

# The Concept of Education of Paweł Smolikowski CR (1849–1926)

**Dominika Jagielska**

## **Abstract**

Paweł Smolikowski CR was a priest, missionary, doctor of theology, as well as a philosopher, historian and writer. A member of the Resurrectionist congregation, he is still regarded as one of the main representatives of Resurrectionist philosophical and pedagogical thought at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He left behind a rich legacy. His concept of education fits in with the Resurrectionist educational system that was introduced in many places in Europe. In this article, I would like to present the main elements of Paweł Smolikowski's concept of education with an emphasis along with its anthropological foundations.

## **Keywords**

Paweł Smolikowski; the Resurrectionists; the Resurrectionist system of education; education; Catholic education; Paweł Smolikowski's concept of education

## **Introduction**

Issues relating to the education of young people have been one of the important areas of human thinking for centuries. Many concepts of education were developed in reference to the values, cultural norms, knowledge, approved philosophies and ideologies, and dominant religions in force at a particular time and place. Catholicism has also, over many centuries, more than once become the inspiration and basis for concepts of education. In this article, I would like to present one such concept, by Paweł Smolikowski, emphasising the link present in the author's thought between anthropological foundations and the theory of education and the postulated principles of educational practice. The Resurrectionist educational system, of which Smolikowski was a co-author and representative, for a long time represented a particular educational programme put into practice based on a Christian view of man (cf. Kostkiewicz 2012; Mleczek 2007–2008), and although nowadays the Resurrectionists rather do not manage schools, their educational activities (running parish groups and day-care centres, boarding schools and dormitories, catechetical and didactic-scientific activities) are still based on the principles worked out by the founders of the congregation (Zmartwychwstańcy 2024).

Paweł Smolikowski co-created the concept of education of the Resurrectionists as one of the members, and for a time general, of the Congregation of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ [Congregatio a Resurrectione Domini Nostri Iesu Christi (CR)], also known as the Resurrectionists. This congregation was founded by Bogdan Janski in 1836 in Paris, with the aim of the moral and social renewal of Poles who found themselves in exile after the fall of the

November Uprising (1830–1831),<sup>1</sup> and of deepening their faith through educational and parochial work. The Order was initially active in France and Italy, and later also in the USA, Canada, Bulgaria and Austria. It was not until 1880 that the Resurrectionists settled on Polish soil (in Krakow and Lviv). At that time, they established various educational institutions (boarding schools, schools and orphanages), creating and perfecting their own educational system (Traczyński 1990; Kostkiewicz 2012; Mleczko 2007–2008).

### **Biography of Paweł Smolikowski CR**

In order to present Smolikowski's concept of education, it is worth briefly outlining his biography. He was born on 4 February 1849 in Tver, Russia. He came from a noble and deeply religious family. He was brought up quite strictly. Initially educated at home with his siblings, he began his school education after moving to Warsaw. He was a polyglot, speaking Russian, German, English, French, Latin and Old Church Slavonic (Mrówczyński 2001; Kardaś 2017; Wójtowicz 2018).

In 1866, he joined the seminary in Warsaw. In 1867 he went to Rome, where he continued his studies and became a member of the Resurrectionists. In 1873 he professed his perpetual vows and was ordained and received a doctorate in theology. In 1874 he went on a mission to Bulgaria, where he taught Latin, German and Old Church Slavonic and worked in a boarding school, perfecting his educational skills. His aim was to prepare his pupils to fight against the false principles of the world of that time, to develop clear political views, civic education, and to broaden his pupils' knowledge of Catholic theology and philosophy. During this time he also worked at the seminary in Adrianople, where he lectured on philosophy and theology, Greek and Latin (Mrówczyński 2001; Kardaś 2017; Wójtowicz 2018).

In 1882, Smolikowski was sent by his superiors to work at the Lviv boarding school, where he worked as tutor, boarding school administrator and later also as superior of the religious house. Here he put into practice the Resurrectionist programme of education. He took care of the integral education of the boys at the boarding school, provided further education and tutoring, maintained the institution's library and periodicals, and founded various groups aimed at the spiritual development and deepening of the faith of his pupils (Mrówczyński 2001; Kardaś 2017; Wójtowicz 2018).

