

THE TEACHER'S AUTHORITY IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATING STUDENTS TO VALUES

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Summary. The aim of this article is to draw attention to the fact that teaching and upbringing is not possible without the existence of authority based on permanent values. It has been argued by the authors that there is undeniably the natural human need to search for people who are role models, authentic authorities and foundations of knowledge, competence and life wisdom. The authors explain that there can be no learning without authorities, no school without teachers, no guilds without masters, no creativity without patterns, norms and customs.

AUTORYTET NAUCZYCIELA W KONTEKŚCIE WYCHOWANIA UCZNIÓW DO WARTOŚCI

Słowa kluczowe: nauczyciel, autorytet, wartości

Streszczenie. W dobie panującego obecnie pluralizmu nie można aprobować wszelkich zachowań i poglądów, które nawzajem się wykluczają, np. dobra i zła, moralności i zachowań nieetycznych. Należy poszukiwać wartości i takich wzorów, które stanowiłyby o humanistycznym wymiarze kultury naszych czasów. Wartości są fundamentem autorytetu, niezbędnym warunkiem jego powstania i trwania. Są elementem światopoglądu człowieka, są też elementem regulacji jego zachowania, stanowią element dążeń ludzkich. Autorytet zależy od wartości przekazywanych dzieciom przez rodziców, w szkole i w społeczeństwie.

Dezintegracja wartości może doprowadzić do zanikania więzi społecznych i spójności w społeczeństwie. Zmiany, które obecnie szybko zachodzą w społeczeństwie polskim, wymagają wartościowania i oceniania faktów, zjawisk oraz przewidywania ich skutków. A to może pomóc w przewyciężaniu stanu nieufności, sceptycyzmu i relatywizacji norm etycznych, a jednocześnie przeciwdziałać protestom i frustracjom różnych grup społecznych¹. Dezintegracja społeczna, zagrażająca procesowi transformacji w aspekcie lokalnym i globalnym, jest egzemplifikacją rozbieżności oczekiwań w stosunku do nowego ładu społecznego. Znakiem czasów współczesnych jest potrzeba pojawienia się humanistycznych wartości i społecznie uznanych autorytetów.

Introduction

In times of prevailing pluralism, one cannot approve of all behaviours and views, which mutually exclude each other, e. g. good and evil, morality and unethical behaviours. It is necessary to look for values and models that would determine the humanistic dimension of the culture of our times. Values are the foundation of authority, the necessary condition for its creation and duration. They are, the element of the world view of man, they are also an element of the regulation of man's behaviour, they are an element of human aspirations. Authority depends on the values given to children by parents, at school and in society. The disintegration of values can lead to the loss of social bonds and cohesion in society.

Values – solid foundation for life

Human life is meaningful when it develops on a solid foundation. This foundation is undoubtedly based on the values that are displayed and passed on in the family, church or school, which allow young people to spread their wings. Particular importance is attached to values in the traditional, more conservative paradigm of education and to the importance of the position of the teacher. *In this approach, education, school and teachers are expected, above all, to take up the protection of social, cultural and heritage values relevant to the survival of a nation, as well as their transmission from generation to generation*². Hence the enormous challenge facing education and educators – to expose, nurture and

¹ E. Badura, *Emocjonalne uwarunkowania autorytetu nauczyciela*, WSiP, Warszawa 1981, s. 56.

² W. Dróżka, *Wartości oraz cele życiowe i zawodowe nauczycieli, pokolenia z lat 1989/1990; 2014/2015*, Uniw. Jana Kochanowskiego, Kielce 2017, s. 11.

