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The personalistic-communitarian[1] dimension of sociocultural animation

An attempt at a comprehensive examination of the phenomenon of sociocultural animation reveals at least two realities. On the one hand, what is primarily disclosed is the practical applications of animation in various areas of social and cultural life, and, more recently, also in the broadly understood economy by way of the delivery of commercial projects.[2] On the other hand, there is a clearly visible trend of theoretical thinking about animation, searching for a suitable tool for it to tidy up the multiplicity of animation activities, and, as a follow-up, categorising them not only with a view to identifying conceptual tools, but above all in order to determine what we actually define as animation, as well as what can be considered animation solely in the intentions of an author of (often original)educational or cultural projects.

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[1] An inspiration for the use of the term proposed in the title of this paper came from my discussion of sociocultural animation and its community dimension with dr hab. Aneta Gawkowska, an assistant professor at the Institute of Sociology, University of Warsaw, as a part of the scientific seminars taking place on a cyclical basis at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences.

[2] What I have in mind are successful attempts at the application of sociocultural animation knowledge in the management of commercial projects as a part of an original programme called "The use of creative education and sociocultural animation in business. Internships for animators in creative industries" which was delivered at the Institute of Pedagogy, Jagiellonian University, between 2012 and 2016. The then-developed methodology of involvement codenamed ANIMAGAME not only became popular among representatives of the world of business during cooperation with them, but also proved that theoretical knowledge in the area of the social sciences/humanities can be transferred to the economy. I am currently working on another publication describing both the projects and the methodology itself.

Three perspectives on educating animators and their competences

Reflections made by pedagogues, particularly in recent years, concerning the successes and failures of animation as a method used in the work of animators (sadly, sometimes only named as such), are often limited to academic discussions remaining in the sphere of "wishful thinking", both in relation to sociocultural animation and the animators themselves. If anything, it is argued that animators are faced with excessively high expectations, due to which their role may be insufficiently detailed, and too excessive in terms of concrete competences; but it can also be said that their profile of preparation for the future performance of the job is not clear enough. Among other things, this results from the fact of the various perspectives of looking at the interpretation of animation – be it through the lenses of cultural anthropology, sociology or pedagogy. Research devoted to competences of the animator and the subsequent report prepared under the auspices of the Małopolski Instytut Kultury [Małopolski Institute of Culture; MIC] in Cracow,[3] which was preceded by a discussion at Forum Kraków,[4] clearly determined some of its models. The showing of animators from the perspective of the three areas mentioned above turns attention to their competences with due regard to these perspectives, which markedly diversify their roles. And hence we may talk about the profile of the education of animators of culture from the perspective of sociology, cultural studies and pedagogy, since the process of the education of animators takes place in the respective courses of study at many academic centres. Let us turn attention to the fact that as a part of the studies of sociology, animation is often practiced as an element of social work, providing normative knowledge. In the pedagogical approach, it can acquire educational value and from this perspective be understood as a goal of educational actions, a method or technique used in pedagogical work (an educational one in a narrower understanding), but it can also function as one of the principles of pedagogy.[5] It is contained in the postulate of an unending "enlivening" of the processes of teaching and education. Animation of these processes is said to have an impact on their effectiveness. Finally, assuming the interpretation of cultural an-

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[3] As a part of the project "Animation/Education. Possibilities and limitations of animation and cultural education in Poland", carried out in 2013 and 2014 by the MIC, a study was carried out during which three types of animators were identified: lovers of culture, rooted professionals, and metropolitan professionals.

[4] Regular, two-day long meetings of the association Stowarzyszenie Forum Kraków operating by the MIC in Cracow, during which theoretical and practical problems of animation and cultural education are discussed and which are devoted to the organisation of such events as Nie-Kongres Animatorów Kultury [*Non-Congress of Animators of Culture*] (Warszawa 2014, Wrocław–Brzeg 2016).

[5] The first two mentioned ones are discussed in relevant literature, while the third proposal results from the analysis and interpretation of my own research on animation – one of the subjects discussed in my separate monograph under preparation for print.

thropology, we also encounter the animation of the active culture – one experienced on a daily basis, literally immersed in daily routine. In the anthropological proposal, animation is presented as a tool of the applied cultural anthropology, "which, using various methods, reproduces memory and the past, searches for the understanding of phenomena of culture, [and] severs the division into high and low culture" (Krasowska 2013: 14). According to the staff educating animators at the Institute of Polish Culture, University of Warsaw, the anthropological perspective of animation sees cultural activity from the point of view of models and attitudes, social relations, tradition and the local environment. Hence, it is important for animators to become familiar with the historical and social specificity of the place in which the actions are carried out as well as the nature and expectations of the community they cooperate with.[6] In the personalistic-communitarian approach put forward in this paper, all the three aforementioned approaches to animation are necessary for animation processes leading to social change to take place. How could such actions take place without norms, values, or references to the making of culture on a day-to-day basis?