Smolikowski was called to Rome in 1891 to carry out work of a theological and historical nature. It resulted in the preparation of a history of the Resurrectionist congregation, with which he wished to commemorate the order's fiftieth anniversary in 1892. In the same year, he was appointed rector of the Pontifical Polish College in Rome, and a year later he was nominated consultor to the congregation of the Council – he was in charge of matters concerning the

---

<sup>1</sup> Poland did not exist on the political map of Europe from 1795 to 1918. Its lands were divided between three partitioners: Russia, Prussia and Austria. In this political non-existence, uprisings to regain independence broke out from time to time on Polish soil. One of these was the November Uprising. All the uprisings in the 19<sup>th</sup> century did not lead to the restoration of Polish statehood in the form it had before the Partitions. Their suppression was associated with numerous persecutions by the authorities of the partitioning states of the people who took part in them and their families, which often resulted in Poles emigrating to Western countries. After the fall of the November Uprising, many people fled from persecution, settling in France and other European countries.

discipline of diocesan clergy and the fidelity of Catholics to the Church (Mrówczyński 2001; Kardaś 2017; Wójtowicz 2018).

In 1895 he became General of the Resurrectionist congregation, in this function he carried out visitations and clarified the purpose and character of the order. In 1902, he led them to the final confirmation of the congregation's constitution and the definitive approval of the Resurrectionists as an order. Due to problems in the congregation, which were triggered by problems with the adaptation of individual houses to the accepted regulations, he resigned as general (Mrówczyński 2001; Kardaś 2017; Wójtowicz 2018).

Smolikowski had to leave Rome in 1915 due to the outbreak of the Italo–Austrian War, and in 1916 he went to Kęty, where he became chaplain to the Resurrectionist Sisters. Here he gave retreats and lectures and also completed his literary works and wrote stage plays. In 1919 he returned to Rome, to the Polish College, but at his own request he was dismissed as rector in 1921. He moved to Poland, where he was responsible for a religious house in Radziwiłłów near Warsaw. He did scholarly work and led retreats, and was also involved in the formation of seminarians. He died on 11 September 1926 at the convent house in Krakow, and was buried in the Rakowicki cemetery (Mrówczyński 2001; Kardaś 2017; Wójtowicz 2018). His life was subordinated to the service of God and fellow human beings, and the educational programme created on the basis of his experiences seems to have put into practice the Catholic principles of love of neighbour and respect for the dignity of the other person.

### **Anthropological foundations of Paweł Smolikowski's concept of education**

The basis of Paweł Smolikowski's assumptions relating to education is the concept of man, based on Thomistic realism, whose adherents were the Resurrectionists.<sup>2</sup> Thomism as a philosophical concept centred around the problem of human nature, resolving it with reference to Aristotle's hylemorphism. It therefore assumed the unity and integrity of the human being, consisting of form (soul) and matter (body). The soul is the form and functioning principle of man, shaping him through his cognitive and desire faculties, which, when subjected to perfection, become virtues (Cichosz 2000; Horowski, 2011). Referring to this, Smolikowski distinguished three faculties of the human soul: the will, the mind (intellect) and the heart (feelings), which constitute the basis of man's material and spiritual life. He regarded their synergy as an expression of man's unique place in the work of divine creation. The will is the source of man's freedom – Smolikowski emphasises that freedom can only be limited in an educationally desirable direction by a free act of the will directed towards itself. (cf. Smolikowski 2010a, 35, 58; Smolikowski 2010b, 73,79–81, 84, 86–88; Smolikowski 2010c, 73).

Also characteristic of Thomism and Thomistic pedagogy seems to be the concept of good and evil in man, which can be seen as a simple and easily translatable demonstration of possible

---

<sup>2</sup> They delivered a memorandum to the Pope for a return to Thomism, deepening the study of this philosophical perspective and recognising it as the basis of Catholicism. This initiative probably contributed to Leo XII's encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, which indicated the need for the study of Thomism and contributed to the development of Thomistic pedagogy (Kostkiewicz, 2013, 180-182).

disharmonies in the simultaneously spiritual and material nature of man (Horowski 2011). This is because Smolikowski points to the presence of seeds of good and evil in every human being. The seeds of evil are presented in his work as a consequence of original sin, which seems to be a certain simplification of Thomistic assumptions. Both good and evil can be developed to varying degrees, depending on man's free will. Their perception is related to the degree of knowledge of human nature and of specific persons (as individuals) (Smolikowski 2010a, 35). These seeds of good and evil form the potential of man, who remains in a certain split, and his choices actualise in everyday action the direction of his development. Similarly, a little later, Jacek (Adam) Woroniecki (1925), counted among the Thomistic pedagogues in Poland, wrote about man as a potential being (cf. Kostkiewicz 2013, 87–175). Smolikowski also emphasises that in this constant distinction between good and evil, in perfecting himself, man is not alone. The relationship with God allows him to choose the good – through contact with values, prayer, the good example of others. Man achieves this by building up his conscience (Smolikowski 2010b, 81).

