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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the Polish experience in values education. Between the years 1944 and 1989 Polish education was often state controlled with the sole purpose of subjugating education to Marxist-Leninist ideology. Over the years the communist party's dictates varied in intensity. Despite the party's efforts to prescribe ethics, certain values remained uncontaminated by communist oriented decision making. While it is difficult to substantiate this with objective research findings, evidence comes from the teachers themselves, especially teachers in the humanities and social sciences, who could observe and monitor values in Polish schools. Three values survived the government's ideologic pressure: (1) knowledge; (2) patriotism; and (3) western civilization. All three of these ideas remained deeply rooted in the minds of both teachers and parents. Four reasons contribute to explaining why patriotism remained an important principle: (1) Polish pre-war schooling followed an early 19th century approach that viewed education as the path toward liberation for subjugated nations; (2) in the majority of families, parents encouraged this attitude; (3) the Catholic Church, a very influential institution in Poland, supported patriotic education; and (4) the communist authorities were unwilling to suppress patriotic education because they were afraid to go against popular attitudes. The study suggests that the new focus for Poland's schools should be mutual understanding, an education for international understanding. Specific programs and curricula are discussed. Contains nine references. (DK)

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**ETHICAL AND MORAL EDUCATION:**

**A NATIONAL CASE STUDY OF POLAND**

*Andrzej Janowski*

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## **I. THE LEGACY OF THE SO-CALLED "PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY" (1944-89)**

Between the years 1944 and 1989 Polish education was often state controlled with the sole purpose of subjugating education to Marxist-Leninist ideology.

People in the West often believe that the main objective of Polish education during those years was ideological indoctrination. In reality, however, Poland and other countries pursued "real socialism" with similar vigour and in similar ways. This issue, therefore, could be presented for further clarification.

During the forty-five year post-war era there were long periods of forced ideological indoctrination. Elements of Marxism and Leninism were introduced into schools by communist authorities. During this time, the communist party became known as the "workers and peasants'" state, especially in the former USSR. Communist governments imposed a "socialist morality" and engaged in a struggle against religion. The early 1950s were particularly typical of these approaches, although later years also saw periods of "increased ideological battle".

The late 1980s witnessed little ideological activity. But one must keep in mind that during the 1980s the communist party no longer enjoyed the fervour that it once had. In the last ten to fifteen years of communist rule in Poland, there was less indoctrination occurring in Polish schools than in other "real socialist" countries.

Over the years the communist party's dictates varied in intensity. However, despite the party's efforts to prescribe ethics, certain values remained uncontaminated by communist oriented decision making. While it is difficult to substantiate this opinion with objective research findings, evidence for this statement comes from the teachers themselves, especially teachers in the humanities and social sciences, who could observe and monitor values in Polish schools.

### Three values that survived the government's ideologic pressure

1. The most important Polish attitude to survive indoctrination was the feeling that knowledge had value. Polish teachers shared this opinion. This "knowledge-is-a-value" approach permeated the school system and stayed in the minds of the students, even those of low academic achievement. However, the last fifteen years, under both communist rule and the new government, have shown a steady deterioration of aspirations in education, due in part to the pauperization of Poland's intellectual élite.

2. Another value embedded in Polish schools was patriotism. Four reasons contribute to explaining why patriotism remained an important principle:

- (a) Polish pre-war schooling followed an early nineteenth century approach which viewed education as the path toward liberation for subjugated nations;
- (b) in the majority of families parents encouraged this attitude;
- (c) the Catholic Church, a very influential institution in Poland, supported patriotic education;
- (d) the communist authorities were unwilling to suppress patriotic education because they were afraid to go against popular attitudes.

3. The third value, retained despite indoctrination, placed emphasis on European history and literature, and the beginnings of western civilization originating in the Mediterranean basin.

#### Additional remarks

These values have not been selected on the basis of educational studies under the former communist leaders or the present post-communist ones. The "results" described above have been arrived at largely through observing deeply rooted ideas in the minds of both teachers and parents, and not as a consequence of specially planned educational analysis. These automatically

transmitted ideas and values have come to be known as the "hidden curriculum".

### Educational problems under communist rule

While mentioning the values retained by Polish teachers, one should not forget the educational gaps and negative influences affecting the mentality of Polish society due to the communists' influence on education.

Educational gaps evident under communism fall into three categories.

