

Introduction

When meta-analysing social work¹ in a way that integrates the philosophical perspective with a socio-pedagogical point of view, questions about the validity of such an approach to this subject may be expected. Social work with its theoretical as well as practical issues as being developed in Poland within social pedagogy may be seen as a fragment of reality encompassing praxeology and, in particular, the methodology of social activity. Its permanent foundation is the theory built up in the course of socio-pedagogical scientific activity. Why then reach for the scientific achievements of philosophy when considering the states, phenomena and processes involved in social work's theory and practice? What is the rationalisation for analysing this concept on the grounds of ethics, ontology or epistemology? Who might find it useful (or usable) to reach for the results of research conducted from the point of view of social pedagogy, but reaching back to philosophical roots in meta-analysis? Such questions are sometimes reinforced *explicite* by accusations of unwarranted crossing of the disciplinary boundaries of social pedagogy. Setting aside questions of intent surrounding trickster-like activity (also present in academic settings), it is worth finding substantive answers to the sample questions mentioned above. To this end, it is possible to use a problem-specific argumentation referring to the relationship of the sciences with their origins rooted in philosophy and the so-called "theoretical sciences".

¹ The category of 'social work' in the dimension of interest encompasses both the field of theory and the practice of applied (liberated) social service activities.

Social pedagogy in Poland was formed as one of the practical sciences serving to transform the reality of human life in the name of the common good, or the ideal, which entails improving the conditions and quality of living in the present and the future.² Its ontological status could provide a sufficient answer to questions about the meaning of 'philosophising' in social pedagogy. However, the assumptions embedded in the ethical essence of Polish social pedagogy, which in a broader context were articulated by Helena Radlińska and Natalia Gąsiorowska during the Third International Moral Education Congress in Geneva, are worth mentioning. It was the first congress after the First World War (taking place in 1922), where the Polish representatives proclaimed: "In a free Poland, we want to promote the love of open, publicly evaluated conduct, civil courage and simplicity."³

The message within such a declaration seems to remain relevant in the next century. It may even become a spark for contemporary seekers of the universum in private and public life. In social pedagogy and other sciences, the openness of conduct under public scrutiny, civil courage and simplicity could be a set of indicators for evaluating scientists' actions. The instruments currently in use, such as "closed reviews," "secret scientific deliberations," "citation indices," "internationalisation indices," etc., seem to be a contemporary negation of the ethos of a university – an institution of public trust.

Therefore, while seeking answers to the questions highlighted above, ones that meet the criteria of: 1) simplicity,⁴ 2) civil courage,⁵

2 H. Radlińska, *Pedagogika społeczna*, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław-Warsaw-Cracow 1961, p. 360–366.

3 H. Radlińska, *Z dziejów pracy społecznej i oświatowej*, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław-Warsaw-Cracow 1964, p. 413.

4 In this sense, simplicity is the negation of simple-mindedness, which has nothing to do with science and sometimes happens to be "a guest" in the opinions of so-called experts evaluating grant applications or the scientific achievements of candidates undergoing scientific promotion procedures (programmes).

5 Civil courage, in this case, means undertaking activity oriented towards the discovery and dissemination of the truth, despite the risks associated with possible obstructionism and criticism coming from scientific opponents holding institutional power in all its forms of manifestation (formal power, institutional authority, etc.).

3) openness of conduct⁶ and 4) public evaluation,⁷ it may be noted that it is necessary to understand what a scientist (including a social pedagogue) does⁸ to comprehend the development of any science (including social pedagogy as an applied science). If one of the subjects of socio-pedagogical observations is social work, it should be assumed that this concept deserves and, at the same time requires, an adequate meta-analysis that facilitates the understanding of: 1) the essence of this entity (ontology), 2) the possibilities, limits and principles of understanding it (epistemology), as well as: 3) the essence of its construction in relation to everyday life that blends social work with human life, conduct, activities undertaken in its area, etc. (ethics).

In focusing attention on issues concerning social work ethics, let us emphasise that they may be investigated from a variety of disciplinary, paradigmatic, theoretical, cultural, historical, praxeological, etc. perspectives. The monograph handed over to the readers refers to a research plan (including publishing plans) undertaken in 2000.⁹

Its objective was to prepare a scientific analysis of issues that are part of the discourse on the theory and practice of serving people, families, social groups, local communities and societies. This intention encompasses, in particular, the issue of social service,

6 The openness of the proceedings in this context is related to the fairness and transparency of the point of view and the perspective of conducting certain analyses, scientific studies, etc.

