

Summary of the doctoral dissertation

“Education and Freedom in Slavophile-Westernizers Discourses in Russia in the Mid-19th Century”

Research in the field of the history of pedagogical thought clearly shows that each generation develops a body of knowledge about education that is reflected in pedagogical theory and practice. This is because education, as a process of shaping human personality, is an integral part of social life and development. Scientific reflection on education can be conducted by treating it as a fact and as a task. An integral part of this approach is to look at different historical periods and communities, as well as to acknowledge that the approach to education has always been diverse and historically variable. Analyses of contemporary phenomena, including pedagogical ones, prove that many of them have historical antecedents and can only be explained if we make an effort to understand the past. Currently, one such phenomenon that requires in-depth exploration is the ideology of *Ruskiy Mir*.

In contemporary Russian socio-political discourse, the term ‘*Russkiy Mir*’ came into being in 2005 as a term for a project to create a Russian-centric civilisational pole, encompassing the nations/countries within the borders or sphere of influence of Tsarist Russia and the USSR. In the field of education, the core of the *Russkiy Mir* concept is to emphasise the superiority of Russian cultural heritage and impose it on other Slavic nations. An important element of education in this spirit is the negative assessment of Western civilisation in the broad sense. Admirers of *Russkiy Mir*, both in their historical and cultural reinterpretations of the Slavic heritage and in their assessment of Western European civilisational achievements, often refer to the ideological polemics that took place in the mid-19th century between Slavophiles and Westernizers. One of the most important issues, which was a significant element of their worldviews and the subject of their discussions, was the question of human freedom and the educational formation that emphasised its importance. In the context of the author’s research plans, whose intention is to explore the pedagogy of *Russkiy Mir*, it was considered necessary to analyse the Slavophilia-Westernism discourses on education and freedom. The main objective of the research is therefore to reconstruct and explain the foundations of Slavophilia and Westernism pedagogy on the basis of the worldviews of the main representatives of these trends at the height of their creative and social activity, which coincided with the reign of Nicholas I (1825-1855).

The author of the dissertation has set the following research objectives:

- a) analysis of the factors influencing historical, socio-cultural and religious phenomena and conditions on reflections on education in Rus and Russia;
- b) indicating the multidimensional and multifaceted nature of historical, philosophical, socio-cultural and religious correlates in the discourse on education in Russia in the first half of the 19th century;
- c) analysis of the development of the worldviews and ideals of the thinkers studied in the historical, social, cultural and religious contexts in which Slavophilia and Westernism discourses were formed in the era of Nicholas I;
- d) analysis and explanation of the origins of the views of selected Slavophiles and Westernizers on education and freedom;
- e) explanation of the pedagogical motives, meanings and significance of the key anthropological, axiological and social categories and concepts used by them, as well as the relationships between them, with particular emphasis on the category of freedom as a hidden category (Latin: *genus absconditum*);
- f) identifying, examining and explaining the reasons for the differences and similarities in the views of Slavophiles and Westernizers on human education;
- g) constructing a narrative that will familiarise researchers and other interested parties with the subject matter and enable them to better understand the discourses analysed.

This dissertation consists of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion and a bibliography.

The first chapter is a comprehensive introduction to further exploration. It presents the historical, cultural and socio-political contexts that will enable a descriptive, genetic and structural explanation of the development of Russian Slavophilia and Westernism pedagogy. The material basis for the research is provided by representative examples of Old Russian and Russian literature, from which concepts, categories and ideas relating to education have been extracted. The subject of the analyses in the first subchapter are elements of Old Russian pedagogy prior to the Mongol invasion of Rus in the mid-13th century. The second subchapter discusses changes in the approach to education and upbringing from the 16th to the early 18th century, when reforms of Tsar Peter the Great fundamentally changed the face of Russia. Much attention is devoted here to the transmission of cultural models that reached Russia from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 17th century. The third subchapter focuses primarily

on an analysis of the intellectual atmosphere of the era of Nicholas I and the ideological and worldview characteristics of Slavophilia and Westernism, which arose in protest against the oppressive state ideology of the *triad of 'Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality'*.

The second chapter of the work focuses on analysing the origins of Slavophilia and Westernism views on freedom and education. These views were inspired by the ideas of Alexander Radishchev and Nikolai Novikov, thinkers from the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. Their literary and journalistic works expressed a deep conviction about the need for liberal social reforms that would accelerate Russia's civilisational development. They considered a change in the approach to the education of the Russian elite, both in terms of intellectual and moral formation, to be an essential condition for the success of this undertaking. Their views found wide resonance among the progressive aristocracy, mainly in St. Petersburg, from which the Decembrists originated. After their uprising was suppressed, the ideals of liberal education were taken up by young nobles studying at universities, who developed them in the spirit of Romanticism and German idealistic philosophy. These inspirations formed the basis for the philosophical, historiosophical and aesthetic thought of Vladimir Odoevsky and Nikolai Stankevich. In the face of increasing difficulties in the free exchange of ideas, they managed to gather a group of people interested in self-education. The goals of human endeavour formulated by them show convergence with the principles of humanistic pedagogy. Future Slavophiles and Westernizers took their first steps in the *Lubomudry Society*, founded by Odoevsky, and Stankevich's *Circle*. The works of these figures contain themes relating to education understood as intellectual formation and character building, the pursuit of perfection through the knowledge of truth, goodness and beauty. The theme of freedom is also present, but it is a category 'hidden' in the thicket of gnoseological considerations. An important precursor of the discourses under study, whose views on education will be analysed, was Piotr Chaadayev. He is a unique figure. The publication of his *Philosophical Letters* in 1836 sparked a wave of ideological polemics, which led to the emergence of Slavophilia and Westernism as opposing ideological currents. In his texts, Chaadayev included a wealth of thoughts on education and freedom that are worth analysing, which he wove into his reflections on Russia's past, present and future.

