
Jan Władysław Dawid

On the Soul of a Teacher

Autorka przekładu: dr Joanna Kostyło
Instytut Pedagogiki
Uniwersytet Jagielloński w Krakowie

For you who embody that soul¹

A focal point of contemporary pedagogical thought and practice is the need to acquire an experiential foundation and knowledge of educational measures, methods, techniques and organization. The pupil, teacher, and school manifest themselves to us as components of a mechanistic system that constitutes, in turn, an element of a grand

¹ Jan Władysław Dawid dedicated this essay to his spouse Jadwiga Szczawińska-Dawid (1863-1910), who was an educational and political activist in Polish territories under the rule of Imperial Russia during the era of partitions of Poland. The essay was composed in the final period of Dawid's life, characterized by personal hardships, including conflicts with czarist authorities, persecution for his progressive journalism, financial adversity, poor health, and most notably, the tragic suicide of his wife. Dawid's indebtedness to his wife is notable. Her influence led him toward radical social and political activism. Collaborating as co-editors, they contributed to the radical-left weekly newspaper *Voice* («Głos») and participated in journalistic advocacy within the *Pedagogical Review*, the *Social Review*, and various other journals. Exhibiting courage, determination, and an entrepreneurial spirit, Jadwiga provided unwavering support to her husband throughout many years of their activities and diligently tended to his fragile health. When in 1906 Dawid was sentenced to prison for his agitational activities, it was only thanks to her numerous interventions with the authorities that Dawid was able to postpone and shorten the sentence. Nevertheless, a series of confrontations with the authorities and severe financial adversities seriously undermined her psychological well-being, culminating in her tragic suicide in February 1910. The sudden demise of his spouse had a profound impact on Dawid. This emotional turmoil triggered significant shifts in his positivist radical convictions and marked his turn toward metaphysics. Cf. W. Okoń, *Dawid*, Wiedza Powszechna, Warsaw 1980, pp. 38-44. It is within this context that Dawid authored his essay, *On the Soul of a Teacher* dedicating it to his late wife as an embodiment of a charismatic and devoted educator who has "love for the souls" of her students and makes substantial sacrifices to educate Polish youth amid the particularly challenging social, political, and economic conditions of late nineteenth-century Poland under czarist rule. These considerations are pertinent to the present translation and have prompted my deliberate choice of using the feminine pronoun "she/her" when translating third-person pronouns related to the figure of a teacher. (*Translator's note*)

mechanism of nature: just as the former so the latter are propelled by distinct forces and governed by laws, the grasp and application of which are poised to determine whether the mechanism will turn out to be efficient and what kind of outcome it will produce. This constitutes the essence and objective of the fields of educational psychology and experimental pedagogy.

However, there exists another concomitant factor that frequently eludes our attention and seldom occupies our thoughts, even though it permeates across the entire educational spectrum, constituting its fundamental core. Namely, the fact that education is simultaneously a natural process, a process that unfolds as far as it can and necessarily must within the confines of the laws that govern the physical and spiritual aspects of the human organism. Nonetheless, concurrently, a sort of steering power acts upon the entirety of this process, commanding authority over the causally and mechanically determined forces: a sort of a scheme, pattern, an idea of what should unfold. This pattern, this idea, resides within and finds embodiment in an educator who, consciously though most often unknowingly, aspires for a student to become like her, to actualize her archetype albeit a more perfect, devoid of the educator's own deficiencies and weaknesses, while superior and enriched with the life experience that has shaped her.

