

The Pedagogical Work of Vieth and GutsMuths¹

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Abstract:

Introduction: Philanthropism as it evolved at the end of the 18th century in Germany wanted to break completely with the contemporary methods persisting in education, with the hegemony of classical languages, and with the study of antique authors' works; instead, it laid emphasis on practical and useful knowledge, on teaching modern languages, on acquiring knowledge based on demonstration, and on an intimate connection to nature. The aim of philanthropist education was to train virtuous citizens who honestly pursue their ordinary profession, in whose training they assigned a central role to physical education.

Purpose: In our paper, which is a part of our research exploring the appearance of the pedagogical ideas of philanthropism in Hungary, we set out to investigate the question: What was the focus of physical education in the philanthropinums? As a first step in our investigation, we give an overview of the philanthropists' ideas regarding physical education, then we take a close look at how these ideas were put into practice in two selected institutions, namely among the walls of the philanthropinums in Dessau and Schnepfenthal, by relying on the contemporary works of Gerhard Ulrich Anton Vieth and Johann Christoph Friedrich GutsMuths. Finally, we consider their impact in Hungary.

Methods: In this study we apply the source analysis as a traditional research method in the history of education.

Conclusions: The impact of philanthropism on contemporary Hungarian public education, especially in the first half of the 19th century, can be clearly detected, which can be accredited to study trips to Germany and the Hungarian translations of German works. The presence of philanthropism can also be perceived in swimming instruction. Basedow and GutsMuths initiated the instruction of swimming and lifeguarding, and the general institutionalization of swimming instruction. The impact of philanthropists could also be felt in Hungary. Károly (Carl) Csillagh's textbook on swimming appeared in German in 1841 with the title "Der

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philantropische Schwimmmeister” (“The Philanthropist Swimming Instructor”). The first book on swimming in Hungarian appeared in 1842.

Key words: history of education, education, philanthropy, physical education.

Introduction

Philanthropism as it evolved at the end of the 18th century in Germany wanted to break completely with the contemporary methods persisting in education, with the hegemony of classical languages, and with the study of antique authors' works; instead, it laid emphasis on practical and useful knowledge, on teaching modern languages, on acquiring knowledge based on demonstration, and on an intimate connection to nature. The aim of philanthropist education was to train virtuous citizens who honestly pursue their ordinary profession, in whose training they assigned a central role to physical education.

1 The philanthropists on physical education

The first prominent representative of philanthropism was Johann Bernhard Basedow (1723-1790). Among his numerous works, at this point we focus our attention on his four-volume “Elementary Book” (“Elementarwerk”), which contained in an encyclopaedic fashion all knowledge children were supposed to acquire up to the age of fifteen. His writing created a stir; besides praising words critical opinions were also voiced. One of the most prestigious journals, the “Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek”, received the work with the highest appreciation, so did Emperor Joseph II. However, it also had fierce critics, such as the journal “Göttinger Gelehrte Anzeigen”, or even Goethe (Fináczy, 1927). According to philanthropists, education should be playful by foregrounding physical activity and exercise in accordance with the child's age; and practical by applying a rich illustration of work-related practical skills, bodily movements and handling tools.

One of their most important principles is that the cultivation and perfection of the soul depends on the body, i.e. the body is the vehicle for the development and the manifestation of inner forces. Philanthropist education emphasized physical movement and bodily exercise adjusted to the child's age (Frank, 1922). Based on a close inspection of the most important writings in Hungarian on the questions surrounding physical education (Frank, 1922, Fináczy, 1927, Czeke, 1938, Pukánszky-Németh, 1996, Mihalovicsné, 2006) we have collected the instructions found in them pertaining to the physical education of children. According to our findings the child spends 16 hours of the day actively: of these, six are devoted to learning, four are taken up by meals and constitutional walks, as well as by longer breaks between classes, and finally, two hours are spent with dancing, singing or arts under the guidance of an instructor. It is an integral

