

TOWARDS PHILOSOPHY IN MEDICINE AND NURSING – ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL ASPECTS OF SEXOLOGY

W STRONĘ FILOZOFII W MEDYCYNIE I PIELĘGNIARSTWIE – ANTROPOLOGICZNE I ETYCZNE ASPEKTY SEKSUOLOGII

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ABSTRACT

Medical and nursing activities are an inexhaustible source for philosophical reflections. We present 10 philosophical reflections in the context of science; with particular reference to sexology. Sexology, as science, investigates human sexuality taking into account sexual behaviour, functions and preferences. This definition goes beyond non-scientific research on sexuality, such as analyses of the political situation, or social criticism. In modern sexology researchers use tools from different academic fields. Sexology is an interdisciplinary study which perceives sexuality in various aspects: medical, psychological, sociological, educational, legal, ethnographic, anthropological, biological, religious, ethical and moral.

KEYWORDS: ethics, sexology, science.

STRESZCZENIE

Działalność lekarska i pielęgniarska stanowi niewyczerpane źródło dla przemyśleń filozoficznych. Z drugiej strony, dziedziny medyczne potrzebują filozofii, dlatego też zaprezentowano 10 refleksji nad filozofią w kontekście rozważań nad nauką ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem seksuologii, czyli nauki o płci. Seksuologia, będąc nauką o płci, bada ludzką seksualność, biorąc pod uwagę zachowania seksualne, funkcje i preferencje. Ta definicja wykracza poza nienaukowe badania nad seksualnością, takie jak analiza sytuacji politycznej lub krytyka społeczna. We współczesnej seksuologii badacze wykorzystują narzędzia z różnych dziedzin nauki. Nauka ta ma charakter interdyscyplinarny, ujmując seksualność człowieka nie tylko w aspekcie medycznym, ale i w aspekcie psychologicznym, socjologicznym, pedagogicznym, prawnym, etnograficznym, antropologicznym, biologicznym, religioznawczym i etyczno-moralnym.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: etyka, seksuologia, nauka.

*“Sex is a certain mood, an experience of a kind,
it is corporeality, but it also is a certain type
of responsibility, which is brought into the world
by a human being”*

Ks. Józef Tischner [1]

Medical and nursing activities are an inexhaustible source for philosophical reflections [2].

The scientific study of human sexuality, i.e. sexology, deals with the consequences of having two separate genders and is inextricably linked to sexual ethics, gynaecology, i.e. female reproductive system science and andrology, i.e. male reproductive system science (with medicine and nursing) [3].

The study on the factual ethos of sexual morality is important for the sexology point of view and normative

sexual ethics. Since the law includes regulations which prohibit certain sexual acts under penal sanctions, one must state that sexuality is inherently connected with responsibility. The aim of this study was to examine whether or not responsibility and ethics are associated with sex according to young adolescents. The problems concerning gender issues have always been a matter of a special, professional and interdisciplinary approach. Such an approach is at the same time full of empathy, sensitivity and delicacy. From the medical point of view, those matters belong to sexology – the study of human sexuality, andrology – the study of a man and gynecology – the study of a woman.

Sexology is concerned with human's emotional and sexual life as well as the formation and development of interpersonal boundaries. Sexology is an interdisciplinary study which perceives sexuality in various aspects: psychological, sociological, educational, ethical and moral, legal, ethnographic, anthropological, biological, religious and medical. It is concerned with every consequence stemming from the two sexes dichotomy. Sexology is strongly connected with sexual ethics – both, in prescriptive and descriptive aspect [4].

In a classical tradition, prescriptive ethics is a branch of philosophy concerned with everything that is acceptable in human behavior, everything that is good or bad, right or wrong in a human strive for his or her goals. In this perspective, sexual ethics means a set of norms and moral judgments from the field of sexology perceived as appropriate in the certain behavior. In other words, they are views seen as harmonious with one's conscience, individual inner rules and perception of the world. The definition of sexual ethics used to change its scope. Behavior once classified as unethical, can be ethical or even should not be considered from the moral point of view today. It seems the Catholic Church permanently guards its rules on sexual ethics [5]. It is worth underlining that in particular cases regarding gender and sex issues, some of its concepts have changed with the course of time – e.g. natural birth control; once unacceptable, nowadays seen as the only admissible method. There is a need to distinguish the descriptive ethics, ethology, which constitutes an attempt to describe and explain, mainly in psychological and sociological aspects, the factual moral ethos functioning in a particular place and time. 'The fundamental methodological assumption of this kind of analyses, is to preserve the axiological neutrality of every matter under consideration and to carefully avoid explaining phenomena concerning the object of studies in a surreptitious way'. Obviously, it does not mean that descriptive ethics does not bring an important content to prescriptive ethics. It happens like an indirect interplay of its inherent inspi-