1. Economic illiteracy. Although capitalism in Poland had never been strong, Poland enjoyed a certain mercantile existence until the end of the 1940s. Generations entering the work force learned to run businesses by watching their parents and neighbours around them. Under communism this opportunity to learn from one's elders disappeared. In the 1980s, after thirty years of learning economics from so-called manuals on the "political economy of socialism", the results of this illiteracy were clearly visible; cognitive emptiness took over.
  
2. The second gap also deals with a shortage of knowledge. The lack of understanding of a democratic society during the second half of the twentieth century was obvious. Information on how elections should be organized, how legislative, executive and judicial institutions should act, what the participatory role of citizens in regional government should consist of, what the varying forms of democracy existing in different countries were, and what the side effects were of these various structures was missing. Also non-existent was knowledge on the self organization of local, professional or regional social groups. The sources of these shortcomings were the same as in the case of the economy. This knowledge could no longer be acquired through the process of spontaneous socialization, and school and civic education dealt mainly with the apotheosis of the communist party.
  
3. There was a severe shortage of historical knowledge, particularly

concerning middle-eastern Europe in the present century. People were not taught about the processes which shaped their own history and formed the so-called "states of people's democracy". This lack of knowledge was due to: the omission of certain facts from all officially published textbooks; falsifications; and ideological interpretations of facts and social processes. This same treatment was applied to former historical periods, the history of human thought and the history of literature -- although to a lesser degree.

Levels of awareness concerning these shortages varied: generally people realized that they did not know history, yet they were sure that they knew what democracy was, even if such democracy was associated with the most unusual phenomena in their minds. These "shortcomings" then were the facts that people did not know concerning a subject or false information about it that had been planted in their minds.

The thought processes and perceptions of young people developed differently from former generations of Poles. Communism affected young people's minds in a way which left them unaware that they had been affected, leaving them with the impression that they were immune to communism, as could be witnessed by their resort to anti-communist slogans.

### Growing up under communism

Two traits characterized people raised under communism. The first trait is an acquired helplessness in the face of life. The second, a difficulty in communication concerning subjects which require the use of abstract terms.

**Helplessness.** Communism keeps individuals and social groups in a state of permanent childhood and immaturity. The communist party thinks for the nation. The party decides what people can do and can read. The party established objectives and the people's task is to achieve them. For communists, this is the purpose of human existence. If a person desires to initiate something, he or she may do so only for a prescribed purpose. One's

reward for the vigorous implementation of the party's prescribed aims is a life of protection and security without tensions and risk. For the governed this means waiting for orders, instructions and recommendations, and results according to the attitude that "everything should be given to them". Awaiting instruction was obligatory for communists, but it affected other non-communist groups as well. If instructions did exist there was always the possibility of rebelling against them and proving how idiotic they were, behaviour sometimes typical of the relationship between adolescents and their parents.

Difficulties with abstract thought. Communist control of the mass media contributed to the difficulties Polish youth had in understanding abstract ideas. The communist authorities deprived the population of knowledge concerning certain abstract notions and the meaning of words through propaganda. Newspapers, TV and textbooks were equally affected. Take the word "democracy" for instance. What is generally understood in the rest of the world as the democratic system became known in the language of the communists as "bourgeois democracy". At the same time various forms of communist totalitarianism were given names like "people's democracy", "socialist democracy", or simply "democracy". It is worth noting that the first period of Stalinization of Polish social life was officially called "democratization".

For forty-five years this propaganda conveniently replaced old notions with new ones so as to falsify abstract notions in politics and social life. For example, the notions of: "freedom", "justice", "public interest", "right wing", "left wing", and "independence" were all affected or "infected" by propaganda. Generally speaking, Polish youth did not share the same notions of these words as is accepted by the rest of the world.

While many young people did not believe the propaganda, they were not aware of any alternative definitions, which led them to reject all abstract notions *en masse*. This was a form of self-defence against propaganda, but in reality this attitude was self-destructive. The total rejection of abstract notions made it impossible for young people to realize what was happening around them and impeded communication and learning.

## II. THE MAIN PROBLEMS CONCERNING ETHICAL OR MORAL EDUCATION

Some people blame the communists for the moral deprivation of Poland's youth and pay tribute to the Catholic Church for its contribution to the positive attitudes cherished by parents and teachers in the school climate. But we need to remember that, although the traditional combination of catholicism supporting patriotism and vice versa is deeply rooted in Polish history, it does not automatically mean people will be happy when building a new democracy in an independent country.