7 Public evaluation here means subjecting oneself to scientific and at the same time substantive criticism both in the scientific community and in the circles of people holding practical experience of conducting the activities inherent in the field of social work.

8 Responding to a potential allegation regarding the language of expression contained in this monograph, the issues addressed here are complex and multidimensional. The use of compound sentences has a well-established and well-founded tradition in science (including philosophical treatises as well as scientific monographs rooted in Polish social pedagogy). They are one of the forms of scientific presentation of analysed problems. The scientific publications of Helena Radlińska may serve as an example for social pedagogues while, in the field of philosophy, exemplification is provided by the texts of classic and contemporary representatives of this science (reflection).

9 A. Żukiewicz, *Wprowadzenie do ontologii pracy społecznej. Odniesienia do społeczno-pedagogicznej refleksji Heleny Radlińskiej*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Pedagogicznego, Kraków 2009, s. 42.

with social work being an integral and simultaneously one of the central areas of activities (scientific and practical). The essence of social work is highlighted here from the point of view of social pedagogy,¹⁰ which in Polish conditions provided the scientific momentum for the development of the field of theory-shaping activity in the first half of the 20th century.¹¹ Within social pedagogy developed in Poland from 1908¹² onwards, the theoretical and methodical bases for the practice of service encompassing educational, cultural and social activities were established.

Irrespective of the socio-pedagogical axis underlying this study, the analysis of the issues of social work ethics refers to the results of ethical research developed in the field of philosophy. This is a deliberate and necessary choice because of the scientific disciplinary interdependence. Also, the sources of pedagogical (pedagogical-social) reflection are rooted in philosophical reflection on the reality of human life and social activity.¹³ The initiated publishing

10 H. Radlińska, *Pedagogika społeczna*, *op. cit.*, p. 361–362.

11 H. Radlińska: *O poziom pracy społecznej*, "Samorząd" 1922, p. 513–514; *Szkoły pracy społecznej i oświatowej za granicą*, "Polska Oświata Pozaszkolna" 1925, p. 322–325; *Z pól pracy społecznej za granicą*, "Samorząd" 1925, p. 700–703; *Studium Pracy Społeczno-Oświatowej przy Wydziale Pedagogicznym Wolnej Wszechnicy Polskiej*, "Samorząd" 1925, p. 419–420; *Kształcenie pracowników społecznych*, "Praca i Opieka Społeczna" 1927, p. 100–107; *Szkoły pracy społecznej w Polsce*, Komitet Polski Międzynarodowej Konferencji Służby Społecznej, MPiOS, Warsaw 1928; *Charakterystyka piśmiennictwa z zakresu pracy społecznej*, [In:] *Bibliografia pracy społecznej 1900–1928*, ed. J. Muszkowski, H. Radlińska, Prace Seminarium Bibliograficznego WWP, Warsaw 1928, p. VII–XXV; *Badania społeczne i praktyka pracy społecznej. Z obrad Międzynarodowego Komitetu Szkół Pracy Społecznej*, "Oświata i Wychowanie" 1932, p. 997–1004; *Przygotowanie do zawodowej pracy społecznej i badań społecznych*, "Życie Młodych" 1938, p. 209–215; *O istocie pracy społecznej*, "Pismo Młodych" 1943, nr 3; *Pracownik społeczny*, "Oświata i Kultura" 1948, p. 175–186 et al.

12 The first scientific lecture defining the basic assumptions of social pedagogy in Poland was Helena Radlińska's presentation entitled *Z zagadnień pedagogiki społecznej*, delivered in Cracow on 25 April 1908 during the proceedings of the Cracow Koło Towarzystwa Nauczycieli Szkół Wyższych (Eng. Branch of the Society of Higher Education Teachers). In the Special Collections of the Library of the University of Lodz, there is an archival typescript of this text done by H. Radlińska (without a signature). An article with the same title was also published in the journal "Muzeum," XXIV, volume II, notebook 2, year 1908, Lviv, p. 52–63. This is the first social-pedagogical text of a scientific nature and is considered to be the disciplinary start of this science in Poland, then under partition.