rations and fits in the context of discovery at the most, but not justification in order to refer to the fundamental distinction in methodology of science.

In order to develop and function properly, every discipline of science, needs to stick to the scientific standards. Research demonstrating regularities and changes which occur in a certain area are indispensable. It is worth underlining that especially in sexology, sexual ethics and in sexual education the studies are vital, and the discussion needs to verify the views. The study on the factual ethos in the field of sexual morality is significant both from the point of view of sexology and ethics (understood as prescriptive ethics). Human sexuality is one of people's basic goods. It makes a human being physically, psychically and spiritually capable of entering into marriage and starting a family. In the medical (sexological), philosophical, ethical, psychological, sociological, pedagogical and legal sense, human sexuality has always been an object of striving and sacrifice, as well as care and reflection aimed at understanding and verbalizing it. Human sexuality is closely connected to the environment, culture and spiritual expectations. The human environment is a relatively permanent set of elements which surround a human being, important for his or her life and behaviour.

According to John Paul II, 'Experiencing a human body in its whole truth about its masculinity and femininity should correspond with the dignity of the body and with its meaning in the process of building a human communion. One could say, it is one of the basic dimensions of human culture understood as enriching affirmation of what is human' [6]. The care for the human sexual sphere, family and marriage, expresses itself in constantly improved and specified legal regulations, aimed at solving the problems which are connected with it. Karol Wojtyła points out that with the development of medicine, a series of moral questions arise in the sexual field of human life. Commenting on John Paul II's corporal theology, cardinal Andreas Laun pointed out that '20 centuries of Christianity brought less into the understanding of sexuality, than 20 years of His pontificate did'. The papal biographer, Georg Weigel, in turn, stated that the said corporal theology is a 'ticking bomb', the blast of which will bring a real breakthrough not only in the Church teachings, but in the whole contemporary way of thinking.

With regard to gender issues, human relationships are regulated by certain rules with moral standards and biological standards being the two main forces.

The abovementioned phenomenon of stigmatizing the sexual sphere of life, common in many periods of human history, has brought about an unwanted result – the feeling of guilt. This phenomenon has also focused

the attention of ethics on a small sphere of sexual behaviours – morality has become identical with sexual morality. One needs to remember that Karol Wojtyła stresses that sex is a gift from God. In the light of Genesis 2,23-25, human body is a body in its primal masculinity and femininity. It is not only a source of fertility (procreation), but also has a distinct feature of 'belovedness' in itself: it is capable of expressing love in which a human – a person – becomes a gift and through this realizes the deepest sense of existence. In relation to the above, a fundamental question arises: how should one live with a soul and – at the same time – a body blessed with sexual features? How can one reconcile these two dimensions of human existence, which so often seem to contradict each other? These two questions are raised by Yves Semen in his book 'Sexuality according to John Paul II'. These questions have always been present in the history of all cultures throughout the ages. Humans are aware of the complexity of their corporal and spiritual nature; this duality is often interpreted as a discrepancy in oneself – often even an internal drama. The discrepancy between the corporal and the spiritual relates in particular to human sexuality, stepping beyond the frames of anthropology and psychology, often touching ethical issues as well as fundamental theological questions [7].

Humans as a species are sexually diverse, which has many consequences in many spheres of human existence. Being a man and a woman brings certain tasks with it, certain responsibility and openness to the other. Acting in accordance with the rules of complementarity and subsidiarity seems inevitable so that a human being can fully develop and realize his/her mission.

The perception of sexual ethics is largely determined by religious hierarchy of values. It is, however, worth mentioning; Karol Wojtyła stressing that many moral questions arise in the field of sexual life and that the source of this phenomenon is a progress in medical science.