A key factor in education pertains to the essence of a teacher and, specifically, what she thinks of herself and what else she aspires to achieve. Indeed, in no other profession does an individual's significance carry as much weight as it does within the teaching profession. An architect may be a wicked person yet still construct an appealing and comfortable house; while an engineer who has dugged tunnels, constructed expansive roads, and erected bridges – may remain a meager character. This may not hold true for a physician. Undoubtedly, nobody would wish to be treated by an individual unmistakably recognized as a wicked person. This is even more pronounced in the case of a teacher – to be a wicked person stands as a contradiction to the very essence of the teaching profession, it is an inherent impossibility. Such a teacher may sometime succeed in imparting a few isolated, serendipitous lessons to a particular student. However, she will continue to remain a stranger to the student, she will play no role in his life. Now, why is this so? What constitutes the essence of being a teacher? What makes one a “naturally born” teacher, a teacher by vocation? To avoid drifting into the realm of fanciful imaginary constructs, let us instead inquire: what categories of teachers do we encounter, and which type should be considered the most excellent among them, the right type of a teacher?

There is a certain manifestation of spiritual life, encountered in everyone to some degree in certain circumstances, and exceptionally pronounced in some individuals. This is the need for and capacity to empathize, to connect with one another, to share one's soul and commune with the souls and spiritual states of others, yearning for congruence, harmony, and unity with the spiritual life of others. At times when our spiritual life reaches greater intensity, such as moments of

pleasurable excitement, joy, and happiness, we are compelled to express our mood and share it with others. We desire that others, especially those close and beloved, come to know what we have discovered at that moment, to feel as we do, and to be happy with us. Our happiness and joy remain incomplete when we find no one around with whom they could resonate. This need is a common experience that is by no means regarded as a trait of individuality. Yet it does allow us to understand the states of mind and individualities in which the need and capability for empathy becomes a dominant feature.

These are states in which the entire spiritual life undergoes transformation and deepening. New forces are awoken within it, new values take hold, or rather, the existing goals of life undergo a re-evaluation. The center of gravity of one's entire life shifts from the exterior to the interior, from things, undertakings, sensual and material objectives to ideas and spiritual pursuits. Metaphysical and moral questions assume heightened importance, essentially becoming matters of personal import for the individual who now endeavours to seek and must provide herself with answers to the questions that had, until now, been a matter of indifference or even remained incomprehensible to her.

Simultaneously, a transformation occurs in an individual's disposition towards others. She becomes less self-centred, willing sacrifices herself for others, feels the need to do good for others whom she judges with compassion and kindness. These distinct mental transformations, commonly known as "conversions", "rebirths", or shifts in one's "inner life", are frequently observed not only in individuals but also within certain mass movements. They manifest through an individual's passionate and irresistible urge to convey her own experiences and acquired knowledge to others, disseminate the "good news", "bear witness to the truth", and convince others to embrace this "new truth." In the historical accounts of various "revival" movements or newly emerged sects, we come across instances where "converts" are invariably driven to propagate their teachings. In cases of prohibitions and persecution, they often leave their homes and families to give free rein to their yearning for apostolatic work elsewhere, responding to a calling that beckons with an almost elemental, physiological force.

Indeed, we encounter individuals in whom such a disposition, though perhaps not as vigorous and intense as in cases of "conversions" and "revivals", does, in fact, represent a normal, constant state of mind. What sets these individuals apart is a profound sense of spiritual communion and unity with others. It appears as if their sense of self was not confined to their own body but rather extended beyond, permeating others, or encompassing the selves of others within the folds of its own essence. This, in turn, manifests itself in the way they feel and behave. In our own existence, we do not tolerate inconsistencies and contradictions but rather make effort to reconcile them. We feel discomfort when we are ignorant of something, lack knowledge, or fail to understand something. Consequently, we work to

improve ourselves until these deficiencies are eliminated. Weakness and moral decline not only offend our sense of duty, but also trigger our self-discontent, reproach, a desire for improvement, and attempts to overcome bad inclinations and to consolidate good ones.

An individual who has a keen sense of spiritual unity with others will experience these mental states not solely in relation to her own experiences but also in response to the experiences of others: she feels for others, she wills on behalf of others. She cannot reconcile herself with the fact that there are people who are ignorant, unenlightened and weak. She cannot live without sensing their ignorance and weakness as something that belittles and debases her own life and cannot find peace until she does something to elevate and improve that life.