part of the education of the adolescent to acquire the basics of various trades, which can also be used in house-keeping. They emphasize learning the use of simpler machines and tools from experts who are outstanding in their field. We also encounter admonitions reminiscent of knightly virtues, whereas young men must come to the rescue of their fellow-men in emergencies. For this reason, they need to acquire the skills of rock-climbing, riding, open water lifesaving, carriage driving, loading and unloading carts, and protection against animals, furthermore the art of fishing and hunting with the help of experienced trainers. They considered it to be of great importance that young men can find their way around in every situation, thus they have to learn to prepare simple meals and beverages, to make a fire in the open as well as in a stove, to slaughter poultry and wild fowl, and to treat bleeding wounds in case of accidents. Acquiring comprehensive experience is articulated as a primary objective, in the frame of which young men are obligated to spend 14 days in every season at a farm under the guidance of an instructor. By the age of 16 he should be given the chance to fulfil the following duties for 14 days in every year: to live in a military camp, to work in a mine, in a naval port, and at the office of a wholesaler, to help the work of an orphanage pastor, and to spend four weeks in a winter with his instructor at a residency. Beyond all these, they had to learn to endure the following hardships: sleeping in a cold room, surviving the heat, sleep deprivation at given circumstances, orientation in the dark and on unknown terrain, and enjoying simple dishes.

2 The Philanthropinum in Dessau and Gerhard Ulrich Anton Vieth

Basedow founded an educational institution operating based on his own principles in 1774 with the support of the prince of Dessau, bearing the name Philanthropinum. He was also the head of the institution till 1778. Later, he passed the position to Joachim Heinrich Campe. The Philanthropinum was closed in 1793 (Pukánszky & Németh, 1996).

The emphatic fields of education in the Philanthropinum in Dessau were expertise, bodily training, freedom and naturalness. One of their fundamental principles was that the cultivation and perfection of the soul depends on the body, i.e. the body is the vehicle for the development and the manifestation of inner forces (Fináczy, 1927, Mihalovicsné, 2006).

Contrary to contemporary fashion, students of the institution in Dessau had their hair cropped short; they were not allowed to wear neck-ties, and they had to wear their shirts with open collar.

Their clothes were loose and comfortable. They bathed in cold water and slept in hard beds. In food and drink they followed a natural diet. They spent a lot of time in the open; they often went on excursions, and frequently devoted themselves to wood carving and turnery. They played a lot in the open and did controlled physical exercises with pleasure. It might also have caught the

visitors' eyes that classes lasted only half an hour, and between classes children were always allowed to have half an hour for refreshment (Czeke, 1938).

The distinguished treatment of physical education was a significant feature of the work done in the Philanthropinum. They wanted to develop the students into being strong, physically skilled and trained. The children's life was characterized by a lot of exercises, games and excursions in the open. It was also part of the physical training that students had to sleep in hard beds, to bathe in cold water, and to wear thin clothes also in the winter. Furthermore, they swam, rowed, rode, fenced, and shot at target.

Philanthropist educators encouraged every conceivable form of physical exercise. Villaume advised even playing wind-instruments for the reason that it develops the strength of the lungs. In a similar fashion he did not advise playing the piano, because it develops musicality, but simply because of its strengthening effect on the fingers (Fináczy, 1927).

The most prominent educator of the the institution in the field of physical education was Gerhard Ulrich Anton Vieth (1763-1836), who is often considered to be one of the founding fathers of German gymnastics for his general propagation of gymnastic exercises and for his work done in their scientific description (Neuendorf, 1932).

Vieth studied law, mathematics, and physics at the University of Göttingen and Leipzig. He was a professor at the Hochfürstliche Hauptschule, then its director, a professor of mathematics, and a school inspector. He was closely connected to the Philanthropinum from early on. In his work as a teacher both music and gymnastics played a central role; and it was his initiative that English and Italian became separate language classes in the Hauptschule (Euler, 1895).

His major work is the three-volume book "Versuch einer Encyclopädie der Leibesübungen" (Berlin 1794, 1795, 1818).

The title of the first volume was "Beiträge zur Geschichte der Leibesübungen". It contains historical sources and travel accounts, which report on the physical exercises of foreign or long extinct people. With this book he was the first to write a cultural history of physical exercises. In the introduction he discusses the naturalness of physical exercise, which has been defining the daily routine of children since the most ancient times (Vieth, 1794).

