been brutally interrupted by the Hamas

terrorist attack in early October 2023: she became one of the first victims of this attack. She orphaned both her own three small children and her Ethiopian dependents. This does not mean however that her values, ideas, and the program she had implemented died with her. She herself passed away, but the memory of the good she did remains among us: good never succumbs to evil. As well as Dr. Hagit Mishkin's concern for the world and other people successfully implementing the Pedagogy of Care.

Basic Assumptions of the Pedagogy of Care

The basics for the Pedagogy of Care have been defined in late 70-ties of the 20th Century by C. Gillan and N. Noddings. The prototype for its conceptualization was the caring relationships between mother and child. Following the above-mentioned assumptions the basic theses contained the postulates of care for other people as a central and alternative value to mercantile and utilitarian values. By linking it with selfless actions undertaken for the good of other people, they highlighted the moral aspects of interpersonal relationships and indicated the costs and consequences of the lack of care manifested in both private and economic-political relationships.

C. Gillan defined mature morality as the social orientation characterized by striving for harmony in interpersonal relationships, responsibility, avoidance of violence, empathetic compassion, and care for others. She contrasted care with justice, arguing that the category of justice focuses on the rational analysis of the act itself, while care considers its emotional side, consequences, and the broader and social context (Gillan, 1977). The broader approach is presented by N. Noddings (1984), who initiated the philosophy of Care Pedagogy. The basis of this concept is the idea of a perfect family in which the needs of all members are met while respecting their individuality and subjectivity. Following the above mentioned, she defined three types of care:

- care defined in categories of an attitude towards other people characterized by caring,
- care defined as the form of action (work) for others and
- care defined in terms of the empathetic, attentive, and dialogical relationship extended over time between the caring person and the person experiencing this care.

N. Noddings also distinguished natural care from the moral one. The first of the categories is a consequence of the natural reflex of compassion attributed to people with a properly formed psyche (this reflex is not felt by individuals with psycho- and sociopathic personalities). Being a natural and,

to some extent, instinctive socio-emotional reaction (like thoughtless help to others in dangerous situations), it is not preceded by ethical or utilitarian reflection on one's own behavior. In contrast, the basis of moral concern is a rational consideration of the principles of right action. Moreover, both forms of care may remain in a conflict situation, the proper solution of which is to be guided by the instinctive, natural reflex of kindness towards another person.

Citing the author, care has a relational nature, and it is shaped by the interferences of the natural need to care for other people (especially close relatives) and the specific nature of social interactions. The basis for its existence is establishing a relationship with another person, recognizing their good and needs, undertaking actions to implement this value in a practice as well as taking into account the subjectivity of that person. This kind of relationship usually is not symmetrical (mutual care of equal partners characterizes a relationship of friendship). Most often, it is a system in which one of the partners has a stronger position (expressed in the ability to make decisions and to take control), while the other one is in a situation of dependence and subordination (the examples of such a relation are parent-child and teacher-student relationships). However, the existing imbalance should be compensated by the specificity of mutual obligations resulting from the respect and kindness existing in this relationship. The obligations of the caregiver include adopting an attitude of partnership, openness and dialogue that enable understanding and respect for the point of view of the care-receiver as well as accepting moral responsibility for the consequences of decisions made. In response, the care-receiver should display his/her acceptance, gratitude, and respect, as well as a readiness of cooperation with the caring person. Moreover, the above presented relation has the individual, unique character due to the lack of universal patterns of partnership behaviors (Noddings, 1984).

According to the Noddings's paradigm of Care Pedagogy, the concern about the others can take two forms: indirect or direct one. The first one is manifested by the tendency to meet the needs of another person without personal contacts and can be exemplified by institutional activities aimed at solving problems of assistance, care, and support in relation to larger and often anonymous groups of people (such as health care and education systems, social and migration policies). The different nature has been attributed to the direct forms characterized by personal involvement in contacts with the people we care for. There have been pointed also some connections between both above-mentioned forms of care. Namely, the indirect forms can stimulate direct ones, but are not sufficient to replace them.

The diversity of interdependencies between people results in graduation of the obligations to care for others and the responsibility associated with it. Moreover, the limits of ethical responsibility for others are determined by the existence or possibility of a dialogical relationship in the existing relationship. The lack of such situational features releases the entity from the obligation of care. The releasing circumstance is also the lack of voluntary acceptance of the relationship and the responsibility that comes with it. The subject of similar discussions can also be the differentiation of bonds in situations where the interests of several people are conflicted. As N. Noddings (1984) points, in this kind of situations the stronger obligations exist in relation to people who are in the closer relationship with the entity (e.g., members of its own family) than to people who are more distant from him or her (e.g., neighbors).