This, I believe, is the very essence of a teacher's vocation, which could be described as love for human souls. It is love because the individual goes beyond herself, cares, and selflessly does something for another. It is love for souls because it has as its object the inner spiritual essence of a person, their moral well-being, their enlightenment, and their perfection as a spiritual being. For a teacher with such a calling, every new student is akin to an extension and expansion of her own soul, representing a new task to be accomplished within the confines of her own personal life. "Here is my student who doesn't know, doesn't understand, doesn't even sense so many important, wise, and necessary things; no – it is actually me who doesn't know yet, doesn't understand with that part of my soul that extends into his soul." "My student behaves poorly, he is malicious, he lies and harms; no – there is still so much wrong within me, in that part of my soul that extends into his own. How much it pains me, this ignorance, this evil – how can I live with them!" It is a teacher's duty, no – rather a necessity, an imperative, to dispel them, to remove them.

On the other hand, every immediate increase in her own mindfulness, new acquisition of knowledge, fresh perspective, elevation to a higher intellectual level, triggers in an individual of this type the necessity to transfer these gains to others. Indeed, for her, to learn, read, or write something herself is only the beginning, as she recognizes that the most important task is to disseminate what she has acquired, instruct others, and persuade them.

For this reason, this type of an individual bears a certain resemblance to an agitator, albeit this resemblance is purely external; this type is of a much loftier and nobler nature. To an agitator, man is not an intrinsic end in himself but a means to ends that lie outside of him. He acts in the interest of a party or an enterprise, and in his own interest. His goal is to win people over in a superficial way, even temporarily, without concern for whether he genuinely persuades them. His focus is on action, a visible sign that does not require convincing; it is enough to insinuate and talk people into something. Whereas for a teacher, even if not free from self-love and ambition, her primary motivation lies with the student himself. The goal is not

the student's incidental behavior in this or that situation, but making a lasting and profound impression, shaping his inner essence, beliefs, and will.

II.

I am not conjuring here, as I mentioned, products of imagination or fortuitous speculations: there exists in fact such a type of a teacher, the type who loves human souls – the souls of her students. This love for souls is a wellspring of enthusiasm, faith in one's vocation, and a source of strength at work. It is equally the key secret of success, given the fact that there is such a moment or event in human life that can determine one's entire life, and that this event can be and is sometimes when one encounters a certain teacher. And if one had to choose between a teacher who, on the one hand, possesses extensive professional knowledge, expertise in psychology, and familiarity with educational methods and techniques but utterly lacking love for souls, and, on the other hand, a teacher with limited knowledge, no methodological preparation, yet having a lively and action-oriented sense of spiritual unity with her students, embracing and loving their souls as her own – when faced with such a choice between these two types of teachers, priority should unquestionably be given to the latter. But there is no need to choose; there is no either/or here. On the contrary, a teacher who has developed a rich inner life and feels a spiritual unity with the student also simultaneously possesses a strong sense of responsibility, duty, and a *need for perfection*. Anyone who wishes to enlighten and elevate others through love for them, must also be willing to do so in the best and most effective way. Therefore, the question of means and methods of action becomes just as vital as the action itself: Am I doing it correctly? Could it be done more effectively? Or, what is the best way to accomplish it?

I had known teachers with a limited educational basis, in difficult life circumstances, yet so dedicated to their vocation that they continued to create projects for various pedagogical reforms. They were devising and inventing various teaching methods and aids, sometimes rather basic or already known and abandoned, which, in their hands, often yielded good results. A modern teacher, living in a cultured environment, has a significantly easier task in this regard. There are now books, journals, and lectures to enhance her educational expertise and supplement knowledge that traditional schooling has not provided. She can now apply her creative abilities to making observations and experimentation on students' learning processes. New educational psychology and experimental pedagogy owe a great deal to the contributions from modest employees in public schools, although their efforts often go unnoticed in the collective editions of surveys and questionnaires.

