

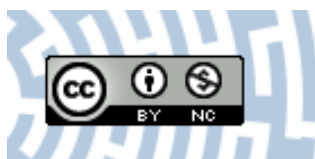


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## **Human Joy of Life: Its Forms and the Significance of their Systematization in Building a positive Upbringing Climate**

### **Abstract**

The author puts emphasis on the fact that the ability to experience joy of life as a psychical condition is ontologically important not only because it derives from the very existence of a human being, but also because it plays a therapeutic role in human life.

The author also looks into the onto-genetic revolution of joy of human life from its simplest biological forms to the spiritual and metaphysical forms of life affirmation. She also proposes the notion that the upbringing to joy of life is in line with the teacher's understanding of the numerous sources of human joy, such as among other things: being united with people, co-existence with Transcendence, educational atmosphere<sup>1</sup> of love, truth and freedom and a belief that it is up to the educator to lead his/her students out of the states contrary to joy of life. The final part of the text contains praxeological guidelines on educating the youth to joy of life.

In concentrating on the ontological aspect of this existential field of science the author was able to explore a new area of the pedagogical research, connecting philosophy of upbringing with the theory and practice of education.

The application of phenomenological and hermeneutical methodology to pedagogical sciences proved conducive to essential thinking which was aimed at discovering the nature, sense and meaning of various phenomena of upbringing rather than at gathering facts. The essential studies play not only an epistemological

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<sup>1</sup> Atmosphere of upbringing (or climate of upbringing) is a set of different interpersonal relationships, styles of upbringing and cooperating with the child, an individual's place in a social group, intensification of emotional relationships and ways of mutual communication (Pilch, 2006, p. 215).

role of providing scientific knowledge, but also an axiological one, based on the thesis that science is “saturated” with values and that it brings us up using these values. Hermeneutical understanding is a very important cognitive-emotional process, peculiar methodology, a style of research work, a way of interpersonal communication.

**Key words:** *joy of life, way to existence, ontology, creativity, upbringing climate, aim of upbringing.*

## **Introduction**

Although joy of life constitutes a permanent part of the cultural output, each new stage of human knowledge development rediscovers it and assigns it a new and original meaning. Joy of life, however semantically close it may be to such terms as happiness or pleasure, cannot be considered to be their synonym.

Happiness, pleasure and joy of life are all experiences that are inner-personal, natural, coupled with experience of action and necessary (the human being cannot deny wanting them). Considering the differences between them one can notice, first of all, the dissimilarity of their origin. In humans it is the sensory functions that are responsible for experiencing pleasure and the emotion-feeling sphere that participates in generating joy. The state of happiness, on the other hand, results not only from animating the human corporality (venting its expression), but also from increasing its moral and spiritual strength.

The matter did not escape the attention of the contemporary phenomenologists exploring different ways of human existence (e.g., Paul Ricoeur, Roman Ingarden and Władysław Stróżewski).

The attitude of joy of life, with its numerous variants, was presented here as a creative way of human existence and an important aim of upbringing.

## **1. Joy of life as a human way of existence**

Existence constitutes a general idea, broken down into individual ways of existence (Ingarden, 1987, p.83). The way of existence always means the existence of something. Existence manifests itself in the form of a certain way of existence. Many ways are known, e.g., existence, ideal, intentional or possible existence (Stróżewski, 2004, pp.124, 130).

One of the ways of existence of adventitious entities is an existential attitude of life acceptance and an accompanying feeling of being united with the world and an attitude of ontological or emotional harmony with other entities (e.g., the Absolute, material beings, indispositions). The approved way of human existence may be set against the non-approved existence characteristic of unwillingness towards life, not being able to take “no” for an answer, and even nihilism. Such a way of existence secondarily increases the deficiency of understanding the aim and essence of life, its non-repeatability, feeling of the sense of life and experience of unity with the work of creation. It also generates shortages of human reconciliatory understanding.

Numerous present-day social and educational threats are related most probably with the lack or inefficient attitude of life affirmation in children, youth and adults. It may prove to be an excellent micro – and macro-social preventive measure if we concentrated all the representatives of collective life on the proper upbringing process aimed at forming such ways of human existence that, on the one hand, will be “resistant” to traps of destructivity and, on the other hand, will be favorable towards life within the structure of the most important human moral virtues.

