

Summary

The Lessons of (Civic) Thinking

Polish Language and Literature Education in the Face of Contemporary World Issues

How can we not think about the contemporary world in Polish literary education? Should the Internet and social media or blog posts be the main source of students' knowledge about the surrounding reality? What would be the outcome of such a scenario and how serious could the consequences be for the state, political system, civil rights and the world as a shared space for everyone? Would it not be worthwhile to use Polish literature lessons for conversation and/or discussions about the world, to reveal the world's diversity, to confront positions on various issues important for contemporary humans? Can Polish education afford to give up on introducing young people into the public space and showing them possibilities of activism in this space? Can Polish literary education consciously give up on developing students' thinking skills? Would it not be worthwhile to show the effects of forbidding the freedom of speech and activism, in order to warn of the consequences of shifting the duty of thinking from an individual towards a state, a political party, an institution or other equally anonymous and impersonal actors in public life. Should the concepts of humanities in education not be reconsidered by exposing the particular role of civic education, as well as the importance of critical thought? Should we not reconsider the meaning of public space and reconstruct the humanities' educational principles according to such ancient values as courage, respect and responsibility? Faced with threats to citizenship, should we not care about the meaning of the freedom of speech and freedom of activism as basic rights that humans are entitled to, regardless of their location and background?

This book constitutes an attempt to address these questions. It tells the story of Polish lessons which can initiate, support and develop thinking skills, particularly those set in our contemporary context. It demonstrates what thinking is in educational and philosophical contexts, and what differentiates thinking from other human activities. It diagnoses a number of challenges facing humanities' education in today's schools (such as multiculturalism, migration, the crisis of solidarity with those in need, and the expansion of digital media). This book contains the hypothesis that responsibility for the world requires a thoughtful concept of civic education which celebrates the world's diversity. The publication demonstrates the educational potential of literary reportage, allowing reflections upon the present times and citizenship during literature lessons.

All the educational discussions in this book are heavily rooted in Hannah Arendt's philosophy, as her analyses allow one to capture the essence of thinking as an elementary

but fascinating human intellectual activity. Her writings provide an interesting description of her contemporary reality and the admiration of its diversity, as well as the fact that many valid questions remain unsolved. Arendt appreciated Plato, Socrates and Kant and many other thinkers and their various ways of looking behind the scenes of the surrounding world, discovering the world's complexity and the conventionality of the language used to describe it.

In presenting my concept, I reach for the Polish literature pedagogical publications and read these according to how the contemporary world is diagnosed there and how it influences school-based theory and practice. I also point to concepts such as subjectivity, integration, anthropocentrism, existential and axiological reading, and linguistic education. All of these could provide valuable support in developing the skills of thinking about the world in civic terms. Finally, I scrutinise the contemporary image of the youth of today presented in a number of reportages, and sociological and pedagogical sources, as concern for young people is the main reason for this book being written. References to literary theory, cultural studies, sociology and pedagogy, as well as other scientific fields, are a very important element in this book. Using these, I try to bring into focus issues related to describing the contemporary world, the relativism of concepts and other issues which should be included within Polish language education. The authors mentioned above propose an interesting perspective in terms of perceiving present reality and analyse positive and negative attitudes towards thinking. Literary reportage has a fundamental place in my book, as a genre describing the world and demonstrating the potential of thinking. Furthermore, it combines the testimonies of real people and the passion for pursuing the meaning of life, which are so important in thinking.

The first part of this volume is focused on the philosophy of Hannah Arendt and the most significant categories in her philosophy, such as thought, activism, judgment, politics, polis, citizenship, education, freedom, authority, *vita activa* and the way Arendt understood such values as diversity, objectivity, respect, astonishment, responsibility, and courage. Without those values, it would be impossible to even attempt any reflection on the humanities or civic education.

The second part of this book presents a portrait of Polish youth based on Filip Springer's reportage and a diagnosis of the contemporary time according to pedagogical publications. It demonstrates issues related to multiculturalism, reminds the reader about the interest of space in the humanities and presents an educational concept dedicated to multiculturalism and space. Subsequent parts describe the difficulties one may face when describing the contemporary world and the relativism of notions such as European, West, East, and Third World. Furthermore, this publication emphasises the changeability and dynamic nature of contemporary times and critical thinking. This part concludes with a reflection upon a European citizen meeting refugees in the context of *Kontener* and presents the concept of involved citizenship.

The third part of this book shows the role reportage read and analysed during Polish literature lessons can play in thinking about contemporary times in the spirit of civic education. The connections between reportage and philosophical thinking and the educational role of the genre are described here as well. A significant element of this part of the book is the analysis of a number of reportage writings by the following authors: Wojciech Jagielski, Wojciech Tochman, Krzysztof Miller and Małgorzata Szejnert.

This book is therefore dedicated to reflections upon the contemporary world undertaken during Polish language lessons, to help young people develop a better understanding of the surrounding world and to think independently.