A teacher in whom a strong sense of duty and a desire for excellence prevail will pose herself yet another equally entreatingly question: the question of the overall purpose of her activity. It is one thing to ask: Am I doing it correctly? How can

I do it best? – And another to question: What good do I do, if any? Knowledge of the processes, causal relationships of things, and the mechanism of operation does not teach us anything about the purpose of action. I may meticulously study the map of a country, but this will not help me to learn where should I go. A thorough understanding of the anatomy and physiology of all processes involved in writing will not be sufficient to determine what I should write in a given case. Psychology and experimental pedagogy reveal to us the laws that govern intellectual life, compelling us to understand this life as a necessary relationship of specific causes, conditions, and effects. However, they do not address the question of what meaning and purpose we should assign to this life. These are the laws from which to draw certain recommendations, examples, and models to imitate. But what precisely shall we give to the student to imitate? What models shall we set for him? These are the laws that instruct on memorization, assimilation, retention, and practice of knowledge, in other words, on the economy and techniques of learning. But what should the student actually learn and practise? There are also the laws of emotional and behavioral development, shaping will, and forming character. Given certain environmental conditions and subjects of study, such-and-such instincts and emotions will be awakened. The specific make-up of these instincts and motivations then dictates the actions of the will, leading to the consolidation of character. However, the question arises: which instincts should be awakened and which suppressed? What kind of subjects should trigger our emotions? What motivations of the will should we instil? And toward which goals should we direct this will?

When we embark on the study of modern psychology and pedagogy, enthralled by the novelty and magnitude of the subject, we experience only the joy of acquiring new knowledge, dispelling doubts, and shedding prejudices. We see vast horizons before us. It would appear that, alas, we have finally embarked on a certain and ultimate path. A few more insights and experiences, and everything will become clear and certain. However, the “path” is not merely the physical road or terrain through which we can advance faster or slower, with more or less friction. It also signifies the *direction* towards which we are progressing. However, engrossed in exploring the terrain, clearing and smoothing the path, we neglect to consider the direction in which it is taking us. In fact, we tend to conflate one with the other, unwittingly assuming that a secure, well-explored, and paved path will inadvertently take us in the right direction. So, when certain part of the road turns out to be smoother and easier than others, we instinctively choose to go in that direction rather than another. But why, is this the right way? Are we certain that the destination we will reach by following the path of least resistance is indeed the one we desire and should have reached?

We may be told that the direction, purpose, and curriculum are typically not the responsibility of a teacher. They are dictated by practical and economic reasons, tradition, social environment, and ultimately, normative factors determined

by authorities, which often, however, have little to do with teaching and pedagogy. Undoubtedly, this is the case, and to some extent, it must be so because external material conditions and the demands of economic life appear to impose more strongly than idealistic commitments. However, economic factors may be altered by the action of conscious will. Moreover, they only determine the terms of vocational training for employment and its financial aspects, which is not everything, not the primary thing, and cannot be considered as a self-determining goal in itself in isolation from a broader scope of education. As far as tradition is concerned, we continuously engage in its ongoing reassessment across various domains and ourselves participate in the formation of new traditions. Likewise, a teacher can exert influence on the environment, to some extent adapting it to her own goals. Indeed, a teacher is herself an integral part of the environment, being the closest figure to the student. Therefore, her qualities have a significant impact on the nature of the environment.

What about goals, curricula, and agendas set down by authorities? That is exactly the crux of the matter: a teacher cannot be a passive, mechanical executor of objectives and tasks externally prescribed from above with goals predetermined for years, weeks, days, and even hours in the determination of which she had no part or influence. If it were the case, it would be more economical to replace all teachers with mechanical automata. Someone, at a set time, would press specific buttons to activate such automata, equipped with phonographs and cinematographs, in every school. Students would react according to the established routines. The same machines would carry out assessment and “classify” the students. Otherwise, we must concede that the responsibility for establishing objectives and curricular frameworks should fall upon the teacher, who, as an individual expected to engage with students on a human-to-human level and act in accordance with her own volition, should either autonomously define these goals and programs herself or through some representatives or co-authors, and enjoy a broad discretion in their implementation. In that case, a teacher must acquire an awareness of her aspirational objectives, the ideals to pursue, the ultimate value to be cultivated through the educational process and therefore understand what the goal of education should be.

