

Values, Responsibilities, and Dysfunctions on Children's Education in Contemporary Society

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ABSTRACT: The article aims to highlight the influence of family involvement in children's education in contemporary society. In the first part, the article presents the fundamental role of the family in society, as the basic cell and the environment where true characters and personalities were formed. As a social institution, the family performs certain specific functions, among which the educative function. However, the Christian family and numerous other institutions with a formative and educational role, taken as traditional landmarks, are currently facing a real crisis, new realities and situations that lead to their weakening, disintegration or even collapse. The role conflict may occur when one of the family members does not fulfill the expected role or performs it poorly. Value conflicts may also occur if family members have different expectations or representations of the family. Along with the influence of the family, the formation and development of individuals in contemporary society is also increasingly influenced by the media. The second part of article underline the considerable responsibility of parents in managing the positive and negative influences of the media. In the third part of the article are exposed different responsibilities and behavioral dysfunctions that influence the attitude of children towards their own education. Raising and educating children is a complex, long-term and very responsible work, in which the role of the family is significant. The attitudes and the family influences (which may each express educational shortcomings or pathogenic conditions of education) condition both the individual's underdevelopment of social skills and a certain degree of fragility and immaturity of the young ones' personality, especially on a volitional, affective and moral level.

Keywords: educative function, family, media, responsibility, violence

I. INTRODUCTION

The definition of the concept of *value* has always caused controversy. One of the causes is the varied meanings attributed to this concept in different disciplines. In ethics, philosophy or aesthetics, the concept has a normative connotation, values being criteria on which the distinction between good and evil is made, between beautiful and ugly. The normative connotation is also maintained when using the term *value* in everyday language: criteria that help us to orient ourselves, lines of demarcation between what is allowed or socially desirable and what is not. The social sciences dealing with the study of values have not reached a consensus concerning their definition. Psychology sees the value as "a way of selective orientation related to individual's preferences, motives, needs and attitudes", while sociology links the value to "norms, habits, ideologies". [1] Values are thus considered cultural entities that can be converted into financial resources and material goods, preserved, and promoted by specialized institutions.

A community builds its own culture and its own universe through symbols, rites, language, norms, traditions, morals, and values. The involvement of the population in actions to promote social values may be determined by the interest given by membership of a particular group. Voluntary participation is based, in particular, on the values of common identity, on the propensity for cooperation, on the civic and administrative competence as well as on the professional and/or managerial skills. The exercise of the cultural function of a community implies shared responsibility in the transmission of social values and norms from social groups to the individuals, from one generation to the next, which results in increasing social cohesion, strengthening the social integration of individuals and standardizing cultural norms in society. A complex form of identity in contemporary society is the community traditionalism (focused on preserving identity), represented by loyalties

towards the natural groups that function as traditional social agents: the family, the local communities, and the church. [2]

II. FAMILY'S EDUCATIONAL FUNCTION

The numerous definitions of the concept of *family* try to highlight a number of both structural and functional issues such as: the family is a social group, a form of community, and the relationships developed between its members (essentially natural-biological, emotional, spiritual and morally legal relationships) allow the continuity of human species and the evolution of society. [3]

Disputes regarding the family's future fall into two categories: a more optimistic one considers that the contemporary family is undergoing through an exploratory period, in order to find a new balance, built on interpersonal relationships of mutual affection and understanding. Thus, relatively traditional family behaviors are still dominant: the family has essentially remained the same unit and operates in a similar way, except that it is more democratic on the inside and more open to the outside, better connected and integrated into society. "Without diminishing its importance as a social institution, the changes of recent decades in the family sphere entitle the idea that family is no longer a conservative institution, but one increasingly adapted to the transformations at the level of society, going through a visible process of democratization, secularization, and liberalization." [4] In this perspective, the image of the family, taken up in the political and scientific discourse of contemporary society, is that of an institution that preserves social traditions and values, being relatively independent of the socio-economic context and having a great capacity for inertia. [5]

The other perspective considers, on the contrary, that the family is experiencing a continuous decline and ceases to represent a fundamental institution in society, its roles and responsibilities being taken over by the State or other institutions and social actors. Individualization, economic independence, and personal autonomy have led individuals (especially women) to be less willing to sacrifice themselves for the unity and functionality of the family. Postmodernity means the primacy of individual interests over the expectations that society has from the family, the spread of alternative models to the classical nuclear family, the redefinition of the family functions, the democratization of the family roles and statuses and, last but not least, the change of family values.