What emerges from Smolikowski's writings is a reverence for the human being, an emphasis on his dignity (although the notion of dignity, characteristic of contemporary personalist pedagogy, does not appear in them in a direct way). Certainly, this anthropology is drawn from Thomism, but it seems to be presented in a simplified way, more comprehensible to people who are not exposed to in-depth philosophy, woven in between other discussions on man, education and facts from the life and work of Resurrectionist boarding schools. This seems justified by the purpose of Smolikowski's writings, who focused more on describing the functioning of the institutions where he had contact with young people, giving guidelines for practical work with young people, rather than on philosophical and theological issues with a high degree of abstractness.

### **The concept of education in the writings of Paweł Smolikowski**

Paweł Smolikowski's conception of man, as defined above, is directly reflected in his understanding of education and his proposed methods of working with young people. It is worth beginning with his understanding of education. Smolikowski defined it as the shaping of character through the improvement of the will (2010a, 58; 2010b, 90; 2010c, 73). He perceived the will as the most essential authority in man's soul, which pushes him to act. For this reason, he emphasised its improvement in education, although he also spoke of the need to introduce harmony between the education of character and the education of the intellect and feelings, referring to the other authorities of the soul. According to Smolikowski, man should know good, feel good and aim for good. This will only be possible with a balance between all the faculties of the soul (Smolikowski 1895, 377; 2010c, 68). The concept of character education, based on emphasising the will and its development in the pupil, was characteristic of Polish thinking about education in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and was built on the teachings of the Catholic Church (Bednarz–Grzybek 2014). Thus, on the one hand, Smolikowski referred to a concept characteristic of his time, acknowledging it, while on the other hand, he emphasised its inadequacy. He referred to Thomistic anthropology, in which

man, as a rational being, is able to recognise what is good and strive for it. However, he enriched it with issues that were fully brought out later in personalist conceptions (in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century): the necessity of harmonious development, of educating the whole child and not just his ‘parts’.

In his concept, Smolikowski tried to demonstrate in more detail how such education should be carried out. The formation of the will had to be based on the child’s freedom, aiming to build up a conscious and voluntary desire to follow the right course of action, which can be achieved through example and responsibility in the performance of duties. For the will cannot be formed if it is constantly constrained by parents or educators (Smolikowski 2010b, 90). According to Smolikowski, the aim of educating the will was to create a sense of duty by leaving the pupils free and enabling them to be self-governing. Such behaviour was intended to build conscience, which was served by the educator’s attitude of trust towards the pupils (Smolikowski 2010a, 36). At the same time, Smolikowski emphasised that excessive discipline in education can be harmful – the child learns to perform duties only under control, to do the right thing for fear of sanctions, and not from a sense of duty (2010b, 88).

In addition to the will, the heart must also be brought up – Smolikowski had the emotional sphere in view. To educate the heart for him is to sensitise the child to good and evil, to awaken empathy, sensitivity, love for God, but in a balanced way so as not to make the child over-sensitive or over-sensitive about himself. In doing so, he emphasised the need to show the child a true ideal, which the child would accept as his or her own and strive towards with enthusiasm (Smolikowski 2010b, 84).

Intellectual education, on the other hand, should involve building efficient reasoning skills, so that the child is able to distinguish between truth and falsehood. But teaching only logical thinking was an insufficient safeguard against false cognition of reality. Smolikowski points out that the supernatural world, in particular, can elude cognition based on logic; besides, human beings have a tendency to decide under the influence of feelings, and therefore also to self-deceive, to accept what pleases the person and is not necessarily in accordance with the truth (2010b, 86). Prepared and inspired to develop, the human intellect cannot stop, it strives for a broader, truth-based cognition of reality (Smolikowski 2010d, 111). It therefore needs new incentives and new material to develop.

The aforementioned need for balance in education was evident in Smolikowski’s approach to religion. He emphasised that faith and religiosity are indispensable in education. Firstly, they participate in the education of the will, directing it in the right direction: ‘It is not enough then to be able to want, one must also want God, his will’ (Smolikowski 2010b, 88), because this is the only thing that brings man happiness. Secondly, in the case of feelings, faith and religiosity can become the source of this ideal that young people choose to realise (Smolikowski 2010b, 84). Thirdly, they are an important element for the development of the intellect. Smolikowski points out that human mind will eventually come into contact with religious questions (which he describes as the most vital). The human intellect cannot leave them unanswered. Religiosity

and faith provide the mind with deeper data concerning these issues, which allow for a truthful recognition of supernatural reality (Smolikowski 2010d, 111).