Not every joyous way of existence is recommended as regards upbringing, however, just like not every non-joyous functioning is ethically unjustified. It is difficult to refer to joy as desirous in cases of people addicted to alcohol, drugs, nicotine, medications, extreme sports or the Internet. Unnatural gaiety may also occur in individuals with behavioral disturbances (e.g., during criminal activity).

The existence almost completely deprived of joy of life may at the same time be an unconscious existence, lacking inspiration for individual development or creativity. If it is justified by suffering, a traumatic situation or the course of disease, however, even though they objectively make it more difficult to experience satisfaction with joy of life, then it is not merely a self-preserving but also an auto-creating existence. Each increase in humanity possesses a clear dimension of hope.

The question that continues to vex the mind is: Why is joy of life a psychic disposition that is ontologically important?

Every human being with their own way of existence initiates numerous processes, events and even things, i.e., they create the reality of accepting or negating life, transforming the world to suit their own attitudes. So modified a world influences other processes, events, individuals and things. Apart from rebuilding the material world and forming nature, the human being has the biggest impact on the psyche of those whom they educate. It is right here in the inner person that certain ways of existence take their origin. Joy of life constitutes an ontological basis for human upbringing also due to the fact that in crisis situations it is rescued by remembering the already experienced joy or by anticipating possible chances.

## **2. Elemental variants of joy of life significant in the process of human upbringing**

The expression of joy of life, or the different ways in which the feeling of joy manifests itself, includes a number of more detailed aspects that need to be classified and applied to pedagogical praxeology. Each period of human ontogenesis is characterised by a number of dominant positive life inclinations.

**Childhood** is associated with a number of joys of the biological kind. Even the tiniest things become the reason for showing joy. There are many objects of children's desires and at the same time reasons for being satisfied, beginning with satisfying the simplest physiological needs, such as sleep or nutrition, to the joy related to psycho-physical closeness to the mother. This last type of experiencing joy makes the mother's joy dependent on the child's joy and vice versa. The joy of contact with the mother evolves over time into the satisfaction coming from a wider family union (Han-Ilgiewicz, 1962, No. 6).

Around the third month of the child's life it begins to smile, manifesting satisfaction and desire to establish positive contact with the social surroundings. Although the early childhood joys do not transgress the boundaries of the sensory plane, young school children and even pre-school children often show intellectual joy.

**Youth** is characterized by a special ability to find reasons for joy, which differ slightly from those experienced in childhood. In some cases the only factors that change are the influence that joy generates and its frequency of occurrence. Due to the fact that the youth are intellectually more capable, some events, known to them from the experience of the previous stage, are less joyous while others cause greater joy. Their experience of joy, which is derived from social interactions both with peers and adults, becomes more mature than before. Joy may also be associated with positive achievement at school and cooperation with classmates, which provides them with ample opportunity to experience intense emotions. Maturing teenagers are still able to perceive comical aspects in daily situations, hence their joy from playing pranks and making jokes (Gerstmann, 1986, pp.219–221). It must be added, however, that the more intensive the joy is, the shorter it usually lasts.

An adolescent may experience a certain crisis of life affirmation as a result of bio-psychical developmental changes taking place in his/her body. However, the forming of the hormonal, sexual and nervous systems in a young individual is not usually the only factors causing disturbances in experiencing life affirmation. Negative attitudes in the youth often result from unfavorable socio-cultural phenomena in their surroundings.

Rapid emotional changes lead to an increase in unreal or surreal joys in comparison to the joys closely related to the course of life. Apart from sensual and cognitive joys there are also cheerful ethical, esthetic and spiritual experiences.

The developmental role of the experienced joys in relation to the past periods of ontogenesis remains virtually the same. It is related to the environment and builds up trust towards people, provides foundations for positive self-assessment and anticipation, stimulates activity. The experienced joys and cheerful moods in adolescence have a major significance for the psychical hygiene of this age. They generate inner calmness, which in turn leads to freedom in establishing interpersonal contacts, so favorable for personal development. In this respect, one way or the other, nothing changes over the entire human lifespan.

The joy of an **adult** is of the well “worked-out” kind. The greater the suffering from which the joy emerges or which it overcomes the deeper the joy. It is also related to the individual’s independence of many needs, i.e., its functional autonomy. A human being may experience all kinds of joy, including cognitive, sensual, esthetic, ethic and spiritual ones.