As a social institution, the family performs certain functions which can generally be reduced to the following: the reproduction (through children the family ensures the perpetuation of a community or society), the children's socialization (the transmission of the dominant cultural patterns in society), care, protection and emotional support (the care and protection of the children, the elderly, the sick people; love, security, feelings of well-being), the assignment of a status (through kinship and other group relationships) and the regulations of the sexual behavior. [6] These functions are fulfilled when family members are guided by common interests and values, maintaining the order and proper functioning of the family institution by consensus. When these interests are not shared by family members, or when individuals begin to orient themselves according to another value system, conflict arises (which does not necessarily involve a split, a rupture, but rather negotiations and mediation attempts). [7]

From a Christian perspective, the family concentrates the totality of the values through which life is affirmed and sustained, it shapes the original, soul and bodily skills of persons, as it also makes the goods of his existence increase and be transmitted from generation to generation as forms of culture and civilization. The family is characterized by mutual help, based on love between spouses, which leads to a communion of thought, feeling and action, so that they fulfill each other, conveying to each other their own qualities and gifts, ennobling each other and working together on moral perfection. The family is based on love, emotional attachment, will and reason, responsibility, discipline, realism, dynamism, and valorization of other family members.

Social, cultural and mental changes have engaged in their mechanism also the institution of the family: today's society is going through not only a financial or economic crisis, but also through one of the family, in which its sacredness and its perennial values have been left in the background, their place being taken by a new system of values, *postmodern*. Important challenges for the contemporary family are the urbanization process, the increase in unemployment, the intensification of domestic violence, of alcoholism and of drug use, the multiplication of migrations and the increase in individualism (which results in an increase in juvenile delinquency, on the context which children having a deteriorating relationship with their parents, marked by neglect and indifference). [8]

Thus, an important aspect of the family crisis is spilling over to children and their education and it has its origin in the freedom granted by their parents. Children are increasingly left "to do what they want", and they do not always choose what is useful to them. Problems start at an early age, when children are left in front of the TV or computer, because they "sit tight" and do not bother the others. Unfortunately, these children do not receive the necessary education, they are often inspired by negative examples, which they then transpose into

everyday life. Later on, at the age of adolescence, they are again allowed to do as they wish, because "they are young and they should have fun", sliding gently towards the slope of alcohol or even drugs.

III. INFLUENCE OF THE MEDIA ON CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

The problem of ways and means of shaping children's personality, in order to optimize the creative potential, tends today to occupy a priority place in all the concerns of social sciences and practices. In this context, the formation and development of individuals is increasingly influenced by the *media*. The current understanding of the concept of *media* refers to all the techniques and means of transmitting, by centralized providers, messages to large segments of the population. Today, thanks to technological progress, modern media have an increased impact in everyday life: television, internet, radio, press and cinema.

The media performs a number of functions, of which can be recalled: the information function (by constantly distributing a variety of scientific, technical, economic, political information), the culturalization function (by facilitating the access of the population to the great values of national and universal culture), the socialization function (by the fact that the individual lives with greater intensity the feeling of belonging to the human community, while showing interest in the problems of others and being in solidarity or in opposition to the ideas of others), the educational function (by leading to significant educational results) and the function of entertainment and recreation (by creating moments of relaxation and leisure).

The media can have a positive or negative impact on children's personalities. If in the past access to a wide range of TV shows was restricted, currently, children have the opportunity to choose and watch shows that are not suitable for their age. In many cases, parents do not deal with this enough, ignoring the influence that radio, television, and print media transmit to children. Thus, the media often enters the lives of the youngest without that necessary mediation of a guiding on the part of parents, which it could neutralize any negative elements. Fascinated and vulnerable to the influences of contemporary society, children are naturally ready to receive what is offered to them, both for better and for worse. In addition, they are attracted to the small and the big screen, watching every gesture presented there and perceiving, even better than an adult, the emotions and feelings transmitted. The child is receptive to any stimulus that requires his intelligence, fantasy, affectivity, or instinct. Moreover, impressions from this age are intended to penetrate most deeply into the psychology of the human being and to condition the relationships that individuals subsequently establish with themselves, with others, with the environment.