Ensuring a balance between the education of the will, feelings and intellect was Smolikowski's basis for his appreciation of educational work methods. He believed that it is examples that attract children more, so the teacher in his work should be authentic and harmoniously developed (Smolikowski 2010b, 81). Indeed, he considered the ideal method and personal example in direct relations with children to be the most important methods of education (Smolikowski 2010a, 42, 60; Smolikowski 2010b, 81; Smolikowski 2010c, 69–72; Smolikowski 2010d, 106–107). The relationship between teacher and student should be based on trust and respect. Smolikowski's approach to the child carries the characteristics of a later understanding of the person in the personalist sense with respect for his or her dignity and freedom, as well as the vision of the child as a separate, complete being, able to determine himself or herself, which was widely spread only at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the New Education Movement (cf. Luoto 2023). He was therefore ahead of his time in this context. At the same time, his thought on education is firmly rooted in Thomistic realism. This was particularly evident in the so-called pillars of Resurrectionist pedagogy, which showed certain goals to be achieved by the teacher. Firstly, it was necessary to make the pupils aware of the evil in them as a result of original sin and to develop in them a sense of duty to combat it – and therefore a desire for self-improvement. Secondly, it was necessary to show pupils their strengths, skills and abilities – the good that is in them – and to help them develop it. Thirdly, it was necessary to empower pupils for self-education, by developing their conscience, their sense of duty by means of persuasion, with appreciation of their freedom (Smolikowski 2010b,35). These three pillars of educational work with young people are thus directly related to the anthropological assumptions of the concept, indicated above, and follow from them – making the whole concept a coherent whole.

The main task of the pedagogical system described was, according to Smolikowski, to bring up good and wise Catholics. However, individual goals (development, self-improvement of the human being) and religious goals did not completely exhaust its meaning. Smolikowski also placed within its framework an important social task: building harmony, unity between representatives of different nations, and in a special way (in the context of the Lviv boarding school) between Poles and Ruthenians – today Ukrainians (1888, 15–16). The Resurrectionist concept and practice was based on the principle of not differentiating pupils by origin, of mitigating conflicts, of learning from each other (Smolikowski 1888, 16). Here again, therefore, respect for human beings, whoever they may be, emerges as the main determinant of Resurrectionist education. As it seems, the pedagogical system proposed by Smolikowski is based on love of God and fellow man (Smolikowski 2010b, 78), which is the starting point for his claims about man and his education

## Conclusion

Undoubtedly, the Resurrectionists created an innovative pedagogical programme, focused on the dignity of the child, far ahead of its time. Its basic outlines had been created earlier, mainly

in the writings of the founders of the Resurrectionist Order: Piotr Semenenko, Hieronim Kajsiewicz, and Walerian Kalinka, and were inspired by their stay at the College Stanislas in Paris<sup>3</sup> (Smolikowski 1925, 81–93). Paweł Smolikowski made his contribution by gathering together and expanding the pedagogical system, both from the theoretical and practical side. The inspiration of Catholic religion and philosophy (Thomism) and Catholic social doctrine is evident in it; it seems to realise the ideal of love fellow and attitude towards children contained in the New Testament. On the other hand, certain aspects concerning respect for the child, his or her freedom and the proposed methods of education seem to predate ideas developed more widely only in the twentieth century – personalistic and those associated with the New Education. Given that work was already being carried out on this system in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it can be considered that these assumptions were not an obvious novelty at the time.