convey values. It is teachers who introduce young people to the world of knowledge and values that have an immeasurable impact on their activity in building the future. The pedagogues, ‘the creators of the future’, are faced with demands that they must meet. This task is not easy, it requires a lot of effort, self-denial and being open to the ubiquitous changes taking place in postmodern reality. *A teacher and educator, as well as a doctor or a clergyman, is a constant person, regardless of the time and place of work*³. Regardless of the following geopolitical and socio-cultural transformations, school and teacher should always guard the values of freedom, justice, respect for human dignity, human rights, tolerance and kindness. They should teach the art of compromise, dialogue, striving for community and the transmission of humanistic ideas. The role of the school is also to explain to pupils the historical, cultural and religious contexts that influence society, thus making it easier for them to consciously build their own value system, *without being influenced by dominant influences, and thus to become more mature and open-minded*⁴. This is a difficult task, especially in the times of change over the last 30 years, in the times of moral relativism, *where the sphere of teacher axiology is under the pressure of permanent change*⁵. This multidimensional aspect of teaching can determine its quality, social prestige, position and even ethos. How is the system of values of a child, a pupil, a young man and a citizen shaped, filtered? Through the prism of family, education and developing socialization of a young person, observed against the background of changes taking place in a Polish democratic state? Is the teacher a guardian of values and are they a value in themselves? Does the teacher’s authority function in the social awareness? Let us therefore look at the meanders of value formation through the successive stages of human life in the context of the teacher’s perception of contemporary reality.

It can certainly be said that, for most of the mature group of the transition generation, older and younger people, ‘school’ or ‘teacher’ have a significant value. This is probably influenced by the memories of childhood and early youth spent in the school benches. On the one hand, we recall in our memories the figure of a teacher who is excessively demanding, harsh, sometimes punishing – or another: good, warm and just, who knows how to make their subject interesting and awaken the imagination of a young man. On the one hand, the school and

³ Ibidem.

⁴ *Edukacja. Jest w niej ukryty skarb*. Raport dla UNESCO Międzynarodowej Komisji ds. Edukacji dla XXI wieku pod przew. J. Delorsa, Stowarzyszenie Oświatowców Polskich, UNESCO, Warszawa 1998, s. 76.

⁵ W. Dróżka, *Wartości...*, s. 11.

teachers appear to us as those to whom we owe a lot, perhaps their current professional and social position, money, worldview. The teacher from those years inspired admiration and recognition in us, they enjoyed authority. On the other hand, the memorable, unpleasant image of a pedagogue who breaks characters, who is severe, heartless, unjust and incompetent, whose memory has an impact on the entire adult life of a student and later an adult. This teacher did not enjoy authority, sometimes they aroused fear and anxiety.

This dichotomy in the assessment of education and the teacher from the perspective of a mature person is dictated by many factors. One of them is the home environment in which a young person grew up, a system of values, views, opinions, world views, teaching responsibility and respect for others preferred by the family. These values were naturally passed on to the child and formed the basis for the formation and development of his or her personality. It should be added, however, that throughout an individual's life, various processes take place related to the functioning of the family, whose views and opinions may evolve with emerging changes related both to the immediate environment and, more generally, to geopolitical, social and cultural changes in the nation and state.

What is beneficial in supporting young people in the development of their sustainable principles, views and representations of a coherent system of values? It is above all a family with a shaped, clear view of the world, open to ubiquitous changes, but wisely filtered through the prism of personal beliefs, experiences, expectations, knowledge, religious beliefs and traditions. The clarity of the family's views becomes the foundation of the shaping of the world view of the child, and then of the citizen. Unfortunately, it is not always possible for a family to lay the foundations for a child's value system. Its dysfunctionality or even pathologization, problems related to unsatisfied existential and spiritual needs, frequent and long-lasting trips of family members abroad and other social and personal factors are not conducive to the formation of fundamental values. This is just one of the few examples of examples destroying the consolidation and shaping of views of young people. But such a foundation will be provided by a school with a teacher who enjoys authority and is a guardian of values.

Further dangers to the value system arise with the socialisation of the child, their entry into a classroom, backyard or another informal peer group. What are they to the group? Whether they have leadership skills or are a passive member of it, whether they can submit to its internal rules or not. Whether their opposition will result in the development of positive leadership qualities or whether it will be sterile and destructive. Or maybe they will remain completely submissive

and submissive to other members of the group? Probably looking for their own place and identity, but the group will now be their testing ground and will put their system of values to the test. Such a training ground may also be a school where a student will find support from a teacher who will be his or her advisor and master. Thus, first the family and then the peer group influence the shape of views and the strengthening or degradation of the child's value system.

