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THE JAGIELLON DYNASTY AND THE BIRTH OF EDUCATION IN POLAND: A PURSUIT TOWARDS KNOWLEDGE

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The Jagiellon dynasty's approach to education was based on the values of coexistence, cultural identity, personhood and freedom, which altogether created an atmosphere conducive to the formation of the specific Polish school of philosophy. The article particularly emphasizes the influence of Queen Jadwiga on the beginning of Polish education is highlighted. Based on the historical discussion, the author highlights the values, which fostered the evolution of education in Poland. The influence of the Jagiellons is felt even in modern Polish society, which continues to appreciate the multi-cultural approach of the dynasty's regard for training and education.

Keywords: philosophy, Jagiellon dynasty, Poland, history, education.

ДИНАСТИЯ ЯГЕЛЛОНОВ И ЗАРОЖДЕНИЕ ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ В ПОЛЬШЕ: СТРЕМЛЕНИЕ К ЗНАНИЯМ

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Подход династии Ягеллонов к образованию был основан на ценностях сосуществования, культурной самобытности, индивидуальности и свободы, что в совокупности создало атмосферу, сформировавшую специфическую польскую философскую школу. В статье особенно подчеркивается влияние королевы Ядвиги на начало польского образования. Основываясь на исторической дискуссии, автор выделяет ценности, которые способствовали эволюции образования в Польше. Влияние Ягеллонов ощущается даже в современном польском обществе, которое продолжает ценить мультикультурный подход династии к обучению и воспитанию.

Ключевые слова: философия, династия Ягеллонов, Польша, история, образование.

The philosophical schools of the modern world have grown from seeds whose historical significance was transformational to philosophy at the time of their planting. Understanding such philosophies is useful in contemporary times when the shifting of politics and society impact beliefs and create tension between worldviews. When one considers the development of philosophy in Poland, one should look beyond the visible surface of literature and delve deeper, where they can see the interplay of values with a culture of tolerance. Within the environment of the Polish state, one may perceive how the notion of “solidarity” (which became well known in the 20th century) was already visible within the unification of the Jagiellonian Empire. This process allowed for the emergence of various common values that were held by many of the empire’s subjects. The Jagiellon dynasty’s approach to education was based on the values of coexistence, cultural identity, personhood and freedom, which altogether created an atmosphere conducive to the formation of the specific Polish school of philosophy.

The idea of coexistence is hardly a novel concept. Despite centuries of conflict throughout the world, certain ages in particular areas have demonstrated what the value of co-existence looks like when assumed as a lifestyle. Coexistence in the contemporary world appears as a search for “methods and ways of opening a suitable dialogue with non-Christians. It should strive, therefore, in order that non-Christians come to be known honestly and esteemed justly by Christians and that in their turn non-Christians can adequately know and esteem Christian doctrine and life” [3, p. 108]. Without co-existence, a country’s people lack understanding. As understanding can promote cooperation, missing it risks society’s development as a cohesive whole. To maintain an atmosphere of coexistence in society, it is necessary to recognize that a societal order based on coexistence “undergoes continual transformation and should not close itself off from new forms of existence but is forced to recognize and understand new challenges” [1, p. 16]. The society meets these challenges and evolves. Stagnation undermines development – whereas progress encourages growth. And growth, in turn, creates life.

In 1385 as a result of the personal Union (known as the Union of Krewo or Act of Krewa) between the Lithuanian Grand Duke Jogaila (Władysław II Jagiełło) and Queen Jadwiga of Poland the two countries formed an expansive territory with a rich cultural history and a considerable contribution to history and education. What remains especially notable about this political alliance, aside from its incredible legacy and the accomplishments made by science and the arts during this period, was its ability to unite two countries into a peaceful alliance. This was not a chance occurrence. Rather, it was possible due to the establishment of a cultural model based on a societal axiology that reflected the values of the founding monarchs – Jagiełło and Jadwiga.

Upon marrying Jadwiga, Grand Duke Jogaila and his citizens converted to Christianity [2, p. 420]. This is a key event in the history of the Polish-Lithuanian union, as the conversion placed the two states onto a more equal footing in terms of understanding and paved the way for them to share their values and destinies. The possibility of common axiological and teleological bases was enabled by these two leaders of the union. As a European ruler, Jadwiga was quite unique. Beyond her fascinating reputation as a female “king”, she possessed an intellectual prowess that was remarkable. At a time when education was concentrated among the ranks of ecclesiastical members, she believed to have spoken five languages and been able to read – a talent, which was not common among European rulers then [2, p. 421].

Jadwiga’s interest in the development of education in her kingdom was centered around the University of Krakow. It provided education to Polish students, but Jadwiga saw education as constructing something far greater than just rote knowledge. Education was a building block for the national identity. She wanted to especially give students the ability to pursue theological studies (an ambition that inspired her also to open a home for Lithuanian students in Prague), so they could better understand the faith. Via religious understanding, she hoped the students would completely embrace the Catholic faith. Aside from Jadwiga’s faith-based concerns, a deeper connection to Catholicism would also diplomatically renew the Lithuanian people’s connection to the kingdom and her rule [2, p. 424].

Despite their Polish Catholic identity, the Jagiellon dynasty promoted an atmosphere conducive to co-existence by recognizing the individual, understanding the individual's relation to their culture, and identifying "the possibilities and values of cooperation in the inter-cultural space aimed towards the growth of mutual influence and co-dependence of ethnic communities and nations" [1, p. 29]. Within each person, there is a complex system of values, which comes from their society's and culture's values. By acknowledging these different value systems, one allows for the proliferation of particular cultures. Although there is a chance that the allowance for different cultural values could harm a society by diminishing its values, it is critical to realize that suppressing cultural values can be just as detrimental.