In this article, I report the need for posing questions about the gist of sociocultural animation and for not only animators but also staff educating future animators and preparing them for playing a role in local communities to reflect on it. I also put forward my own original approach to one of the dimensions of animation, i.e. its personalistic-communitarian nature.

I am advancing an incontestable thesis that we continue to experience a shortage of phenomenological research on animation – hence it is easy to come across judgements pronouncing animation itself and its application as unsuccessful. As already mentioned in the first paragraphs of this article, academic discussions on sociocultural animation are full of voices pronouncing its failure to achieve an expected success, although, as we know, it settled into the Polish reality at least a quarter of a century ago, becoming as much as the advertising of various institutions. However, let us take into account the excessive use of the word "animation" in all sorts of projects in the area of culture or, more broadly speaking, the social activity taken by and directed at people. Therefore, an absence of there being concrete effects of animation, i. e. in the literal sense of the word, "enlivening", should come as no surprise, since they require from animators a special disposition and a resulting attitude to the participants of animation activities. The effect might be the compelling of the "internal stir" included in the very word, which may be the basis for a permanent change in the personality of a given individual. What is meant here is the change of attitudes manifested in behaviours and concrete decisions and the subsequent actions undertaken for the benefit of the local community. A thought formulated in this way may open up the field for research into the effects of animation projects, since it seems necessary to undertake this research if we still want to

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[6] Cf. Zofia Dworakowska's standpoint concerning the competences of animators of culture educated at the Institute of Polish Culture, University of Warsaw, http://forumkrakow. info/wp-content/uploads/Kompetencje-animatora-IKP-UW.pdf.

practice sociocultural animation and solve the problem of its efficiency – be it in the area of pedagogy or elsewhere. Of help here would be the phenomenological approach to research into the subject in question, which above all creates a possibility for a phenomenological description of sociocultural animation. Through the personalistic-communitarian dimension of animation proposed in the title of this paper, I have indicated the potential contained in the etymology of the notion itself and attempts at applying it in working with other people through values included in cultural goods. Thus, making a reference to the creators of this volume of *Ars Educandi*, we may on the one hand indicate the sociocultural conditions applying to both animators and the animated, but on the other hand – opportunities for overcoming certain limitations resulting from these determinants. Perceiving animation through its personalistic-communitarian nature, we have in mind the development and functioning of the individual not only as a person with their own unique set of features, including the abilities, so-called talents, elicited in the process of animation, but also as a member of a bigger group, in confrontation with which they notice their distinctiveness – both individual and common traits. Both the former and the latter constitute individuals' humanity at its fullest – humanity understood as the conscious updating of their possibilities, and – through them – stepping beyond all their limitations. Such humanity opens up to the individual, at the same time being discovered by them, during animation activities through the world of cultural values or broadly understood actions for the benefit of society that are aimed, inter alia, at the change of the quality of life of the particular groups. Let us stress that the latter calls for a particular sensitivity to the so-called Others/Aliens, consisting in a specific listening to their individual needs and discovering them together with them, or perhaps even based solely on a discreet accompanying of them in their discovery of their own authentic needs. Let us turn attention to the fact that they are set much deeper than at the level of the satisfaction of material needs. Most probably, they are also secondary in relation to the previously supplied/satisfied basic values/needs, including the vital ones related to the ordinary daily living activities as well as physical and mental health.

Therefore, it is not difficult to notice the emerging humanistic-social nature of the future graduates of animation, in particular those studying pedagogy or cultural studies, as well as an extensive, albeit not sufficiently deepened, scope of theoretical knowledge supplied to them during the process of education.[7] It is precisely in the above that the already mentioned nature of the education of animators manifests itself, since what they are provided with in the case of pedagogical studies, apart from the in-depth knowledge of pedagogy, is the basics of psychology and sociology, as

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[7] I discussed problems related to the cataloguing of the competences of the animator and the perception of animation from the pedagogical point of view in my article prepared to express my standpoint concerning this issue at Forum Kraków operated by the MIC. In this sketch, I use threads discussed there, quoting some of them in their entirety, http://forumkrakow.info/blog/2015/04/13/kompetencje-animatorow-kultury-stanowisko-forum-krakow.

well as rudimentary knowledge concerning fields of art (the fine arts, music, theatre, literature, and film).