At the same time, however, there is another doubt. Whether the surrounding reality is perceived as one in which the individual maintains a conformist attitude, or vice versa – he or she chooses to be in opposition to the changes taking place; it also happens that, deprived of social activity (or illusions), he or she becomes indifferent to the social, cultural and political processes taking place. It happens that the processes taking place are not accepted by the general public or a part of the society, and political and social changes may destroy the existing order of things, have a destructive effect on the family, the individual or the social group. This is why previously shaped judgments and opinions may lose their meaning in a new form; sometimes there is a moral *questus perdidit* in the maze of incoming information and a devaluation of the values approved so far. Assuming that the family effectively supported the child in shaping and developing a coherent system of values, and that the school supported and developed the child, it can be assumed that it will be implemented in adult life, and that the trends taking place in social, political and cultural life will allow these views to evolve positively. To what extent, then, do these sociological-psychological premises determine the social perception of the image of today's educator?

Let us look at these considerations from a different perspective, namely the teaching position. We can learn a lot about teachers' professional careers by following their careers from a narrative and diary perspective. The reflection of teachers will be the main basis for analyzing the determinants of the authority of contemporary teachers in their own research.

The teacher's authority is always built on faithfulness to his or her beliefs, stemming from some general notion of love, goodness and responsibility. And it does not mean temporary, human falls, as long as they are repaired (this is the case with our parents, teachers and other personal 'carriers' of values). It is dominated by an understandable desire for some ultimate fidelity, confirmed by life (but also death), spiritual closeness, being 'at the side of man, at the side of a child' and not in some virtual media or stands. In the past a teacher or priest was compared to 'towers reaching clouds'. Nevertheless, they are not only authorities, but also separate entities, whose courts were not opposed precisely because of

the 'height of these towers'. However, there is also something that can be called a kind of certainty of moral (but also life and socio-political) choices, often very difficult. Young people hate double standards – they will forgive a temporary, minor fall, emotional exaltation, but they will not forgive the inalienable nature of life and the false message of words. Two paths of moral transmission: *logos* and *ethos* must go together.

The observation of educational processes over the years shows how much effort has been put into reconstructing the education system and continuously improving teachers' competences. Education has always been about the future of the nation and hope for 'a better tomorrow'. *Such will be the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as their youth will be educating* – Jan Zamoyski, a politician and statesman, wrote in the 16th century. In modern times it is natural that children and young people go to school, acquire various skills, including elementary ones, such as reading, writing, counting. It is also natural that parents wish to entrust the teaching and upbringing of their child to an educator who is widely recognized and respected. It is to be a person who meets their expectations and enjoys universal authority. The natural need of man is to search for people who are the model and life guide, authentic authority and foundation of knowledge, competence and life wisdom.

Today, the professional attitude of teachers is influenced by various factors and Processes taking place in the country, such as the fall of communism, Poland's accession to the European Union (2004), the change of school system (1999 and 2017), the introduction of neoliberal order, the rapid development of digital technology and, with it, the promotion of new lifestyles⁶. The position and role of the teacher, as well as the values he or she should guard, change with the socio-political and cultural context. In conditions of developed democracies and pluralistic positions, in times of moral relativism, values are fragmented and dispersed. Hence the importance and position of the teacher can be shaken, as can the other values which for years have been the hallmark of human existence and the future, and which today are being devalued. On the other hand, the work of a teacher is seen as highly professional, which may mean that *they are not a representative of the ordinary profession, but of a profession that has an important social mission to fulfil, as a representative of the intelligentsia*⁷. Adults, and even more so children, need leadership in the form of authority, and in school in the

⁶ Ibidem, s. 12.

⁷ Ibidem.

form of teacher authority. A teacher with authority is a particularly important person in the education of children and young people. It is a signpost of the present and the future, it is a guardian of values. There comes a moment to reconstruct the contemporary teacher's knowledge of the *status quo* and to consider whether the status quo, associated with the teacher's authority, is necessary to restore it in the social consciousness. The above considerations are connected with an attempt to find an answer to the question whether in the era of ongoing educational changes and the geopolitical, social, cultural and cultural system in the last thirty years, the contemporary teacher enjoys recognition and respect, or perhaps the concept of 'teacher's authority' is already a thing of the past? Maybe it is slowly disappearing and devaluing. It would be interesting to determine factors which in past conditioned the functioning of the concept of 'authority of a teacher' and to determine those which build this authority today.