Decisions made by humans with regard to one's corporality can largely determine one's life, sometimes even the course of history. These decisions are often a consequence of environmental and parental (educational) influences in the period of psychosexual development. In adolescence – shaping one's psyche and soma. Young people are faced with a difficult task of defining their identity. The so-called 'hormone storm' causes an outburst of first sexual desires, needs and expectations. The youths also realize that they themselves are an object of similar feelings from their peers. At that very time young people are faced with a hard decision of whether to commence their sexual life or abstain from it and wait. Such a decision, however, needs to be deliberate and voluntary. It should come from one's

certainty and will. Such a situation enables harmonious development. James B. Nelson says that human sexuality is a physiological and psychological fundament of the ability to love [7].

Some authors say that sexuality is a sort of language one must learn. What is important, the process of this 'education' happens in a different tempo for different people. Changes of sexual morality happen together with the evolution of culture and social life. The world of values and culture ideally expresses the strivings and affirmation of a contemporary human. Culture as a product of human activity is the best proof of the overall condition of the society and its possibilities for development. It also expresses the insecurities, happiness and strivings in the best possible manner [7].

The contemporary human, living in the era of a widespread cult of corporality and consumptionism, the era of striving for one's comfort, rich and comfortable life, caring only for material values, needs and searches for the answers to questions such as: What is good and what is evil? The contemporary human needs permanent values and searches for them, and values connected with sexual ethics are of particular significance.

Karol Wojtyła stresses that the sexual ethics' point of view should be individual. It touches the issues of persons – issues of love between a man and a woman, not only in the aspect of body and gender. In this regard, love can only be a phenomenon in which persons partake. Issues of body and gender only take part in it through the fact that they are subordinated to the rules creating a frame of the order which should rule in the world of persons. Therefore, sexual ethics cannot be sexology in its view on the man and woman and -love, for it only, or to a dominant extent, defines the problems through the corporal and sexual point of view. This point of view is typical for sexology, which handles the issues of sexual life from the medical and physiological angle [8].

Multidimensionality of space and the multitude of factors that control psycho-sexual development are a major issue in sexology and gynaecology, including paediatric and adolescent sexology and gynaecology. All of these should be taken into account in health promotion. The issue requires exclusively philosophical consideration, with particular attention being paid to ethics.

10 philosophy reflections by Krzysztof Stachewicz:

1. Philosophy seems to be a constant element of the European culture. The prophecy of its end most often intensifies the philosophical thinking.
2. Human is a metaphysical creature. Humans never have and will never derive intellectual satisfaction from the knowledge about facts.
3. The truth is a basic value. Without the truth, the good and the beauty are starting to falter. At-

tempts to erase the truth destroy the foundations of the European culture and are a symptom of a deep soul crisis. The times we live in are not far from these issues.

4. Philosophy should not become close with ideology and politics. It does not want to be an instrument or tool for anybody or anything. It wants to serve only the truth.
5. Pure theory and practical thinking have a deep meaning, against the pragmatic climates of the modern age. You cannot do anything about philosophy and that is the way it should be. (Heidegger).
6. It is always worthwhile to come back to the sapiential nature of philosophy. For the ancient thinkers, philosophy was a soul exercise. Does the modern age propose a creative alternative to the human soul?
7. Philosophy should care for the accuracy of expression, bearing in mind Aristotle's remark that accuracy must always correspond to the described subject. Accuracy in itself in philosophy is a Phantom and delusion (Whitehead).
8. Beyond the cognitive borders of philosophy there are also the spheres of music, poetry, art... In these spheres, a philosopher sees something that steps beyond the philosophical mind. A thinker can affirmatively be silent in the face of these spheres of Reality or try to co-think in these areas.
9. Apofatism has a good tradition and its own place in philosophy. Silence is often more informative than a linguistic expression.
10. We live in the times in which philosophical schools and systems do not exist. Apparently, philosophy is looking for new ways [9].

These philosophical reflections are important in medicine and in sexology, too.

Sexology is an interdisciplinary study which perceives sexuality in various aspects: medical, psychological, sociological, educational, legal, ethnographic, anthropological, biological, religious, ethical and moral. In modern sexology researchers use tools from different academic fields.

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