Just as important as the animator's knowledge and abilities in various fields are the masters whose apprentices future animators are. Therefore, it is worthwhile to reflect not only on the process of education and competences, but also on the very value of animator's work, thus arriving at the gist of sociocultural animation. When lecturing theoretical knowledge on sociocultural animation, and teaching animators its practical application as a part of a several years long process of academic education, maybe it would be worthwhile to ponder on the possibility of becoming an authentic animator – someone recognizing talents, and directing them wisely, an accompanying tutor in the process of the management of the already identified ones? Thus, the so-called animation competences indispensable in the animators' work will emerge in the area of the enlivening, inspiring the surrounding reality, determining the key dimension of professional attitudes of the animator, expressed in openness, reflectiveness, awareness of the spiritual improvement of people, and not only the improvement of the biological fitness of the body, as well as investing into the spiritual potential of the charges. Understood in the above way, animation may be a solution to manipulations or colonisations.

From an individual to community in animation activities

A look at sociocultural animation through the suggested personalistic-communitarian dimension corresponds to cultural anthropology, where animationis above all an expression of the search for the understanding of cultural phenomena, while, when perceived as an idea, it opposes the technocratic understanding of mass culture affecting the cultural personality and types of interpersonal bonds (Mencwel 2002: 20). This fits in at least two elements constituting the personalistic-communitarian core of its dimension, i.e. the individual and the community. Therefore, let us point out that Emmanuel Mounier – the creator of open personalism and the founder of the magazine "Esprit" connected with the animation trend in France – argued that the existence of people who are free and creative is irrevocably interconnected to make a network of social conditions. In communitarianism, the identity of individuals is a derivative of the traditions absorbed by them in the process of socialisation and as a part of the social functions they play. In the communitarian approach, individuals are parts of the communities that surround them, who fulfil themselves as persons. In contrast to liberalism, communitarianism puts pressure not so much on the individual's independence and rights, as on their relations and social duties, as well as the common values indispensable for society to survive. Who we are depends not only on us, is not entirely the question of individual choice, as liberals have it, but is determined by the multiplicity of our relations with other members of the community, "the horizon of common meanings". This joint space also determines the sense of the notions we use. It is impossible to understand

what justice, tolerance, and freedom are outside the context of meaning specific for every community. The protection of culture and collective identity is indispensable for the protection and development of the "self" grounded in collective practices. Identification of the citizens with the state and political community may take place only where "communal forms of life" are values, and their existence and condition have solely an instrumental importance and are not designed to satisfy the needs of individuals. According to communitarians, the community is a good necessary for individuals, and should thus be protected by the state. Communitarians see in the contemporary Western societies strong atomisation tendencies, civic apathy, withdrawal into privacy, and deep sociocultural stratifications. They also believe that to maintain the collective identity and strengthen social bonds, it is indispensable to bring back the spirit of democratic co-participation through the enlivening and development of the civic society and decentralization of state structures. In its gist, animation contains a community creating potential, while as a method or technique of effective action, it may strengthen interpersonal bonds and communication as a part of them, thus building strong communities – an issue this paper develops further on.

Although the thought quoted above seems to be utopian, the daily practice confirms the existence of concrete places, in which animation is understood as an idea, attitude, lifestyle, but also a method, which is practiced, and one may see the observable/empirical indicators of the changes taking places owing to it. The leitmotif of the animation understood and practiced in this way by historians and theoreticians of culture is the discovery of creative possibilities both in themselves and in others. Teaching sensitivity to the potential hidden in the other human being, empathy towards other people's feelings and a special insight into the understanding of their minds, are the main abilities developed as a part of the specialisation of the "animation of culture" as understood by the applied anthropology. In one of the well-known French journals devoted to animation, the author of an article on the anthropological context of the animator's work argued that the sources of the permanence and cohesion of animation should be sought in the day-to-day life of the citizens of local communities (Precas 1984: 117). The above was confirmed by the French animation researcher, Pierre Besnard, who demanded that it should not be limited solely to instrumental actions carried out during free time in the process of the promotion of culture (*v*. Besnard 1980).