III.

Moral values and goals are defined by ethics. But the ethics with which we are concerned here cannot be simply learned in the way we study psychology or methodology. It is an ethics that each person must create for themselves, experience it, and live by it.

We all agree that schools should prepare for life. But for what kind of life? In other words: how should we live? This prompts a teacher to ask: how should I live? What should be my goal and the value of my life? This in turn will determine

what kind of life she will be able to inspire in her students and for what kind of life she will be able to prepare them.

It could be assumed that the main value and goal of life is pleasure, indulgence, and happiness. This principle has underlaid a range of ethical and philosophical systems and has guided the lives of many individuals. However, none of these systems survived criticism and withstood the test of life experience. This experience shows that the life of an individual based on the principles of pleasure and indulgence turns out to be always misguided, it undermines itself, and ends in moral bankruptcy. It cannot be otherwise. Life rooted in passive indulgence sooner or later falls into a void, into emptiness. Tied to external conditions such as material possessions, health, vigour of the senses, a significant part of which is beyond our control, it will fall apart with the change of these conditions. Life has enduring value precisely to the extent that we create it ourselves, and to the degree that we are able to transcend and rise above the elemental life of natural, physical, and organic forces. However, this implies that such a life must embrace an element of effort, compulsion, self-denial, and therefore, hardships and suffering. This holds true even in the most favourable external conditions. Considering various forms of mental life from an energetic perspective, we observe that effort, difficulty, compulsion, self-denial, and suffering require a greater amount of work or energy on par with all creative mental processes such as abstraction, synthesis, invention. These rank higher on the energy scale than passive states of receptivity, ease, and pleasure. All great works of thought, art, and religion have been born out of struggle, duress, self-denial, and therefore out of hardship and suffering. The tree of freedom has grown on human suffering and blood far and wide. Nations and states have risen and survived through effort, compulsion, and self-denial, and they have declined when their capacity to endure and overcome hardships and pressures waned, giving up ground to passive indulgence, pleasure-seeking, and ease. There has never been anything great in humanity, in the past or at present, that has not been thoroughly imbued with suffering, effort, and self-denial. Therefore, this element must be inherently present on the balance-sheet of life, for which we are prepared through education. This means then – as we already know – that a teacher must possess this element in her life, discover it, or create it within her own soul. This is precisely the task of acquiring, creating within oneself a new life, a spiritual life.

A human being is bound within nature. But as long as she remains entirely within it, she perishes, loses herself as a human being. The problem presents itself to her: to be or not to be as a human being, as a spiritual being. In order to emancipate herself and gain control over her animal, natural existence, she must begin to exist on a different plane of being, to live a life more enduring and more substantial than a sensual life, and to accomplish this task in the realm of cognition and in the realm of action. Variable, transient, and contradictory impressions provided by the senses must be countered with enduring concepts and ideas, with the invariability

of cause and effect. The never-ending task in this context is to bring forth a structured order grounded in causality from a state of chaos.

Similarly, in the moral sphere, the analogous task is to transcend the chaos of instincts, emotions and desires, and counter them with rational, moral will. It involves making the mechanisms of nature a tool and means of realizing this will and the goals set by it. The object and content of these goals should not be what satisfies sensual needs and desires, but what intrinsically constitutes an enduring, harmonious good in itself – having its own existence beyond the constraints of time and space. The former inherently carries the seeds of indulgence, contradiction, and death. It compels us to retreat into ourselves and live only for our sake. It separates us from others and from the higher reality beyond us. The latter is good not only for us but for others as well, enabling us to unite with others and partake in their lives as a greater whole. Thus, it leads to a life that is infinitely more complete and richer, one that is not fleeting but eternal.