The media is also the best way to manipulate individuals by repeatedly presenting ideas, principles, opinions. Thus, one of the most worrying aspects of the current media is the intensification of violent behaviors, which arise from watching cartoons, movies, or TV shows. Studies carried out in recent years have found that the media disseminates aspects with a very high concentration of violence, which causes negative effects: reactions, attitudes, beliefs, and behavioral deviations. Watching a cartoon program, which is apparently "harmless", today's child lives in an imaginary world often full of violence, witnessing crimes and acts of destruction, knows fabulous heroes and monsters. Although they find themselves at the age when they should be guided to park walks and playgrounds, or readings formative books appropriate to their age, to play constructive games, they only want to conquer the world, like the characters on television. Exposing children and young people to violence, counter-models and encouraging non-values have profound effects on their behaviors. By presenting situations of violence or violation of the law (as relaxing or rewarding), the media can induce a distorted perception of reality, thus jeopardizing the innocence of childhood. We cannot blame social violence solely on the media, but numerous studies show that it plays a decisive role. This is possible because there is no rigorous control over television programs, published articles, often inadequate in relation to the age of the segment of the population to which it is addressed.

Without challenging the beneficial importance of the media in the context of contemporary society, it is often noted that it has harmful influences on the children's personality: following the model of the examples offered by the media, children try to assert themselves more and more by influencing the social status of their parents and less by their intellectual capacities (material and financial aspects tend to be more valuable than intellect). Thus, children find the wrong patterns to imitate for non-compliance with the laws and the manifestation of inappropriate behaviors. Lately, there have been a great decrease in the requirements for children's behavior and, in particular, in terms of their respect for parents, as well as for the exercise of the educational act through the school. The media disseminates a lot of information about the indifference, passivity, lack of concern and responsibility for school activities, both of some students and teachers.

Another imperative for school children is reading, an activity that is increasingly neglected by today's children and young people. It cannot be replaced by either the TV or the computer, even if each of them provides quick access to varied information. The long time spent in front of the TV, even if it is educational shows, can affect the harmonious development of the child, physically and mentally. A large proportion of children and adolescents spend their nights in front of the TV or computer, which induces fatigue, depression, feelings of isolation or panic attacks after watching shocking images or movies. In such situations, the most

appropriate attitude of parents is to communicate with children, to comment together on what they see in TV shows or on computer, thus making them aware of the negative effects of these activities and helping them to discern more easily the evil from good.

Numerous scientific research points out that, among children, watching television contributes to the onset of diseases such as autism, hearing impairments, anorexia, myopia, etc. There is also a high incidence of obesity and cardiovascular disease as a result of a sedentary lifestyle, reduced physical activity, insomnia, and inadequate nutrition of the body's needs. Children's dependence on television has symptoms that only few people are aware of: continuous buttoning of the remote control, watching TV without a choice beforehand, inability to turn off the TV, depression and nervousness in the situation of impossibility to watch TV programs, decreased attention given to other family members, etc. All these symptoms have repercussions on mental and physical activity, on the health of the body and mind. To prevent problems from becoming a result of dependence on television, it is advisable to combine relaxation in front of the TV with outdoor activities and healthy eating. It is recommended to involve children in age-specific activities with other children, during which they develop their inter-relationship capacities, stimulate their imaginations, and consume their physical energy. However, in terms of education and the formation of children's personalities, the positive influences of the media take precedence over negative ones. Television, internet, radio, and print media are a rich source of information and knowledge, as well as a way of relaxation, which rebuilds reality and achieves a new way of life.

IV. THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY IN ENSURING SCHOOL SUCCESS

The word *attitude* indicates "someone's way of being or behaving (expressing a certain conception)". [9] Attitude also means "position towards an event or aspect of reality, historically and socially conditioned. It has a more or less affective character and manifests itself in the person conduct." [10] Referring to school work, the attitude expresses the student's position towards learning, the way how he performs his school duties. If the student learns with interest, if he is permeated by the need to acquire that knowledge, if he is diligent and possesses skills and habits to work independently, if he learns systematically, perseveringly and actively participates in lessons, if he achieves good results as an effect of his efforts, it can be said that the student has a *positive attitude* towards learning.

Positive attitude towards learning takes differently forms. A first form of positive attitude is *emotional-positive attitude*, determined by inner and affective motivations. In this case, the student shows interest, attraction, love for learning. For him, learning is an opportunity for satisfaction and therefore he learns with pleasure. This form of positive attitude is more common in small school children and less in medium and large school children. The positive attitude manifested in the form of interest in certain educational objects, known as "early specialization". In such cases, students are happy to learn about objects that correspond to their interests and concerns, often neglecting other objects of study.