Authority in education

The upbringing of young people is about passing on to them the highest values, such as goodness, beauty and truth, and is therefore an upbringing of values. At the centre of personal education as an education to values are concrete patterns, authorities, masters⁸. Such upbringing assumes reference to personalism and the presented personal patterns, e. g. Pope John Paul II or other characters and strong personal patterns enrich the experience of both pupils and teachers. Such a personal model, the master can become the teacher himself. In modern human sciences, and especially in the sphere of research on human social development, a great importance is attached to cognitive processes and indicates the design and modelling of life and control of emotions that occur during teaching and upbringing. The result of such activities is the creation of appropriate cognitive representations and associations, which may lead to some degree to the behaviour presented to the pupil. The student may take over from the presented personal model certain rules of behaviour, norms of conduct, way of thinking or motivation, identifies himself/herself with him/herself. During modelling, the learner learns from observation. Not without significance is the emotional bond that is created between the pupil and the teacher, as well as the impressiveness of the teacher's knowledge in the case of older pupils.

⁸ K. Olbrycht, *O roli przykłady, wzoru, autorytetu i mistrza w wychowaniu osobowym*, Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2014, s. 12.

Therefore, the term *authority* also functions in pedagogy, a field of science which is of particular interest to us, and we associate it with the person of a teacher who is respected and respected by students. *Authority* can be associated with the special bond that is created between a teacher and a pupil or pupil, allows to improve the educational process and the educational activities undertaken. How can a teacher become an authority for a pupil? Track the child's development and relationships with a significant person, a person with authority and the influence of that person on the formation of the world of child's values. In relation to children and young people, people who are in close emotional contact with them have an originally significant role, i.e. authority. A role full of parents, siblings, important people from the child's environment, and even characters from movies, fairy tales or characters from the virtual world. As a result of the close relationship between a child and a significant person, this person becomes an authority for the child, providing him/her with patterns of behaviour in different situations. Relationships with this person are a model of relations with other people for a child. The proper role of parents, i.e. the adoption of an authoritative style of upbringing, is a consequence of the development of self-esteem in children. The authority of the parents should not be used to enslave the child and subjugate him/her. It is then false and involves imposing an authoritarian will on it, it results from the desire for power and excessive parental ambitions. This type of authority is conducive to suppressing the belief in one's own capabilities, liberates low self-esteem, awakens in the child passivity or aggression (formal, external, subjugating authority). Its opposite is the external authority, liberating and authentic. It gives a sense of security and inspires confidence in one's own abilities. When a child starts school, he or she is handed over to a teacher who is competent and represents sustainable cognitive, moral, aesthetic and ontological values. The child connects with the teacher by following his or her instructions and showing respect for him or her. The lack of the above-mentioned ingredients may result in the child not recognizing the teacher as an authority. The authority is determined by a set of features that allow the student to be influenced by the teacher⁹.

It means that for the recognition of e. g. a teacher as an authority, their character traits and competences that the student admires are important, and they are internalized and accepted as their own. A specific relationship is created between the student and the teacher, which is based on mutual cooperation and trust.

⁹ M. Kielar-Turska, *O zmienności autorytetu*, „Wychowawca” 2012, nr 10, s. 6.

When you start school, your parents' authority is clearly limited, you start to modify it, and others start to act as an authority in your child's life. This can be a teacher whose pupils trust and admire his or her competence.

In adolescence age, the authority of parents is further limited and is associated with their critical assessment. The child notices that parents' competences are lower than those of others and that parents often cease to be partners in the world of adolescent children. In the late adolescence period, the authority of parents is further limited, and the teacher has the chance to be an authority due to certain personality traits, communication, pedagogical and ethical competences. Teenagers are still looking for authorities, not necessarily those they find, but becoming relativists, they want to be idealized authorities. A teacher or another character, even with negative traits, can become such an authority again. True authority is based on the autonomy of the two entities and on their mutual cooperation and cooperation.

How does contemporary pedagogy treat the meaning of the term that interests us: *the authority of a teacher*? In modern pedagogy, the word authority is understood as respect, trust and respect for a teacher who is a scientific expert, a counsellor, a personal model, as well as a person with whom students identify themselves¹⁰. Therefore, teacher authority can be considered as:

- 1) respect, trust and respect for a teacher who is a scientific expert, adviser and guide in difficulties;
- 2) source of pedagogical influence/impact;
- 3) a situation where a teacher is perceived as a personal model and is identified with it by students;
- 4) a relationship in which students submit themselves naturally and voluntarily to the teacher.