## References

- Bednarz-Grzybek, Renata. 2014. Kształtowanie charakteru dzieci i młodzieży na ziemiach polskich w drugiej połowie XIX wieku i na początku XX wieku. *Studia Edukacyjne* 31, 267–287.
- Cichosz, Wojciech. 2000. Koncepcja osoby ludzkiej w filozofii Św. Tomasza z Akwinu. *Studia Gdańskie* XIII, 175–186.
- Horowski, Jarosław. 2011. Tomistyczna Myśl Pedagogiczna W Polsce Wobec Idei Personalizmu / Thomistic Notion in Pedagogy in Poland in the View of the Idea of Personalism. *Kwartalnik Pedagogiczny / Pedagogical Quarterly*, 224(2), 29–90.
- Kardaś, Artur. 2017. *Sługa Boży ks. Paweł Smolikowski CR*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Alleluja.
- Kostkiewicz, Janina. 2012. “Zgromadzenie Zmartwychwstania Pańskiego i jego system wychowawczy”. In *Pedagogie katolickich zgromadzeń zakonnych : historia i współczesność*, edited by Janina Kostkiewicz, Vol. 1, pp. 309–334). Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza “Impuls”.
- Luoto, Lauri. 2023. The Social Nature of New Education: An Affiliation Network Analysis of the Movement’s Evolution, 1875–1935. *Paedagogica Historica: International Journal of the History of Education*, 59 (1), 36–54. *EBSCOhost*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00309230.2022.2095874>.
- Mleczo, Wojciech. 2007–2008. “Zmartwychwstańczy system wychowawczy. Próba zarysu”. *Zeszyty Historyczno–Teologiczne* 13–14, 215–227.
- Mrówczyński, Jerzy. 2001. *Sługa Boży Ojciec Paweł Smolikowski*. Jabłonowo Pomorskie: “Koronis”.
- Smolikowski, Paweł. 1888. *Stowarzyszenie Opieki nad Internatem Ruskim XX Zmartwychwstańców we Lwowie*. Lwów: Stowarzyszenie Opieki.

---

<sup>3</sup> It was an educational institution for young people in training. It was based on religion, which permeated all spheres of life and school subjects. Various methods were used to motivate pupils to learn and a sense of duty was fostered. The system of education was based on trust, activities shared by pupils and educators, and being together during study and rest time (Smolikowski 1925, 81–93).

- Smolikowski, Paweł. 1895. Reguła Braci Zmartwychwstania P. N. Jezusa Chrystusa. *W Historia Zgromadzenia Zmartwychwstania Pańskiego. T. 3, Bracia Zmartwychwstania*, 342–416. Kraków: Księg. Spółki Wydawniczej Polskiej.
- Smolikowski, Paweł. 1925. *Obudzenie się ducha religijnego wśród Polaków w XIX wieku*. Kraków: Zgromadzenie Zmartwychwstania Pańskiego.
- Smolikowski, Paweł. 2010a. “Eksperymenty pedagogiczne”. In *O wychowaniu: zbiór tekstów pedagogicznych*, Paweł Smolikowski, selected and foreword by Wojciech Mleczek, 33–66. Kraków: Komisja Studiów Zmartwychwstańców Polskiej Prowincji Zmartwychwstańców.
- Smolikowski, Paweł. 2010b. “O wychowaniu”. In *O wychowaniu: zbiór tekstów pedagogicznych*, Paweł Smolikowski, selected and foreword by Wojciech Mleczek, 78–91. Kraków: Komisja Studiów Zmartwychwstańców Polskiej Prowincji Zmartwychwstańców.
- Smolikowski, Paweł. 2010c. „O wychowaniu młodzieży”. In *O wychowaniu: zbiór tekstów pedagogicznych*, Paweł Smolikowski, selected and foreword by Wojciech Mleczek, 67–77. Kraków: Komisja Studiów Zmartwychwstańców Polskiej Prowincji Zmartwychwstańców.
- Smolikowski, Paweł. 2010d. “Rozmyślania o wychowaniu”. In *O wychowaniu: zbiór tekstów pedagogicznych*, Paweł Smolikowski, selected and foreword by Wojciech Mleczek, 105–116. Kraków: Komisja Studiów Zmartwychwstańców Polskiej Prowincji Zmartwychwstańców.
- Traczyński, Marian. 1990. “Zmartwychwstańcy w służbie Stolicy Apostolskiej”. In *Zmartwychwstańcy w dziejach Kościoła i narodu*, edited by Zygmunt Zieliński, 121–148. Katowice: Wydawnictwo Unia.
- Woroniecki, Jacek (Adam). 1925. *Katolicka etyka wychowawcza*. Poznań: Druk Św. Wojciecha.
- Wójtowicz, Kazimierz. 2018. “Wstęp”. In *Mądrość pokory: myśli*, Paweł Smolikowski; selected and foreword by Kazimierz Wójtowicz CR, 7–18. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Alleluja.
- Zmartwychwstańcy. 2024. “Działalność naukowa”. Strona internetowa Zmartwychwstańców w Polsce. <https://zmartwychwstancy.pl/dzialalnosc-naukowa>.

**Dr Dominika Jagielska**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4633-0550>

Jagiellonian University

Faculty of Philosophy, Section of Polish Pedagogical Thought

Batorego 12, 31-135 Cracow, Poland

[dominika.jagielska@uj.edu.pl](mailto:dominika.jagielska@uj.edu.pl)