Another form of positive attitude towards learning is *conscious-positive attitude*. In this case, the student learns conscientiously, diligently, being aware of the need to acquire knowledge in order to prepare for life. The conscious attitude gives to the student the strength to overcome the difficulties arising in the process of more sustained assimilation of knowledge. Moreover, the work reluctantly done, which does not offer satisfaction, the work that the student does only because the adults demand it, becomes for him a chore, a burden. Consequently, the student placed in this situation carries out his school tasks without interest or concern for quality.

Other form of the student's attitude towards learning is the *apparently positive one*. In this case, neither emotional-affective motivation nor conscious determination is present. Good learning outcomes, which lead us to consider the student as having an appropriate attitude towards school work, are the result of permanent adult guardianship (educator and especially parents). Often the parents declare: "If I didn't hold on to him, he wouldn't get his hands on the book!" or "I have to sit next to him while he does his lessons, or he'll find to do all sorts of things", etc.

There are also cases where the student learns well because he is afraid of punishment or because he wants to be rewarded by his parents. If we appreciated the student's attitude only in terms of learning results, we should consider him with a positive attitude. However, if we also consider the reason for learning, which lead to these results, we see that the student has a positive attitude only in appearance. It can thus be said that the apparently positive attitude brings together elements of positive attitude (good results) and elements of negative attitude (absence of reasons of an emotional or conscious nature), thus being at the limit between them.

Some theories confuse the positive attitude towards learning with the interest in a study discipline or in school activity as a whole, thus narrowing the scope of the concept. The *interest in learning* is the basis of emotional-positive attitude. It is that inner mobile that makes the child learn with pleasure. The presence of interest makes learning easier, more appealing. Knowledge acquired in the context of interest is better understood, more thorough, more enduring. On the other hand, knowledge acquired without interest and without

the presence of the conscious factor, is often formal, useless, and quickly disappears. Students who do not show an interest in knowledge learn much harder, needing more effort and more time to prepare lessons. Interest can therefore be considered a part, a component of positive attitude and cannot be identified with it. There is the same relationship between the part and the whole between the interest in learning and the positive attitude towards it.

Opposite to the positive attitude is the *negative attitude towards learning*, manifested by disinterest, letting go, indifference to low grades, by unsatisfactory or mediocre results and indiscipline during lessons. Like the positive attitude, the negative attitude takes many forms.

A first form is the *absolute or total negative attitude*, manifested in disinterest, sometimes even revulsion towards school work, indifference to low grades, passivity, total lack of concern for the performance of school tasks, lack of work skills, and indiscipline during school hours.

Another form of negative attitude can be called *relative or partial negative attitude*. Students in this category prepare their lessons superficially, without interest or concern for quality. Therefore, their learning results are mediocre or even sub-mediocre. In other cases, the negative attitude manifests itself only towards certain objects of study, for which the student does not feel attraction and to which he achieves poor results, while in other objects he learns well or even very well. In this situation, the lack of interest is due either to the lack of previous knowledge, which obstruct him from understanding and feeling the beauty of the discipline study in question, or even the antipathy he has towards the teacher. In most cases, mediocre learning results are due to insufficient and unsatisfactory work. The harmful nature of this form of negative attitude lies in the fact that students in this category only partially acquire their knowledge from study program, fragments of dispersed and unsystematized knowledge, which they cannot use when appropriate.

Other form of negative attitude can be called *disguised or masked attitude*. In some cases, under the guise of good or relatively good results, traits of negative attitude towards learning are hidden. Students in this category tend to get high marks at all costs. Unfortunately, this trend is often fueled by parents, who only claim high grades from their children, and if their results in learning are not commensurate with their wishes, the only culprits are the teachers, to whom they make accusations and make unfavorable assessments against them in front of the children. In this case, the student learns not to enrich his knowledge, but to obtain high marks, to stand out among colleagues, to satisfy the ego of his parents.