13 Compare: H. Radlińska, *Pedagogika społeczna*, *op. cit.*, p. 363–364.

triolet, which in its entirety is dedicated to a socio-pedagogical meta-analysis of social work, covers three main areas of reference: ontology, epistemology and ethics. The subject of cognition has been explored in both Polish and foreign conditions (England, Germany, the Czech Republic, the USA).¹⁴ The results of the empirical research to date (participatory – inquiry and action) and the analysis of documents and source texts formed the basis for the already published monographs that cover the ontological and epistemological perspectives of social work (theories, categories and fields of practice). Still, in 2009, the last (presented here) feature of the intended analysis was to cover issues limited to the axiological sphere only.¹⁵ However, both the results of my research and the in-depth philosophical study (analysis of the literature on the subject, scientific consultations, participation in the discourse among philosophers) justified the validity of extending the scope by adding further areas of ethics, i.e. aretology and deontology. Next to axiology, they are equally important for the theoretical and methodical bases of the activities undertaken in the field of social work.¹⁶

Philosophical reflection on reality from an ethical point of view includes, in its essence, all branches that are part of the space of both general ethics and specific ethics.¹⁷ Not every branch was included in this study. This is not a philosophical treatise. Socio-pedagogical analysis simultaneously enables and enforces

14 A. Żukiewicz, *Wprowadzenie do ontologii pracy społecznej*, op. cit., p.42–44.

15 *Ibidem*, p.12–13.

16 The choice of axiology, aretology and deontology, all forming their respective areas within the field of ethics, is justified by the subject-matter capacity of these branches and their coherence with issues of social work practice. Both values, virtues (moral fitness) and norms (deontological duties) belong to the catalogue of ideas analysed in connection with the activities of social service representatives. This does not mean that issues related to other branches (currents) of ethics, such as utilitarianism, syneidesiology or eudaimonism, are outside of the analytical interest in the context of social work ethics. These have not been included in this project due to the adopted framework. However, they will be the subject of continued ethical inquiries in subsequent research projects in this area.

17 See more: T. Ślipko, *Zarys etyki ogólnej*, Wydawnictwo WAM, Cracow 2004, p. 53 et seq.; T. Ślipko, *Zarys etyki szczegółowej*, T. 1, Wydawnictwo WAM, Cracow 2005, p. 21 et seq.; J.M. Byrska, *Wykłady z etyki ogólnej*, Wydawnictwo “Scriptum,” Cracow 2018, p.14 et seq.

the restriction of the field of reference to those elements of the philosophical acquis that are useful from the point of view of the adopted scientific intention. On the one hand, this study refers to selected results of the work of philosophers-ethicists; on the other hand, it remains in disciplinary coherence with the socio-pedagogical optics of capturing a selected slice of reality. Such a solution coincides with the essence of the disciplinary assumptions of Polish social pedagogy, which were exposed by Helena Radlińska, who wrote:

Social pedagogy is a practical science, developing at the intersection of human, biological and social sciences with ethics and cultural studies (cultural theory and history) thanks to its own point of view. (...) The philosophy of upbringing contributes general views to social pedagogy, receiving from it the formulation of many issues not hitherto considered in this philosophy¹⁸ (translated).

The founder of Polish social pedagogy emphasised the transdisciplinary dimension of this discipline (subdiscipline)¹⁹ for a reason. Adding to the above citation, the author pointed out the links, the interdependence and the unity of science, which in its essence is intended to improve the quality of human life and the elimination of obstacles that form barriers to social development. The divisions within science are treated as a way of isolating detailed fields of research and generating appropriate methods typical of particular disciplines. However, these dissimilarities did not exclude, according to Helena Radlińska, “the interpenetration of issues, the common search for truth, the use of manufactured tools.”²⁰

18 H. Radlińska, *Pedagogika społeczna, op. cit.*, p. 361–363.

19 In formal terms, social pedagogy is a part (area) of pedagogy recognised as a scientific discipline and included in the applicable register of sciences [Regulation of the Minister of Education and Science of 11 October 2022 on the fields of science, scientific disciplines and artistic disciplines; Journal of Laws, 27.10.2022, item 2202]. However, the changeability of the law and the simultaneous disciplinary development of social pedagogy allows for the third decade of the 21st century to assume that this science under Polish conditions is a separate area of theoretical, research and educational activity rooted in the academic tradition. Hence, in this study, it is treated as a science and a sub-discipline of pedagogy in the process of disciplinary empowerment.