The second volume bears the title "System der Leibesübungen". It gives a detailed description of the particular exercises and of their regular execution. The book distinguishes between passive (e.g. sitting, lying, bathing) and active exercises. The latter are divided further into mental and physical exercises. He discusses the health of children at various ages at length, from the correct way of swinging up to being confined to the bed (Vieth, 1795).

The third volume of the trilogy is a supplement to the first two.

The significance of the Philanthropinum in Dessau in the field of physical education can be best grasped in the fact that this institution was the first

German school where students did physical exercises regularly under the supervision of teachers who taught also other subjects.

3 The philanthropinum in Schnepfenthal and Johann Christoph Friedrich GutsMuths

Another prominent figure of German philanthropism, Salzmann (1744-1811), founded his own institution in Schnepfenthal, Thuringia, near Gotha, modelled on the Philanthropinum in Dessau. In 1786 Salzmann trusted Johann Christoph Friedrich GutsMuths with the task of physical education at the institute in Schnepfenthal (Schmitt, 2007).

Johann Christoph Friedrich GutsMuths (1759-1839) studied theology, physics, mathematics, and history at the University of Halle, where he also attended the lectures of Trapp on pedagogy. He is identified in the history of education as the originator of regular physical education (Waßmannsdorf, 1884).

GutsMuths considered physical education to be an inseparable part education. In the beginning, the physical exercises practised in Dessau served as a model, then after two years he reshaped physical education according to his own ideas. In his own methodology he considered the individual abilities of the children to be the starting point. Physical exercise was carefully designed methodologically; children's physical load was increased gradually.

He was the first educator who - besides being a teacher himself - in his publications reflected on the practice, synthesized teaching practices in a complex general system, and through his extensive publishing activity became also known to the general public (Geßmann, 1998).

His works include "Gymnastik für die Jugend" (1793), the first systematizing work on physical education in schools, and "Spiele zur Übung und Erholung des Körpers und Geistes" (1796). This book collected movement and mental games based on observation into a coherent system. GutsMuths studied the pedagogical and physical educational functions of various games. The book qualifies as the first pedagogical game-book of Germany.

It is divided into the following major chapters: ball games, playground games, marble (or small/heavy ball) games, skittles games, games involving poles and rings, winter games, parlour games, night games, individual games, further games.

He is also known as the author of the first book on the methodology of instruction in swimming, with the title "Kleine Lehrbuch der Schwimmkunst", which appeared in 1798.

Beyond providing the foundations for the specialized content used in physical education in schools, GutsMuths writings are also systematic works of German gymnastics and games (Schröder, 1996).

4 The impact of the philanthropists

Based on the examples of Vieth and GutsMuths it can be stated that teachers of physical education in philanthropinums were not merely instructors of the exercises any more, but school-teachers, who laid the foundations of German literature on physical education.

The impact of philanthropism on contemporary Hungarian public education, especially in the first half of the 19th century, can be clearly detected, which can be accredited to study trips to Germany and the Hungarian translations of German works. Salzmann's institution, founded in 1784 was visited by 366 Hungarian educators, among others by Terézia von Brunszvik, who also gave an account of her impressions in her memoirs (Czeke, 1938), yet, we also need to mention Samuel Tessedik, who made good use of his experience gained during his journey to Germany in his school in Szarvas.

It is a noticeable impact on physical education that the official physical education teacher appears also in Hungary, in the person of the painter, Vilmos Egger (1792-1830). He was the first professional instructor of physical education in Hungary, and also a private tutor in the service of Baron Miklós Vay.

The presence of philanthropism can also be perceived in swimming instruction. Basedow and GutsMuths initiated the instruction of swimming and lifeguarding, and the general institutionalization of swimming instruction. The impact of philanthropists could also be felt in Hungary. Károly (Carl) Csillagh's textbook on swimming appeared in German in 1841 with the title "Der philanthropische Schwimmmeister" ("The Philanthropist Swimming Instructor"). The book is devoted to swimming instruction, introduces water gymnastics, and discusses hygienics. The first book on swimming in Hungarian, "Aradi Úszómester" ("Arader Swimming Instructor"), appeared in 1842.

Conclusion

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