The fundamental question is what exactly should the cornerstone of education in Poland's public schools be? Two points of view emerge in answer to this question. "Human rights" seems to be one answer; "Christian values", which in Poland refers to the "Catholic approach", is another. Some Poles feel that the growing tension and debate over this question leads to a lack of commitment to find a compromise and achieve a consensus. The approach to sex education in Polish schools can be used to illustrate this controversy. In 1993, ministerial guidelines emerged for sex education in secondary schools. But due to the Catholic Church's influence, the syllabuses present a lot of wishful thinking about familial love and almost nothing about sex and contraception.

A letter from the International Bureau of Education indicating the idea of preparing a few national case studies, including one for Poland, was prompted by the need to collect materials for one of the topics for the forty-fourth session of the International Conference of Education, namely "Appraisal and perspectives of education for international understanding". When commissioning the case studies, the IBE made the obvious assumption that ethical or moral education always leads to international understanding. Well, in Polish culture and tradition it is not so obvious. When the average person in Poland thinks about ethical or moral education the relationship to God comes to mind first, then the relationship to one's own conscience, to abstract moral standards, and finally one's relationship to one's neighbours. It is not altogether certain, however, that a person would include an evaluation of one's attitude toward

other groups of people.

Such an understanding of morality may be the consequence of the simplified perception of moral issues in the popular version of catholicism, where the moral/immoral judgement is reserved mainly for sex-related issues and everything else is "morally neutral".

The popular approach, then, separates ethical issues from the question of attitude towards other communities. There is, however, a group of individuals who do not agree with this and they are trying to design innovative ethical/moral education. In so doing, they must come to grips with the traditional approach.

### Background history

Between the First and Second World Wars Poland had a very high percentage of national minorities accounting for nearly 33 per cent of the total population. At that time, the authorities did not develop good relations with these minorities. The education system was not equipped to handle their cultures and could not satisfy their needs or aspirations, nor prepare the Polish population for co-existence.

After the Second World War the demographics of Poland changed dramatically. The Holocaust destroyed the Jewish community which had shared the land with the Poles for some 600 years. In the wake of complex post-war developments, Poland came under Soviet influence, with its population decimated, its eastern, western and northern borders changed and its minority population was reduced to 4 per cent. Communist propaganda portrayed this as positive and advantageous, and some parts of society agreed. The relationships between Poles and minorities were laden with a (historically rooted sense of) mutual resentment and injustice. This was particularly true about Polish-German, Polish-Ukrainian, Polish-Lithuanian, and in part also about Polish-Jewish relationships.

For many people the past is still somehow alive, and so the issue of minorities continues to evoke sentiments which are out of proportion to their

actual significance. Some people express their minority-related emotions with such intensity one would think it was a key subject of importance for national survival. The minorities themselves also tend to be more past- than present-orientated. Naturally, this mutual tendency to dwell in the past rather than in the present fuels irrational behaviours and perpetuates national stereotypes. For instance, anti-Jewish statements occur relatively frequently in the Polish sub-culture. People say that certain social groups are dominated or directed by Jews. Considering that Poland's Jewish community has only about 12,000 members, the motives behind such statements are difficult to substantiate. They are easier to understand, however, if seen as a historically-shaped reaction to the behaviour of the once several-million strong community whose mentality Poles never really understood.

#### A Catholic majority

The environment in Poland in which educational activity, including moral education, takes place has another interesting characteristic, which can be described as a tendency to equate catholicism with Polishness. The phrase "a Pole is catholic", has been around for over 100 years. It used to mean that you could not be a good Pole without being a good catholic. The phrase's roots are ideological rather than empirical, for, naturally, both the past and the present have seen distinguished Poles who were either non-catholics or non-believers. Obviously, the phrase is not used by the enlightened representatives of Polish society but by the less educated public to indicate a bearer of all virtues, in contrast with those who are neither Polish nor catholic. In any case, the fact that this phrase exists does not help moral education and makes shaping proper attitudes toward others more difficult. Supporters of this phrase believe that since society is mostly composed of Poles and catholics, catholic morals and ethical standards can be adopted as legally binding. They argue that any other approach represents a dictatorship of a minority over the majority and demonstrates a lack of tolerance for the latter. Although it is hard to judge how widespread this kind of thinking is, it goes without saying that it does not

create a favourable climate for moral education, whose one objective is to form an attitude of tolerance toward others.