20 H. Radlińska, *Pedagogika społeczna, op. cit.*, p. 364.

Continuing the question of the unity of science and, in particular, the applied nature of social pedagogy drawing on the achievements of other fields and disciplines of science while enriching them with its own achievements, the teleological aspect of this monograph should be emphasised. It is not only a presentation of the research and the analysis of the ethical dimension of social work but may also become a trigger for scientific collaboration in the future. In particular, it is a question of the interaction of social pedagogues with philosophers (ethicists) as well as psychologists (family psychology, social psychology, developmental psychology), sociologists (sociology of upbringing, sociology of family, sociology of culture), familyologists, social politicians, theologians (moral theology, family theology), historians, medics (representatives of the health and hygiene sciences), cultural scientists and representatives of other sciences dealing with the questions of human life and activity in the individual and collective dimension. The content of this study is not limited to the presentation of social and pedagogical concepts. It reveals research problems that require solutions based on competencies developed during the disciplinary development of pedagogy and other sciences, including philosophy. Hopefully, this will trigger deeper reflection on pluridisciplinary partnerships across sciences, regardless of their formal divisions and classifications. This may lead to research initiatives integrating the scientific strengths of different fields and disciplines (subdisciplines). Indeed, the results of such collaborations may generate theoretical foundations for practicing service within social work.

The structure of this monograph includes an introductory section that reveals the intention and execution of the research and the publishing intents.²¹ The next part – Chapter One – serves a specific background to the issues of social work ethics. It includes references to ontology and epistemology, but also complements the existing findings mentioned in the previous parts of the triptych on social work. This chapter is based on research findings inspired by the

²¹ H. Radlińska wrote about honesty of intention and performance, encouraging scientific honesty in cognition as a useful approach to life-oriented activities [H. Radlińska, *Pedagogika społeczna, op. cit.*, p. 63].

discourse generated by monographs published in 2009²² and 2015.²³ These publications are integral components of the collection devoted to social work ideas – a philosophical triptych on social work. Chapter Two outlines the ethical dimension of the undertaken analysis from the perspective of social pedagogy. Chapters Three, Four and Five present the results of the ethical analyses of social work, with a corresponding division into three main dimensions: aretological, axiological and deontological. The monograph finishes by indicating areas for further research as well as providing relevant recommendations (theoretical, research-related and methodical) which, teleologically speaking, may stimulate further research both in the academic corpus and in the field of service practice carried out in various areas of social work.

This monograph was initiated by a large group of people to whom acknowledgements are due.²⁴ They are field research participants from the country and abroad, colleagues from academia as well as practitioners (consultants, scientific partners and community interaction and colleagues with administrative functions in social as well as academic institutions). The experience gathered while preparing previous monographs in this triptych allows to assume that, yet again, there will be critics for whom such a publication will trigger emotional reactions. I would like to express my appreciation to this group of readers because their different perceptions of social service have broadened the insight into the fragment of reality under study. The attachment to the category of outreach work, settled during the communist period, is fundamental for many academics in considering issues related to contemporary activity in the field of social theory and practice.

22 A. Żukiewicz, *Wprowadzenie do ontologii pracy społecznej*, op. cit.

23 *Idem*, *Wprowadzenie do epistemologii pracy społecznej. Odniesienia do społeczno-pedagogicznej perspektywy poznania pracy społecznej*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2015.

24 The list of names would be exceedingly long, as it includes people from Poland and abroad with whom I have had research, academic, practical and, above all, social relationships over the past 20 years. Hence, let me refrain from naming those to whom I remain grateful, leaving this to the realm of personal communication. I hope to secure institutional support to publish this monograph in English so that it may reach further readers – friends and colleagues from abroad with whom I have interacted during field research, consultancy and academic exchange projects.