The third chapter of the thesis analyses the views on education of the main representatives of Slavophilia – Ivan Kireyevsky and Aleksey Khomyakov. The aim of the research is to explain their origins and structure, as well as the motives, meanings and significance of those anthropological, axiological and social categories and concepts that determined their understanding of the essence and goals of education. Among them, a special place is occupied by the category of freedom as a manifestation of free will, which always

directs man towards truth and goodness. The Slavophiles, in their protest against the intrusive Westernization of Russia, built their pedagogies on the basis of Eastern Christian anthropological, axiological and ecclesiological categories and Old Russian ideals of social life, reinterpreted in the spirit of Romanticism and philosophical idealism. They understood human upbringing primarily as a spiritual and moral formation carried out in the family, local community/parish, nation and church, which makes a person's personality integral. A key role in the process of shaping a person's personality was played by so-called 'believing thinking', which opened a person to transcendence and arranged a person's cognitive order so that free will could choose well. The main purpose of this chapter is to describe and explain the functions and meanings of these activities, which, according to the Slavophiles, lead a person to the knowledge of universal principles and timeless values, and, as a result, to the attainment of perfection. Understanding them will allow us to properly interpret the Slavophiles' approach to social education, which Khomyakov described as 'actions through which one generation prepares the next generation to fulfil its assigned role in the history of the nation.' The subject of research in the last subchapter will also be the pedagogical ideas of Nikolay Pirogov and Pyotr Redkin, who, during the post-Nicholas thaw (the second half of the 1850s), attempted to synergise the Slavophilia and Westernism approaches.

The last, fourth chapter of the dissertation is an analysis of the views on education and freedom of representatives of Westernism in Russia in the mid-19th century: Vissarion Belinsky, Alexander Herzen, Nikolay Chernyshevsky and Nikolay Dobrolyubov. Due to the fact that Russian Westernism was a rather heterogeneous movement, the thinkers were selected in such a way as to present its most representative directions: absolute (Hegelian) idealism, which evolved into realism (Belinsky), naturalism (Herzen) and materialism (Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov). In terms of social philosophy, all of the above-mentioned thinkers were admirers of socialist ideas. Their worldview, philosophical and epistemological views were reflected not only in the dispute with the Slavophiles, but also in the discourses conducted within their own movement. Despite the differences that emerged mainly in the confrontation between idealistic and realistic and naturalistic approaches to education, the Westernizers considered issues related to upbringing in close connection with the practice of social life, the struggle for the right to free and comprehensive development of the individual and social justice. Emphasising the rationality of education, they attached great importance to education based on scientific and empirical foundations and rejected all metaphysics. They also denied the need for any elements of religious formation in education. Their goal was to shape a 'new man' – a rational egoist and initiator of revolutionary socio-political changes. The analyses undertaken in this chapter will

explain the essence, goals and nature of Westernism educational formation, indicate its main concepts and categories, and justify the arguments behind them.

In summarising the content of the submitted dissertation, it is worth emphasising that the reflections of Slavophiles and Westernizers on education have not yet been the subject of detailed research in Poland. Among researchers dealing with Russian philosophy and social thought, only some of Andrzej Walicki's publications mention the pedagogical potential of their considerations. In Polish-language literature, apart from biographical studies and translations, only the works on the history of education edited by Stefan Wołoszyn and Łukasz Kurdybacha contain a brief description of the views of thinkers of the era of Nicholas I. These researchers limit themselves to presenting the views of Westernizers: Bielinski, Herzen, Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov and Pirogov. The achievements of the Slavophiles are completely omitted. The author of the work hopes that his explorations will not only supplement and enrich historical and pedagogical knowledge about the development of Russian pedagogy in the period under study. Above all, he also expresses the hope that the considerations presented in the dissertation will prove helpful in the process of understanding the nature, course and consequences of actions that shape the personalities of pupils entrusted to the care of educators. The author of the dissertation is most concerned that 'raising a human' (Nikolay Pirogov) should remain the most important goal of education. In his opinion, the same intention is expressed by the slogan of the 12th National Pedagogical Congress in 2025, which reads: *Humanity as a problem of pedagogy and a task of education*. The author hopes that his research will contribute to strengthening the humanistic and personalistic trend in pedagogy, which is so greatly needed today.

Katowice, 14.11.2025 r.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Artur Aleksiejuk". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.