### Intolerance

Tolerance of those who have different views and behaviours does not seem to be a typical characteristic of the average Pole. A recent example of this intolerance is witnessed by acts of hostility and aggression toward Gypsies. Some believe, however, that this intolerance is nurtured by reasons that are not related to the nationality issue. Intolerance towards people of different sexual orientation and for AIDS victims are other examples. The intolerant rationalize their attitude by saying that they condemn not so much the sick as the "sin" which lies at the root of the sickness. Also, it should be noted that there is not the same animosity toward the sizeable, half-a-million strong group of Romanians and citizens of the former USSR who find themselves in Poland temporarily and who often take up illegal employment. A possible explanation for their acceptance by Polish society lies in the mutual benefits from their work and trade.

Professor Tadeusz Zeilinski, a Polish ombudsman, submitted to Parliament a report in 1993. News of Zielinski's opinion was published in a quality Warsaw newspaper which quoted him as saying, "intolerance of different views of the world is widespread" in Poland and "if a state is to be truly democratic, it must be ideologically neutral" (Zycie Warszawy, 16/II/1994, p. 6).

### Capitalism

Idolatry for the new and rather ruthless form of capitalism, (disregarding the fact that its nineteenth-century, anti-social features are not a model worthy of emulation) hinders moral education in Poland. Some think that caring about the costs of system transformations is a communist legacy impeding the construction of a sound and efficient economy. This approach is definitely not conducive to developing humanistic attitudes toward others.

### III. THE MOST IMPORTANT PRESENT AND FUTURE TASKS

Values proposed by Poland's intellectual élite  
for implementation in educational practice.

Interest in organizing education for democracy in Polish schools is growing. For half a century it was impossible to acquire any real knowledge about democracy because the tradition of pre-war democratic institutions had not been very strong. The quick and widespread acquisition of practical knowledge concerning how democracy works is *conditio sine qua non* for Poland's social and political life. Education for democracy will reach the learner through different channels, the most important being:

- civic education and social studies taught by skilled and well-prepared teachers according to well-designed curricula;
- real-life situations observed by students and their parents, discussed and commented upon in the family circle;
- school organization - observation of the degree to which teachers and parents have the possibility to influence decision-making processes in a democratic way;
- the way the students are organized - if they have opportunities for self-government, what are the possibilities and responsibilities of this body?

No doubt, it is not enough to praise democracy in the classroom. Only when and if a majority of students experience and express the following values can we say we have been successful in building education for democracy:

- willingness to be active and take full control over one's life;
- willingness to accept responsibility for one's decisions and behaviour;
- knowledge on how to reach goals in a democratic way and how to reach an acceptable compromise via negotiation.

Though a lot of effort has gone into trying to introduce democracy into the Polish education system, there is still more hard work ahead because the initial efforts began without a base. It remains to be seen to what degree the architects of school reform will be able to include democratic values into the

curricula of school subjects and to what degree the organization of life in an average school in Poland will reflect them.

### A new focus for Poland's schools - mutual understanding

Education for international understanding, strictly connected with civic education, should be important to Poland, especially after the dissolution of the Soviet empire. To understand these changes education should focus on the following three aspects:

1. the attitude toward newly emerged states formerly within the Soviet area of influence;
2. the attitude toward Western Europe;
3. the attitude toward the world outside the European perspective.

An important issue is Poland's developing attitudes toward new free states. Poland had only three neighbours up to 1989: the USSR, Czechoslovakia and East Germany. Today, Poland borders Russia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Germany. National issues are very sensitive now and, while Poland does not expect an eruption of hostilities, it is treating the situation in the former Yugoslavia as an important warning and is trying to co-operate effectively with other post-communist countries. Those concerned with educational reform are looking to create and implement a type of education that would disarm would-be hostilities.

Education that encourages mutual understanding between Poles and ethnic minorities is important. Minorities may be either the breeding ground for hostilities or see themselves as a bridge between two nations. The educational opportunities created for minorities in the last few years should be evaluated, since changes for the better are always possible.

### Stereotypes are the key obstacle to mutual understanding

Poland's borders have changed throughout history. At one time, Lithuania,

Belorus and part of the Ukraine formed part of the Polish state. The tensions and biases of these areas are still strong today and have created a different vision of Polish history. For example, the long German rule over the province of Silesia moulded different views of Polish popular tradition and has led to a different evaluation of what are considered important historical events used in textbooks. Another good example of these differences can be found by comparing Polish and Lithuanian textbooks.