Shaping the attitude of care and responsibility for others is the basic task of the Pedagogy of Care. It is understood as a long-term process beginning in the early stages of a child development with the experience of care delivered to children by their parents and relatives, and then with school education emphasizing both moral education in the spirit of humanistic values (including the importance of caring for others, also animals), as well as practical dialogic and caring competences. An important condition for the implementation of these postulates is an axiological transformation expressed in a departure from education promoting egoistic individualism oriented towards power, control, domination, and competition in the zero-game paradigm towards education promoting community values, harmony, cooperation, and a sense of mutual care and trust (Bleszyńska, Orłowska, 2023).

Exposing the importance of care as a basic value of social activities can also be found in the works of D. Engster. He views care as the basic social virtue manifesting itself in moral obligations to care for, support and aid others resulting from the nature of human interdependences, which grant members of a given community the rights to expect help in times of need. Pointing out that in every culture we can find forms of activities supporting the existence and development of individuals and social communities by understanding and satisfying their needs to at least a minimal extent, he distinguishes three types of such activities:

- assistance in meeting basic biological needs,
- support in the development of basic skills enabling self-realization and functioning in society, and
- helping to avoid or alleviate physical and mental suffering (Engster, 2005, 52).

Moreover, successful caring should consider not only the goals, but also the measures taken as well as the conditions for its implementation, with

particular emphasis on the situation and preferences of the person being cared for. Caring attitude should be also guided by three principles known as the caring virtues:

- empathy understood as sensitivity to the needs, suffering and individual capabilities of a given person,
- respect for the person and oneself, and
- openness to feedback (Engster, 2005, 56).

Comparing the concepts of N. Noddings and D. Engster we must state that the second of the mentioned authors perceives the obligation to practical implementation of caring attitude more broadly than N. Noddings. He extends the obligation to care for others to areas beyond individual actions, making it the basis of social policy and the pragmatics of public life. The bonding of politics and social practice with the moral category of care is found also in the works of J. C. Tronto (2006, 1993). Arguing with the feminist approach perceiving care as an attribute of femininity and motherhood, she emphasizes the universal nature of the phenomenon of caring for others. Pointing to the social nature of man, she draws attention to the fact that caring for others is the basic form of action aimed at ensuring a given community the best possible living conditions in the surrounding world. According to the cited author, care takes a central place in the lives of individuals and social communities perceived as structures whose individual elements are linked by bonds of cooperation and mutual care taking socially diverse forms. However, to create the basis for social bonds and relationships, care should coexist with other social values such as social justice and equity (Tronto, 1993),

As J.C. Tronto's assumes, the universality and social importance of caring for others means that it cannot be privatized and remain outside the area of interest and responsibility of the state (Tronto, 1993). The principles of equality and social justice require that care for others should be shared equally among all participants of social life, constituting a crucial element of the policy aimed at eliminating inequalities. Thus, the special attention of the state and its agencies should be paid to the fair distribution of aid resources, considering the actual needs of people applying for aid, while omitting or reducing claims that are less justified, although sometimes more publicized. Tying justice to equality, J. C. Tronto (2006) calls also for combating social inequalities related to the provision of care and care. She indicates that both people directly involved in caring for others and their dependents are subject of strong marginalization due to such factors as:

- neoliberal political and economic doctrines promoting primitively understood social Darwinism, and

- rejecting the social dimension and importance of care perceived as an insignificant private matter or a praiseworthy but not necessary charitable activity (Tronto, 2006).

Postulating the rejection of the above-mentioned social dogmas and presenting care as one of the fundamental values of social life, J. C. Tronto, like N. Noddings and D. Engster, joins the pedagogical discourse outlined at the beginning of this chapter, promoting the revitalization of great humanistic values both in education and social life.

This postulate, however, is not limited to the narrow circles related to education or social policy, only. It is also articulated by all spiritual leaders of the world as well as the greatest secular thinkers who recall the fundamental importance of care, justice, fraternity, and fidelity to others.

The values they recall had been implemented in practice also by Dr Hagit Mishkin. We believe that her successors will follow the path chosen by her.

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