Both of these tasks – cognitive-utilitarian and moral ones – can be undertaken and accomplished only through the powers of another order that reside within human beings and express through them, the powers of the transcendent order. Human beings experience the need, desire, and longing to rise above, to emancipate themselves from the bondage of senses, precisely because they feel these transcendental powers within themselves, experience their action upon them, and recognize their capacity to harness and utilize them. For how could humans feel their weakness, inadequacy, and insignificance, if there were not some greater powers within them, more perfect and eternal? The powers which, in the intellectual realm, command the need for unity, permanency of life, cause-and-effect consistency, and, in the spiritual realm, manifest themselves as moral principles, ideals, and conscience.

The moral consciousness cannot remain a subjective experience, an emotion, a theoretical concept. Within it lies the necessity of realisation, an irresistible call for action. Just as the mind must be disposed to reason in certain ways and according to certain principles in order to confront the chaos of sensory impressions, so it must actively respond to the external world and express its relationship to it with accordance to certain norms, once the voice of its destiny and duty calls upon its instincts and desires. Only when the process of intellectual mastery of the world by the spontaneous and creative forces of the mind has significantly progressed, taking deep roots in the mind through an almost organic process that can hardly, if hypothetically, be distinguished from sensory operations, does the process of man's moral emancipation from nature truly commence. In its initial stages, this process is far from being considered a universal achievement of mankind brought about into the world by every individual. Each person must laboriously undertake and consolidate it through the continuous struggle forward, first toward their own spiritual and human "to be or not to be," and then toward the realization of a spiritual and

moral order in the world, the realization of the “Kingdom of Ends,” as Kant put it, as a counterpart and complement to the pre-existing and *inexorably* unfolding “Kingdom of Necessity and the Laws of Nature.” The higher a person advances in her spiritual existence, the stronger and more irresistible need and calling for action she experiences, as if it were a duty. Driven by this inner necessity, she willingly take upon herself a share of general suffering, compulsion, self-denial, and effort. Suffering, effort, and self-denial are intrinsically bound to an emancipated spiritual existence: each is both a cause and an effect in relation to the other. Suffering is the matter from which spiritual reality is created and lives on in a human being. And, in reverse, once this reality is embraced by an individual, it awakens the need and makes her capable of suffering, effort, and sacrifice.

It is not my task here to point out and examine individual moral values and goals. A teacher will find various formulations of them in general treatises on ethics and pedagogy. Each of them contains a grain of the truth, but all of them will remain lifeless and ineffective if the teacher lacks the sensitivity and capacity to absorb and understand them. Only when she discovers her soul, when she experiences the reality of the spiritual order, do these values and goals will acquire meaning and significance for her. She will easily recognize what is true and alive in each of them, what suits her best, what value and goal shall shape her own life, and consequently, for which values to arouse and reinforce sensitivity in her students and towards which goals to guide their will. In any case, it becomes clear to her that upbringing and school cannot turn into a playroom of fun, idleness, and games; schools must impart a sense of effort, self-denial and obligation and teach how to overcome difficulties. This does not imply physical coercion imposed from above but rather compulsion that arises from the student’s own will and inner need, stemming from a common enthusiasm shared between the teacher and the student for effort, obligation, and duty.

One more issue needs to be specified in this context. To cultivate a profound spiritual life and a sense of belonging to the realm of moral purposes, it is imperative and essential that one possesses inner authenticity, a sense of harmony with oneself, and the ability to uncover their genuine and complete self. An individual feels: I must be myself or else I will cease to exist morally. This means first to be oneself every time in each individual state of mind and heart, then, to be oneself in general as a whole individual, and, finally, as a member of society and nation.