Leszek Kołakowski presents his reflections on the teacher's authority: *Such a person becomes a master, and the credibility of their message makes them teach us not only facts, but also myths. We are inclined to trust such a person and, thanks to him or her, to experience the content of teaching, to admire and to give up cognitive passions. The Master becomes our guide, and they do not need to be widely known, but only if they have a small group of disciples or journeymen of the spirit to whom they are able to give their gifts. Such a man is an authority, not necessarily equal to the greatest of this world, but they know how to stand on their shoulders and look further than they have seen, they know how to convey timeless*

¹⁰ T. Olearczyk, *Autorytet nauczyciela*, „Wychowawca” 2012, nr 10, s. 10.

truths, entangling them in the content of their message, confirmed by a personal example. Such behaviour becomes a real, independent effort, in which the cultural message occurs in an ideal arrangement, the teacher becomes an authority-master of the cultural message¹¹.

Ilona Dudzik-Garstka claims that *a teacher who enjoys authority with students, is accepted by them, becomes a role model and liberates more and more possibilities within the student*¹². The author believes that teachers and students should be in constant dialogue with each other; this applies to the knowledge transferred in a relationship that is not based on sanctions or fear. The author further states that *there is no education without requirements, but it is necessary to teach the pupils how to cope with them, how not to succumb to difficulties and temptations, and how to achieve their goals*. The author rightly claims that *authority has its source in the power that is an element of the process of education, but as an expression of service to another person*. The author rightly claims that *authority has its source in the power that is an element of the process of education, but as an expression of service to another person*¹³.

These definitions of *authority* differ in content, scope and presentation (in a similar way to other authors), e. g. as a feature, social relation or phenomenon¹⁴.

In pedagogy it is pointed out that *authority* concerns social relations, is expressed in superiority over others and is connected with trust and recognition of a person. It is also believed that authority is not possible without power.

In classical pedagogical and psychological literature, Henryk Rowid took up the definition of *authority*, treating it as a feature. He assumed that authority is a specific property, immanent in a person or institution, thanks to which other persons, institutions and social groups subordinate to it, in a more or less arbitrary way¹⁵. Children and young people need authorities, and their lack may cause emotional and social development disorders, disturbances in the upbringing process, lack of stability and security, and a high level of anxiety. The authority is based on values that are particularly valuable in a particular society. Authority is not a value in itself, but depends on other persons who consider

¹¹ Kołakowski L., *Czy Pan Bóg jest szczęśliwy i inne pytania*, Znak, Kraków 2009, s. 186, cyt. za J. Błaszak, *O pojęciu autorytetu*, „Forum Dydaktyczne” 2011, nr 7–8, s. 61–65.

¹² I. Dudzik-Garstka I., *Autorytet nauczyciela – potrzeba czy konieczność*, „Hejnał Oświatowy” 2016, nr 8–9/155, s. 9.

¹³ Ibidem, s. 10.

¹⁴ T. Pilch, *Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku*, t. 1, Żak, Warszawa 2010, s. 254.

¹⁵ E. Badura, *Emocjonalne...*, s. 36.

a person to be worthy of submission. The authority is not 'given' permanently, it can disappear. The second feature of authority is the trust of a person 'with authority'. Such a person is a model of competence and authority in disputed cases. The basic characteristics of 'authority' are: professional qualifications, knowledge, experience, social status, intellectual and moral values, correct interpersonal relations, social involvement, physical characteristics of the person, sanctions appropriate to the position and innovation in professional work¹⁶.

In social sciences, the concept of *authority* is interpreted in the context of power and influence. The perception of 'authority of power' originated in the Middle Ages, when the dominant authority commanded obedience and humility. In pedagogy, power is an element of education, it means the right and duty to decide. It stimulates and directs the development of children, protects them from the effects of lack and insufficient imagination. If a teacher uses the authority given to him/her in the interest of the child and gives him/her the character of repression, then his/her authority shall serve as a servant and the teacher shall be regarded as a significant person. In the context of influence, authority can be understood intentionally or unconsciously. The following conditions of the authority's existence, inspiration and interaction may occur: intentionally influencing a person who unwittingly changes his or her behaviour; intentionally influencing a person who consciously changes his or her behaviour; Unintentional influence over a person who knowingly changes his or her behaviour; the behaviour of both sides of the reaction is intentional.