In this place, we may refer to the concealed dispute in environments practicing animation, concerning, perhaps even subconsciously, its gist – namely the roots, the ontological status, and the paradigms of its understanding, and, in consequence, also practices, that are built up above them. This concerns mostly the indication of the educational horizon of animation, regardless of the word "sociocultural/cultural", or "of culture" that is attached to it. Andrzej Mencwel shows the above in his text, discussing the goal of animation projects, but also adding that what he has in mind is education: "oriented towards individuation, subjectivity, and creation" (Mencwel 2002: 22). The author uses a phrase which is typical for pedagogy: "leading". When

calling the intention accompanying the goal of the founding of the specialization course by the Department of Polish Culture, University of Warsaw, Mencwel connects the verbs "to enliven", and "to lead" with the act of animation.

Trying to answer the question of what animation is for pedagogy, I look for its roots so as to be able to more efficiently move within its reach, or to find theoretical grounds for it. Mencwel mentions the following actions in the field of animation processes: the facilitation of creativity, the development of personality, and the creation of concrete bonds (Mencwel 2002: 25). We start the process of animation with a careful look at its participants and focusing attention on them so as to raise their interest in being active, thus involving them with either social or creative movement. Here, it is worth to refer to one of the many theoretical standpoints of French and Polish researchers indicating the aforementioned educational potential of animation. The already mentioned Besnard (1988: 341–376) talks about stimulating individuals to act, introducing them to the environment, and integrating them with the broader structures, which implies inclusion processes.

The "spirit" of personalism and communitarianism in sociocultural animation

Reflection on the "enlivening" potential of sociocultural animation takes on a deeper significance when we include it in the personalistic-communitarian dimension proposed herein.[8] Taking a look at its ideological roots, one may clearly notice three classical threads on which it draws. The dimension I am describing has been inspired by the conservatism, liberalism, and socialism that emerged after the French Revolution. The personalism, which refers to them but also undertakes a critical discussion with them, followed by communitarianism, propose a vision of a person "immersed" in relations with others as a part of various communities. In this case, the supreme value is the variously understood, but assumedly existing, common good, which legitimizes animation activities. This dimension appears as a new, additional source of the empowerment of animation activities through the existence of an objective common good, owing to which the change taking place in a person or group as a result of the undertaken animation actions is not an effect of an external enforcement, but a reference to the participants' internal needs in the course of the animation process. Thus, this is not about the enlivening of what has already died, but about energizing the existing, which is in lethargy, which sleeps.

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[8] The sociocultural dimension of animation proposed herein manifested itself during my research devoted to the use of the methodology of sociocultural animation in projects focusing on the activation of mentally disturbed persons, and attempts at making them more socially and vocationally active. I first described the personalistic-communitarian dimension of animation in my paper devoted to an already delivered project in the above scope. In this article, I use and deepen the analysis of the animation dimension proposed in the title of the work.

We thus touch upon the gist of humanity, as reaching to the inside we reveal what should be disclosed. This is achieved through the individual's internal openness to change, through a peculiar internal pressure – in contrast to the external one – as discussed by Bogdan Nawroczyński, which balances the necessary pressure and freedom in education (1987). Animation actions may facilitate a specific transformation of external pressure into an internalized system of orders, which becomes a driving force behind the development of individuals and groups. The simplest examples are animation actions in the amateur artistic movement, which often involve a significant effort, or even self-sacrifice, on the part of the participants, but are still performed with such a devotion that it is clear that they result from a balance between internal and external pressures.

When pondering on animation actions from the point of view of the above personalistic-communitarian perspective, we may conclude that communities develop themselves in the world of their own relations, but animation guarantees the building of broader structures, the expansion of relations (Gawkowska 2004b). We thus have in mind strong communities marked by firm rooting, identification of its members in a specific space, and the maximum of direct bonds or "associations" determined by a rational but fragmentary logic of the goal (Kurczewska 2004: 93). The question of the existence of a local community in today's times moves to the area of the search for sets of interrelated individuals with a common identity, living in a specific area, accepting the collection of norms and principles typical for a given community, having a direct contact with each other, cooperating for their common good, but also using contacts with the outside world. What helps in their finding is the thinking of local communities in terms Joanna Kurczewska showed in oppositions of time and space, inclusion and exclusion, community and association, and the local and the global (Kurczewska 2004: 90). Another problem which is so significant at present is the question of the role of sociocultural animation in supporting the process of the emergence of local communities, or, as relevant literature often has it, acting as a part of the already existing communities and transforming them into the so-called strong communities.