The middle-age crisis, related to biochemical changes in the human body and the perception of several psycho-physical symptoms of growing old, may for some time (up to several years or occasionally even longer) weaken the so-far stable experience of life affirmation. In general, a somatically and mentally healthy individual handles well the somewhat deteriorated frame of mind and eventually overcomes negative interpretations of life in general and its share in it.

**The senior age** (late adulthood) is not without reason referred to as “second joy of life” and “spring of the matured mood and spiritual cheerfulness” (Szuman, 1947). Explosive joys of childhood and implosive joys of adolescence combine to create a new quality in the form of explosive-implosive joy, slightly of the inner kind, although still based on the permanent satisfaction with the whole life.

Sometimes it is thought that the proclivity for spontaneous experience of joy is characteristic of youth and that over time it is allegedly suppressed. It does not seem right, however, since there are elderly individuals who can experience joy most intensively (Izdebska, 1988, p.145).

The elderly do not always enjoy perfect health or physical efficiency. Cognitive joys differ a little from the previous life intervals. One may suppose that the matured personality obtains more joy from the depth rather than the expanse of cognition.

The periodical systematization of life joys indicates certain regularity, i.e., the human being at the early stage of his/her ontogenesis first discovers in his/her own self the foretastes of the future joys and expresses them with laughter or smile, and

then finds them in his/her human surroundings. During the later phases of life the human being does not only rely on the physiological or psychical resources but also desires to experience evolutionarily higher spiritual and metaphysical forms of life acceptance.

The **elementary (inborn)** life acceptance, present in a healthy infant, may transform over the subsequent stages of human development into **secondary (acquired)** life acceptance or secondary life negation. Bio-socio-cultural conditions, in which a young human being is brought up, to a large degree determine his/her life attitude. Life acceptance is a manifestation of the emotional-axiological maturity and the individual's psycho-social health; it also indicates the person's ability to cope with critical and crisis situations. The tendency to positively interpret traumatic events in life reveals an individual's functional independence and his/her ability to strengthen him/herself with ethically justified life affirmation. Unwelcome obstacles on the road to emotional and moral development of the child (such as, among others, parental divorce, parental addictions or addictions of the child itself, social orphanhood and institutional upbringing, neurosis, psychical disturbances and suicidal tendencies, failure at school and in relationships with peers) may significantly weaken life affirmation. Life negation may then assume a variety of forms, e.g., chronic pessimism or nihilism, cynicism, defeatism, despair, negativism or fatalism. Life negation evokes other negative consequences for human personality and these are manifested in the form of socially destructive behavioral disturbances.

When considering the human attitude in face of favorable and unfavorable events in life, one may look at two kinds of joy of life: **conditional** joy (activated by favorable outer or inner conditions) and **unconditional** joy (a resultant of the already formed life affirmation and the way of existence). The unconditional acceptance of life is obtained by individuals who possess a properly formed system of values and highly appreciate this axiological unit. The unconditional acceptance of life does not depend on chance events since such individuals are successful in partial freeing themselves from changeable existence. Respect for the metaphysical dimension of human life makes life affirmation more indeterminative.

On the basis of joyous experiences, joys may be classified as follows:

- **physiological** (e.g., sleep, rest),
- **sensory** (through sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell),
- **esthetic** (through a creative process, arts),
- **cognitive** (through thinking, memorizing, picturing things/events/situations, concentrating attention, e.g., during learning),
- **ethic** (as regards ethical norms),



- **moral** (related to the individual's sensitivity of conscience),
- **spiritual** (related to the way of expressing two fundamental desires: to be immortal and to be perfect, e.g., joy of prayer, contemplation, discovery and protection of sainthood, approaching Transcendence).

If one takes into account the reason for joy of life, the joys basically fall into two categories:

- **joy related to the idea of outer reason** (e.g., a positive attitude towards the world, delight, love);
- **joy related to the idea of inner reason** (e.g., self-satisfaction) (Spinoza, 1954, p.225).

The various forms of inner expression of the human joy of life direct our attention to two possible ways of its manifestation: **verbal** (speech and other phonations) and **non-verbal** (facial expression and whole-body mime).