In a pedagogical sense, *authority* is the influence of an educator or a person enjoying general recognition on an individual or a group of individuals or a specific sphere of social life. It results from specific personality traits that contribute to its universal recognition, respect among the community and success in teaching and educational work. The impact may be differentiated according to the motivational aspect, implying a positive or negative impact. In particular, a positive impact is undertaken in the interest of the other person, is voluntarily undertaken, inspires and strengthens; this impact stems from the interest of the other person and forces the other person to yield.

In society, *authority* creates a specific form of interaction, and credibility and trust play a fundamental role. Such behaviour is conditioned by imitation, identification and internalisation, which are linked to teaching, upbringing and self-activity. An authority, as indicated earlier, cannot exist without influence.

¹⁶ Ibidem, s. 40.

In educational situations, the teacher interacts with students on two levels: as a person with an individual personality – through his or her appearance, temperament and way of thinking; as a representative of educational authorities – through specific pedagogical contents and methods. On the first level the teacher influences the pupil unconsciously, intentionally, on the second level it is a conscious action. With regard to the pedagogical process, it would be advisable for the teacher's influence to come from his or her authority. Only then can the influence, regardless of the level and intentionality of the impact, meet with voluntary subordination of the pupil and be positive in its motivational aspect.

Authority is a source of models, examples, ways of thinking and acting, it is the key to translating many phenomena and behaviours, especially among children and young people. Divergences in the understanding of the essence of authority, as mentioned above, concern its relationship with authority, leadership and influence. It is assumed that: power, leadership and influence may or may not necessarily come from authority; authority can be linked to leadership; in general it is with authority; it is always with influence; Power and leadership may exist without authority, but they may not exist without influence; the notions of authority, power and leadership are linked by a factor of influence, which is a necessary but insufficient condition for the existence of authority. The difference between authority and other types of power is that: this impact does not result from any formal relationships; the extent of the impact may not be intended and made clear by a person with authority; subordination to authority is voluntary; it is assumed that the subject of authority may justify their claims and that their indications conceal deeper rationale, but they are not required to prove or present such rationale¹⁷.

A similar position is represented by Mariusz Dembiński, who defines authority “as a specific phenomenon of social awareness with a distinguished subject recognized by the recognizing subject, maintained thanks to the asymmetry of possessed resources, leading to bonds between people of unequal status, ready to submit, and in a way not forced by the need to submit to its authority”¹⁸.

The relationship between authority and authority is evidence of the ability to influence others in order to serve the welfare of others; authority with leadership determines the ability to influence so that obedience is based on cooperation.

¹⁷ Ibidem, s. 49.

¹⁸ M. Dembiński, *O „autorytecie wsobnym” kreowanym przez „strażnika braku”: Przemyslenia na marginesie książki L. Witkowskiego „Wyzwania autorytetu w praktyce społecznej i kulturze symbolicznej”*, „Studia z Teorii Wychowania” 2011, t. 2, nr 1(2), s. 39.

The authority with influence determines the range of impact – it can be positive or negative. Speaking of authority in the context of leadership, it is emphasised that it is a feature of the dominant person. Authority and influence are mutually conditioned interpersonal relationships. The positive influence of authority on other people's behaviour is manifested in the following functions: integrative, motivating, inspiring and modelling ¹⁹.

Every human being needs authority as a source of patterns and values. Authority therefore satisfies the individual's need for security, recognition and affiliation, as well as self-confirmation. It is also a source of information, patterns of behaviour, action, performance of various activities, justification of higher reasons, e. g. tradition or law. An authority may also disorganise the functioning of individuals, institutions or social groups.

Conclusions

The changes that are currently taking place quickly in Polish society require evaluation and evaluation of facts, phenomena and prediction of their effects. This can prevent from overcoming distrust, scepticism and relativization of ethical norms, while at the same time counteracting protests and frustrations of different social groups. Social disintegration, which threatens the process of transformation in the local and global context, is an exemplification of the discrepancy between expectations and the new social order. The sign of modern times is the need for humanistic values and socially recognised authorities.

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¹⁹ Ibidem, s. 42.

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