But children cannot always satisfy parents' desire to obtain only high marks and, in order to avoid arguing, reproach or even beating, resort to lying, sometimes fraud. Thus, when they take notes that are not to the liking of parents, children say that they have not been listened to or that they have taken an excellent evaluation, although in reality they have been graded by a medium or poor evaluation. Other times, these absurd claims of some parents push children to fraud. If only learning outcomes are considered, without considering the reasons for learning, students in this category should be considered with a positive attitude. However, given the negative nature of the reasons, the goals they pursue, these students can be considered with a negative attitude. The child does not come into the world with a positive or negative attitude towards work and learning, already formed. The child's attitude is the result of the educational influences exerted on him. Educating positive attitudes towards learning in pupils is a complex and long-term task that can only be achieved through joint efforts by family, school, and media. Thus, the concern for educating children's positive attitudes towards learning must begin early and continue by the family and school until they reach adulthood.

It is the family that lays the foundations for the child's education, which sets out the guidelines for its further development. Thus, the family is the child's first school, and the parents are its first educators. One of the main functions of the family is the educational one. The family is the starting point, the initial stage in the education of the children, which has a bearing on the whole subsequent development of the child. In the family the child forms first impressions, first representations of the surrounding world. Hence the great responsibility of parents and adults living with the child; they must exercise constant care in order not to pass on wrong knowledge to the child, as the child's beliefs, skills, habits and character are formed on the basis of this. Parents, adults in general, are the main criterion for the child of moral and aesthetic assessments. That is why, in their arguments, the phrases are often found: "It's good because that's what my father said," "It's nice because my mother said so." The basis of positive attitude towards child learning is laid by the family from the very first years of life. However, it is not possible to speak about the formation and the presence of a *positive attitude towards learning* in the child, in the strict sense of the word, before entering school, because his dominant activity up to seven years is the game.

The creation of premises for educating positive attitudes towards learning in the child contributes to the intellectual concerns of parents: if the family reads and discusses what is read, if one goes to the cinema, the theatre and explains to the children about them, if there are books, magazines, newspapers and are read and commented, if an intellectual (cultural) ambience is achieved in family life, this is an important contribution to the formation of child's cultural interests. The stimulation of the child's interest in the book depends, to the greatest extent on the place of reading in the family, on the value given to him by the parents and other adult

persons. If the parents read and share with the other family members what is read, if the child is bought books and read to him, if the library or book shelf is a sacred place that everyone approaches with care and admiration, if each book is ordained and carefully preserved, the child's consideration and interest in the book is formed early and manifests itself in the attitude towards their own books. It is good to reserve a shelf for the child's books in the library space. Of great importance is the choice of time for reading a book, a story. If the child is tired or preoccupied with other activities, his interest in reading is low, he does not concentrate his attention and imagination and therefore does not live affectively the events in the story. Attraction, love for the book must be cultivated with patience, with tact, with perseverance.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Raising and educating children is a complex, long-term and very responsible work. This is not a personal matter of every parent, but also a social duty. The child does not belong only to the parents, and therefore they do not have the right to behave towards him as they wish, as their feelings or moods dictate. It is educationally harmful if parents overwhelm the child with exaggerated love, as it is just as harmful if they spill their troubles on him. Thus, parents must have an equal attitude towards the child, constant, measured, without exaggerations.

The atmosphere in the family, the affective ambience in which the child is formed also contributes to the creation of these premises. A calm, serene, warm atmosphere is stimulating for the child's activity, while a dark, tense, oppressive atmosphere has a depressive, inhibitory role. The relationships between family members are also important: if they are based on understanding, esteem, and mutual help, or, conversely, if all these attributes are lacking. Parents must be an example, a model of honest attitude towards work, an example of sincerity and modesty, and thus possess the moral qualities they seek to form for children. A particular importance for educating positive attitudes towards work and learning in children is the place of family work: the way how parents and other people work, whether they work with love, persuasion, passion, or obligation, with or without enthusiasm. An important contribution to enriching children's knowledge of the surrounding world, to stimulating the interests of knowledge are nature excursions and walks, visits to museums and exhibitions, plays and to watch children's films.

The success of the family's educational work depends on the unity of views and action of its members, their moral profile, their concerns and aspirations, continuity, and consistency in educational actions. If positive influences have acted systematically, continuously and organized on the child, if the parents and the school have been concerned not only with the amount of knowledge that the student acquires, but also with his attitude towards school work, then he will form a positive attitude towards learning. Ultimately, it is not the sum of knowledge that counts as a priority, but how it is appropriated, and the purpose pursued by it. The fact that the student learns well is of little value if his skills and knowledge are not put in the service of good character, if not useful purposes, of valuable social attitudes.

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