The phrase "to animate" means, among other things "to enliven", which is metaphorically tantamount to "breathing life into", and is related to community actions. Animation is directed to a group of people finding themselves in the situation of a cultural or educational social event. The community dimension of the animation activity lies in the integration of groups of participants of cultural events in events having a broad social reach, which also play an educational role consistent with the values expressed by the group. All actions always have a relational nature, are directed at the other, in relation to whom they are undertaken. Every act we perform has consequences for the life of the people that surround us, and sociocultural animation is closely connected with the local community, resulting in work with a small group, as well as individuals.

What therefore emerges as a result of the posing of the above questions is the problem of the building of a community through animation actions connected with

the idea of communitarianism. This proposal was reported by Aneta Gawkowska through the use of communitarian concepts for the description and analysis of local activating actions involving the use of actions from the area of culture in local communities (2004b).[9] Special attention should be devoted to the axiological context of the creation of the community.

In the groups experiencing animation actions one can almost hear a question: how to make a group of people a community? – a community the existence of which assumes the equality of its members consisting in making sure everyone develops as much as they can, freedom understood as the making of choice with respect and acceptance for the other person's right to free choice, unconditional acceptance fostering internal transformation, mutual sharing, and reciprocity. In today's world, which is marked by fragmentation in practically every area of life, it is one of the most serious challenges to pedagogues – cultural animators – as well as an educational problem. Animation actions that assumedly are to "enliven" individuals and whole human groups are a special type of activity, which opens up possibilities for the building of communities between people.

Animation activates processes concerning the things happening now, establishing a positive vision of the future. The processes implied by animation, such as: discovery, the establishment of relations, and creation,[10] can be found at the stage of the recognition of (previously often unnoticed) talents and their skilful management, and subsequently at the generation of relations based on common interests, but also a community of the experience shared during the animation actions in larger groups of people[11]. The first of the processes – the discovery – consists in the creation of conditions fostering human development, with particular focus on the Other/Alien, and the recognition of hidden creative powers and cultural needs in persons subjected to animation processes. The second process in question – the generation of relations – is the sphere of interpersonal communication and values present in cultural goods, introduced to the animated persons during contact with works of art. The animation taking place in stages, which we are familiar with from relevant literature, taking on a new shape in the context of the personalistic-communitarian dimension of animation proposed in this paper. It brings out individual features, focusing in particular on the disclosed potential abilities of individuals, so as to subsequently combine them with community values. This process of anima-

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[9] For more information on communitarian theories, see A. Gawkowska, *Biorąc wspólnotę poważnie? Komunitarystyczne krytyki liberalizmu*, Warszawa 2004, Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN or its English version: *Taking Community Seriously? Communitarian Critiques of Liberalism*, Warszawa 2011, Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego.

[10] For example: Fundacja Sztuki Osób Niepełnosprawnych, Fundacja "Hamlet", Stowarzyszenie Pomocy Socjalnej "Gaudium", Fundacja im. Brata Alberta, Stowarzyszenie GRAAL for the development of children's personalities, and Fundacja MAXIMUM, in which animation projects have been delivered.

[11] A reference to the processes identified by H. Therry; H. Therry, *Animation, action sociale, action culturelle*, "Recherche Sociale" 1970, No. 32.

tion takes place in such a way as to highlight the uniqueness and indispensability of the individual features of every person for the making of a community out of a group of accidental people.

Summing up the above, it should be once again highlighted that I intended above all to open new research fields in the face of the emerging doubts as to the existence and functioning of sociocultural animation, both in the environment of theoreticians and practitioners searching for an answer to the question of what sociocultural animation is and how it should be practiced so as to discover its full potential contained not only in attractive forms of action, but also hidden in the meaning of the very notion, and use it comprehensively? By sketching the personalistic-communitarian dimension of animation as proposed in the title of this paper, I have turned attention to its gist, which, among other things, is contained in the fact that, working in the field of individual expectations, animation steps beyond them, disclosing its communal nature, to become, in effect, an instrument of social inclusion.

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Summary

The personalistic-communitarian dimension of in sociocultural animation

This article highlights the need to ask questions concerning the gist of sociocultural animation and to reflect on it not only by animators but also the staff educating future animators, and preparing people for playing the role in local communities. I also put forward my own approach to one of the dimensions of animation, i.e. its personalistic-communitarian nature. My line of thought fits the topic of this volume of *Ars Educandi*, as it discusses the conditions of development and functioning of human beings (in this case animators and the animated), and in particular its sociocultural determinants I am most interested in.

Keywords

sociocultural animation, cultural activity, skills and knowledge of animators, education of animators, individual, community

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