The external conditions for such a fully self-consistent and truthful life and authentic self-expression are created, to a considerable extent, by the State – a self-governing National State formed by the will of citizens, guaranteeing their freedom. When the State is based on economic exploitation or controlled by a foreign power, it puts the moral life of individuals in constant danger, giving rise to a series of conflicts and contradictions. The individual’s life cannot fully express what it truly is – genuinely, individually, and nationally. She cannot fulfill all her in-

ner needs and imperatives. She is forced to suppress some of her powers and talents and offer a half-hearted and distorted expression of the others. In the face of external forms of social and political life that are alien or even hostile to her own needs and aspirations, she is compelled to involuntarily violate these needs and aspirations, contradict them, and deceive her beliefs and emotions. In the best case, she can lead a dual life. But duality is already a contradiction of inner consistency and authenticity. Moreover, such duality cannot normally persist. The organization of the mind will strive to regain the unity between the sphere which has succumbed to falsehood, hypocrisy, and betrayal under the pressure of external forces, and the one that has remained the reserve of our true essence. As a result of a continuous osmosis or pervasion that occurs between these two spheres, notwithstanding our will and knowledge, both spheres end up being tainted with duplicity.

When an individual yields to the temptation of denying her true self due to external reasons in a number of instances, she no longer has sufficient motivation or strength to fully be herself in those instances where there is no external pressure. Yet being in harmony with oneself, with the inner truthfulness of feelings, beliefs, and conscience is at the core of moral life. It is a condition and bulwark of one's sense of dignity, which itself is necessary for human sustenance and existence. Therefore, when the roots of this core are cut off, life itself will to some extent be eroded and disrupted.

In these conditions, education loses its deeper meaning; it also becomes something contradictory in itself, a half-measure, banality. It may still appear as propaedeutics, training, a sort of corrective orthopedics but ceases to be a form of initiation of a person into a higher life. It does not awake the divine element within her. It is no longer an endeavor that we undertake in each new generation for our liberation and the realization of goodness on Earth. How can we possibly think without contradiction about liars and hypocrites who are grooming students into living in falsehood and hypocrisy? About education on par with falsehood and hypocrisy!

Reclaiming independence is a demand not only for our material existence [as a nation] but for our life and our salvation as moral beings who can only maintain their dignity and sense of belonging to a higher spiritual realm through inner harmony and truthfulness. It is about preserving the nation's character for this very purpose, safeguarding it from corruption that could become incurable, and finding an antidote to slavery. I see this antidote in awakening and cultivating *courage* in all its forms: the courage that will be needed when the hour strikes to act, the courage for today, for everyday – the courage to be oneself as much as it is possible within the bounds of physical external coercion, to profess one's true self, one's feelings, language, beliefs, intentions without renouncing anything that represents the idea of Polish life and liberation or conceiving falsehoods that undermine this idea. And if there is one goal that should more exclusively define Polish education, it is the goal of educating to this courage.

But what is courage?² It is perhaps one of the deepest and most mysterious manifestations of human nature. It can only be understood as the state of a person who has already stepped, with a part of her being, beyond life – that is, beyond organic and sensual life, beyond what is her need and condition, gain or loss – and who is thus capable of acting against the interests of this life and against self-preservation. But to step outside of physical existence in this way can only be accomplished by that transcendent, non-embodied element in man which is inherently independent of physical existence.

And so, we see that every time this element is awakened and gains strength when deeper inner life develops, at the same time, the power to act despite or against the demands of material life is revealed in a person – the spirit of sacrifice, self-denial, and heroism. All of this already encompasses sufficient courage. The highest intensity of spiritual life that finds expression in martyrdom for one's truth is only an intensified manifestation of what is experienced in a milder form in every act of courage. Therefore, to educate to courage as a constantly operating force in a person means first to awaken and nurture deep spiritual life within her. It means to already possess such life within oneself.

IV.

The need for excellence, a sense of responsibility and duty, inner truthfulness, moral courage and above all, love for human souls – all this constitute the background and essence of what we have called “the soul of a teacher.” It is an individual gift, a calling, a manifestation of the higher spiritual element in a person. However, it is also a fact of general mental life, which, due to its connection with physical body, is subject to specific conditions and limitations.