An alternative path to repression, then, is the formation of a societal axiology that intrinsically promotes cultural values. The Jagiellon dynasty did this by upholding an axiology system centered on the person. This was "a supernatural source of human dignity as something personal, natural freedom, equality and justice, truth and wisdom as life guides, the ability to tell right from wrong, love of a close one as principle in interpersonal relations, the inalienable right to life of every person, the right to personal freedom and property, the right to religious freedom, the right to a dignified and fair trial, a duty towards the common good" [1, p. 31]. From these named concepts, it can be deduced that the Jagiellonian society was one focused on the individual, justice and freedom. These values continued to exist in Poland beyond the Jagiellon dynasty, are visible in Polish history, and are especially tangible in modern Polish philosophy. From Adam Mickiewicz's poetry to Roman Ingarden's writings to Karol Wojtyła's personalism, the values of personhood and freedom are strongly visible in Polish philosophy over the span of centuries.

The Jagiellonian recognition of these extrapolated values paved the way for allowing the people freedom of movement through the Polish-Lithuanian union. The movement promoted multiculturalism, which in turn developed the quality of openness in both the kingdom and the people. What is especially important about this is the already-mentioned point of co-existence. The people lived, as individuals, together in their society. Forced assimilation, which would have overlooked the

individual's cultural and personal diversity, did not occur. Rather, the society was enriched by the cultural elements of the diverse nation. It was the "source of genuine truth, as well as new, inspiring and different values of the world at that time" [1, p. 25]. The people were enriched by the sharing of these values, and in turn, so was education. The philosophy that emerged from these beginnings was conditioned to be open and receptive to progress.

Aside from learning new educational concepts from abroad, Polish philosophers were also exposed to students from the West and the South – from as close as Germany to as far as Turkey. At the same time, such international scholars also journeyed to Krakow, where they exchanged ideas and promoted the development of philosophy. Together, they studied "the question regarding the fundamental characteristics of man and humanity" [1, p. 25]. Although the possibility of zoom meetings has somewhat diminished the awe of such a gathering, it is still possible to imagine just how revolutionary this was to scientific development at the time. Yet, somehow, the distances were traversed, and the cultures brought together ever closer by the sharing of knowledge.

Polish philosophy during the renaissance reflects the societal reality of the time. "Cultural poly-valence" was the order of the day, as the multi-cultural reality of Poland saw "the development of more than two cultures within a space and the building of cultural identity through slow and selective choices which do not destroy the values of any of the cultures but simultaneously create its own creatively configured whole" [1, p. 16]. The Polish culture was not erased through the presence and exercising of other cultures. Rather, it evolved – especially in terms of its educational knowledge and philosophy. The appearance of various schools of thought over time (such as scholasticism, humanism, Thomism, etc.) allowed for a continuous means of enrichment [4, p. 74]. This, in turn, allowed the Polish culture to "bend" rather than "break" under the weight of so many present cultures, represented by the complex conglomeration of people within the large country. In effect, Polish philosophy was not stifled by stagnation. Rather, due to its humanistic roots that were acquired via international exchange, it was made richer. With more factors present

within it, the philosophical school was able to branch into more varieties and disciplines. This allowed it to experience constant growth, rather than gradual death via intellectual starvation.

As the Jagiellon dynasty promoted education, the freedom the individual held to travel allowed them to discover the educational trends emerging throughout Europe. This was especially important with regard to the humanistic development in Italy, which saw numerous instances of Polish philosophers benefiting from humanistic education. They thus enabled a societal “reception of Jagiellonian ideas over a long-lasting historical process, in which they define numerous fundamental values in the sphere of public life but also intercultural relations, attitudes towards the state..., and reflection regarding the social history of the idea and its cultural experience” [1, p. 24].

Education proliferated the value of co-existence in the Polish-Lithuanian union. Co-existence encouraged education, which enshrined the values of the Jagiellon dynasty into philosophical writing. From this point, Polish philosophy would not be the same. It was defined by this specific characteristic of multiculturalism, which allowed the influences of other philosophical schools and cultures to enrich its teachings. To ensure the exchange of ideas, society must ensure the freedom of education. This was done in the Jagiellonian society by “the prohibition of mutual oppression, respect and esteem for the dignity of every person” [1, p. 27]. The legacy of the Jagiellons’ particular values is visible even in modern Polish society, which continues to appreciate the multi-cultural approach of the dynasty’s regard for training and education. Centuries ago, this approach opened the realm of possibilities for the development of Polish philosophy. In the 21st century it is now visible how international influences and tolerance left an imprint on Polish thought that keeps it open and welcome to development, change, and international consideration.

The historical Jagiellon dynasty’s approach to education was based on the values of coexistence, cultural identity and education, which altogether created an atmosphere conducive to the development of philosophy in Poland. The move towards coexistence began with Jagiełło and Jadwiga’s marriage. From this point, as

Jadwiga worked towards the development of Polish education, the international exchange of ideas allowed via the freedom to travel through Europe offered a significant contribution to the evolution of philosophy in the Polish-Lithuanian union. As Polish philosophers encountered the ideas of international scholars at home and abroad, their own research was impacted. In consequence, Polish philosophy assumed a unique character that continues to be visible in the 21st century.

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