Considering human life in the eschatological plane one should also pay attention to the specific properties of **natural** joy (temporal, finite) and **supernatural** joy (eternal, infinite). These two types of joy result from the assumption that the process of human life and the love of life are of uninterrupted and constant character.

Even at the moment of his/her own death the individual may express essential information in two ways: firstly by redirecting attention from him/herself and shifting the love of life onto another human being; secondly by trusting the care of God, who perceives and supports his/her thoughtlessness. This belief in resurrection assumes numerous revealing forms, e.g., by transferring onto the surviving family members or friends the duty to replace one's own desire to exist and the effort of existence. In this way the dying person mobilizes the deepest resources of life to indicate his/her cheerful presence [*s'affirmer encore*] and not fear of death. Such an attitude to life expresses the principle that reality cannot be destroyed by death or by the delusion that only temporal life is real (Ricoeur, 2007, pp.12, 16, 18).

### **3. Several observations on upbringing youth to joy of life**

Assuming that the personality of the teacher does not constitute in this respect an anti-model for students, I hereby present selected propositions for development of affirmative life attitudes in upbringing relations between teachers and students at school or between the custodian and the children under his/her charge in institutions such as orphanages.

What is interesting is the observation that in order to lead a successful life the human being adheres to the belief that daily philosophy is more important than



the philosophy of life which any given individual applies to his/her argumentation. The training aimed at determining one's own opinions, beliefs, attitudes and habits may constitute a golden opportunity to keep for a longer period of time (e.g., several months) a thematic diary entitled: *My philosophy of life*. The upbringing dialogue based on such mature work by the youth leads to better relationships between group members, better self-cognition and introduction of behavioral modifications/adjustments among group members.

The cognitive training described above may be completed by a comparative analysis of psychological benefits and losses due to cheerful and pessimistic behaviors. It would be a constructive idea and an inspiring intellectual adventure as well as a valuable lesson on spiritual cheerfulness for the students if the teacher assigned their students the task of writing a screenplay entitled, "*Life – a clash between optimism and pessimism without winner or losers*", which they would then present to the rest of the class and school.

The activating teaching and upbringing methods should, however, remain harmonized with the contemplation and relaxation forms. Students can be taught how to calm down through a soothing field trip or a lesson (arts, ecology) held in, e.g., a park, where they can observe the beauty of the world around them. Such forms of creative expression in children and youth as drawing, painting, sculpture, singing, dance, *rhythm exercises*, playing musical instruments, designing buildings and interiors, literary, logistic and rationalization exercises (especially outdoors) make children all the more prone to manifest joys of life.

The teacher's and parents' excessive pragmatism may hamper the development of reflectiveness in the youth and block their auto-creative life attitude. Technocratic rationalism and consumerism of contemporary societies are considered to be obstacles, albeit not insurmountable, on the way to upbringing to joy of life. If children and the youth are brought up in the atmosphere of an esthetic and phenomenological approach to nature then the occurrence of mere exploitation attitudes will be reduced.

A young individual's natural drive to life acceptance can be boosted by channeling his/her enthusiasm into peer upbringing communities (such as clubs, circles, associations, teams, rallies, etc). Here the elementary ways for expressing positive life inclinations obtain cultural and social "framework". A group eliminates these forms for expression of happiness that are not approved by its members and strengthens these that are commonly accepted within the group. Collective expression of enthusiasm (e.g., at music concerts), however, should remain under social control, otherwise it may become dangerous.

Once the teacher understands the upbringing process as a way of leading his/

her students out of the state of unhappiness, then both the children and their educator become wisely absorbed in life and achieve axiologically impeccable life happiness.

## **Conclusion**

The ability to achieve joy of life constitutes a psychic disposition that is ontologically significant not only because it derives from the same human existence but also because it serves therapeutic functions towards the human being.

The ontogenetic evolution of human joy of life begins with its biologically simplest form via cheerful sensory, ethical and esthetic experiences that eventually lead to spiritual and metaphysical joys. The developmental role of the experienced joys remains almost the same in these periods of the human life. It is connected with the environment, evokes trust towards people, generates the attitude of positive self-assessment and anticipation, and mobilizes to activity.

The upbringing to joy of life is facilitated by the teacher's true understanding of the numerous sources of human joy, his/her ability to build up the atmosphere of agreeability towards life, truth and freedom, and by the belief that it is the teacher's role to lead his/her students out of the states that are contrary to the states described above.

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