In another instance, when analyzing the “ability to work” and its constituent processes, I emphasized the significance of tranquility, the absence of external and internal agitations, and, in general, the importance of idleness as a condition upon which higher mental creations depend³. Such mental creations, indicative of the development and growth of mental life, include an increase of knowledge, formation of concepts and syntheses, new configurations of imaginative constructs, invention of ideas, inspirations. Although they require prior conscious work, stimuli, and effort, ultimately, they come to fruition and “ripen” into repositories of memory, “arranging and organizing” themselves as concepts. They emerge from the subconscious as ideas and inspirations, especially when the mind remains idle for a certain period, as if left fallow. It is idleness, but a fertile idleness. Or it turns fer-

² I am not speaking here about the so-called physical, animal courage, which depends on the health and strength of the body, temperament, and some measure of thoughtlessness and blindness.

³ See, *Inteligencja, wola, zdolność do pracy (Intellect, Will, Ability to Work)*, Warszawa 1911, p. 522n. – And *ibid.* pp. 426-471, on the energetic benefit of suffering.

tile when preceded and prepared by a groundwork (and this is what distinguishes it from indolence) and as long as the mind remains alive and not overly exhausted (which, again, sets idleness apart from leisure).⁴ The inner life, along with its accompanying manifestations as described earlier, is also one of the highest forms of psychic life. It must be preceded and prepared by a certain kind of work, experiences, reflections, reading, and contemplation. However, for spiritual growth to arise from these activities and to achieve the highest “moral synthesis of life”, a certain minimum of tranquility, idleness, solitude, and silence is necessary. The outer life, along with its distractions, shifting from one subject to another, constant company and conversation, reading or professional commitments limit our mental activities to the most superficial tasks, hindering deepening, concentration, introspection, and the awakening of higher spiritual dimension within ourselves.

Constant material concerns, the struggle for daily bread, and the exhausting work that depletes the mind completely stifle all possibilities of truly human, spiritual life. Consequently, they destroy in its infancy those forces that constitute “the soul of a teacher.” We have seen that suffering elevates a person, ensouls her. However, only *active* suffering works like this, suffering which results from conscious will to make effort, to forsake oneself, sacrifice in the name of higher necessity, destiny, or duty. Furthermore, in order not to succumb to suffering but to transform it into nourishing, soul-strengthening sustenance, a person must possess enough strength to control it, to reflect upon it, consciously acknowledge it, and use it to build a deeper life upon it. Meanwhile, the concern for basic needs of life such as hunger and the fear of tomorrow weakens the body, depletes energy, directs thoughts solely outward, scatters them into thousands of small but necessary burdens. It not only extinguishes spiritual life but also stirs and amplifies opposing tendencies – animal instincts of self-preservation, competition, strife, and hatred.

A hunger-stricken teacher, uncertain about her future and that of her loved ones, burdened with mandatory work that consumes all her energy and constantly preoccupies her thought, terrorized and humiliated by superiors – this kind of a teacher at best becomes apathetic and indifferent to everything. At worst, she becomes a bitter and malicious teacher, not a friend and sister to her students, but an enemy and persecutor.

It would be ironic to search for “the soul of a teacher” in such individuals and urge them to develop and deepen their spiritual lives. As long as we exist in this world, the soul can only reveal itself through and within the body. Hence, to allow “the soul of a teacher” to emerge, external material conditions must first be secured or fought for: the right to fair wages, adequate rest, and fertile idleness.

⁴ The idea of idleness (*otium*) as a creative state of mind and a form of intellectual leisure in contrast to the busyness of public duties (*negotium*) was a key concept in Renaissance humanist philosophy and rhetoric. See, for example, Brian Vickers, “Leisure and Idleness in the Renaissance: The Ambivalence of *Otium*”, *Renaissance Studies* 4/1 (1990), pp. 1-37. (Translator’s note)