References to the past, recalling events related to brutally and institutionally enforced change, may cause resistance (sometimes aggression) in those who have participated in the revealed (symbolic and sometimes very literal) violence. Moving away from the tradition of social work and adopting the so-called new category (outreach work), which was in line with the assumptions of the socialist system, was anchored in ideological premises that were of crucial importance to the communist authorities in post-war Poland. Hence, for those whose biographical past is intertwined with the propagation (promotion) of the systemic ideology of the People's Republic of Poland,²⁵ the truth about political censorship, communist violence (physical, psychological, economic, institutional, etc.), the omissions and wasted opportunities brought by the systemic transformation after 1989 (some social educators of the time did not see or did not use the opportunity to return to the essence of the disciplinary assumptions and ideas rooted by Helena Radlińska in Polish social pedagogy), must result in an emotional negation. With their 'alumni' by their side – the institutional continuators of the ideological entanglement of social pedagogy in a materialist (Marxist/neo-Marxist) vision of the world and social affairs – they demonstrate their opposition to any manifestation of the truth about the politicisation of science during the communist period. However, the science itself in its essential layer is unchanging, still the same. Its essence is the search for truth; in its teleological dimension, it will serve humankind in achieving higher levels of civilisation, both as individuals and families as well as social groups, communities or entire societies.

The marginalisation of the voice of the truth about the “difficult past” as well as a kind of contemporary censorship in the form of ideological pseudo-reviews generated in publishing processes, during grant applications during scientific and promotion-related

25 The term “People's Republic of Poland” (PRL) is used in the thesis as a general reference to post-war Poland between 1944 and 1989. Researchers of modern history stress that it was a country shaped by supporters of pro-Soviet communist ideology. However, in a literal sense, the People's Republic of Poland was established as a state entity in the Constitution of 22 July 1952. See: P. Borecki, *Tworzenie konstytucji PRL*, “Czasopismo Prawno--Historyczne” 2008, no. 1, p. 163–180; F. Musiał, *Triumfi i pierwszy kryzys “Ludowej” Polski (1948–1956)*, [In:] *Od niepodległości do niepodległości. Historia Polski 1918– 1989*, ed. A. Dziurok, M. Gałęzowski, Ł. Kamiński, F. Musiał, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, Warsaw 2010, p. 254–262.

procedures, are the methods sometimes adopted by the so-called “defenders” of the hypocritical reality of communist Poland. The successive reforms of science and higher education (after the regime change) did not contribute to a significant increase in academic work culture. It is possible to fall under the impression that a university, seen as an institution of scientific service, has been transformed into some ‘factory’. Its leading objective seems to be the production of something that is often questionable even to the ‘manufacturers.’²⁶ In such a situation, ethical issues appear as both an opportunity and a threat. They are an opportunity for those searching for the truth in the course of scientific research, but a threat to those who wish to preserve at all costs the social or professional status achieved in the past. Even limiting the field of analysis to the area of service within social work may be a signal to mobilise forces in the struggle against the truth about the past and the present. Is giving way, surrendering, moving with the so-called “scientific mainstream” and pretending that “everything is fine” really worth the peace and a comfortable academic position?²⁷

At the end of the introductory part, I would like to thank Professor Bożena Matyjas and Professor Fr. Zbigniew Marek for their critical comments on the typescript. Their emphasised recommendations and suggestions have been applied in the final version of this monograph. The substantive validity of the changes makes me particularly grateful in the academic dimension for the insightfulness of their comments and their nature. The critical reading of the reviewed text was based on a hermeneutic, scientific apparatus of cognition and understanding the analysed content of the monograph. It was undertaken without the constraints of ideological entanglements. It is with deep respect that I express my gratitude for the scientific service you have undertaken, which has provided and enriched me with yet another experience of true scientific conduct in my scientific development.

26 Compare: P. Nowak, *Hodowanie troglodytów. Uwagi o szkolnictwie wyższym i kulturze umysłowej człowieka współczesnego*, Wydawnictwo Fundacja Augusta hr. Cieszkowskiego KRONOS, Warsaw 2014, p. 13 et seq.

27 On the dilemmas of academic development choices in the context of university employment and promotion policies, see: A. MacIntyre, *Trzy antagonistyczne wersje dociekań moralnych. Etyka, genealogia i tradycja*, WAIp, Warsaw 2009, p. 271 et seq.