A growing conviction is that, if we are to understand one another, these textbook biases must be changed. It would seem necessary to avoid using anything in textbooks that a neighbouring country may view as an untruth, an insult or a bias. Perhaps in the future it will be possible to have one common text for the history of Central and Eastern Europe, approved by every educational authority from the region.

The second obstacle to mutual understanding is connected with the attitude toward Western Europe. The general vision of Western Europe as a role model creates differences among politicians which are to some degree reflected in schools. Some people blindly idolize Western Europe without criticism while others express quite the opposite view, stressing the importance of national values and the diminishing positive role of Western Europe.

In forthcoming years, the educational debate will probably turn to an evaluation of the values traditionally associated with western civilization and decisions concerning what to follow and what to reject. The problem is connected to the present day search for identity among Poles. Today, some people have a national inferiority complex while others treat Poland as a spiritual model for other nations. Both of these tendencies help retain old myths and stereotypes. However, when a nation has to evaluate its strong and weak points an opportunity arises to reach a healthy unbiased judgement. The attempt to adopt as many European standards and values as possible while maintaining the valuable features of patriotic education is a challenge for those shaping the new model of education in Poland.

Since mutual understanding relies heavily on the ability to communicate with other nations, Poland has placed heavy emphasis on the teaching of

foreign languages since 1990.

Mutual understanding could also be fostered in Poland by expanding education to include areas outside Europe. The teaching of history and social sciences is heavily biased with polonocentrism and eurocentrism. Educationists are aware that a more global approach is necessary. It is important for Poles who live in the twenty-first century to have an insight into different cultures, religions and mentalities characterizing nations geographically removed from Poland. Education should give more attention to South-North relations so that students become aware that important issues of humanity can be tackled in a global way.

This "global" approach does not signify concentration of attention merely on social issues but would also include issues like ecology. While Polish environmental education has not brought significant results, it is probably still too early to be measuring the outcomes. Environmental concern is a value that should become strongly anchored in Polish education in the near future.

#### IV. THE ORGANIZATION OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES

The curricula currently used in Poland represents elements from the old system combined with recently introduced components. From the end of the Second World War until 1989 the situation was as follows:

- curricula and syllabi were developed by an institution reporting directly to the Ministry of Education;
- curriculum guidelines were written by the Ministry of Education with assistance from teachers in various types of schools;
- as a rule there was one national syllabus for every subject and every grade; any exceptions could only be substantiated by the need to experiment;
- teachers had few opportunities to be innovative with regard to the content of the teaching, but much more freedom in the choice of methods;
- curricula had to be approved by the Ministry; an approved curriculum became a binding document and the teacher was required to implement it;
- textbooks and other teaching materials were published by a state-owned, Ministry-dependent publishing house; all books used at schools had to be approved by the Ministry.

Centralization and dependence on the state are the two most striking features of this system. Its other characteristics include a small curriculum development group and a lack of organizations interested in establishing a market for teaching materials. Given the centralization of the education system at that time and its subjugation to propaganda, the idea of starting such a market would have been perceived as heresy.

The turning point for the transformation of the system began in 1989. Its goals were as follows:

- to reach a point where the Ministry defines a core curriculum for each subject and teachers use this guide as a basis for their own curriculum development; in addition, curricula could be constructed, promoted and distributed by groups of individuals, organizations or businesses for commercial and non-commercial reasons as long as the core curriculum is incorporated.

- everybody will have the right to publish curricula and syllabuses, textbooks and other teaching materials.
- only some publications will require the Ministry's approval; and the conditions for granting approval will be clear, understandable and not too demanding.

At present, one can say that the necessary changes in education have started. Core curricula for certain subjects have been developed, even though their use is not yet obligatory since they have not been introduced by ministerial decree.

The current Ministry of Education leadership has voiced reservations about decisions and activities delineated by the Education Minister two years ago. Although the current Ministry agrees with the need to reform vocational training and the character of Polish secondary schools, it feels a different approach should be used. The forthcoming months will show what organizational concept has been chosen.

Since there is no formally approved core curricula, teachers now have the opportunity to be innovative. Licenses for original curricula are easy to obtain.

Obtaining approval for the use of textbooks and other teaching materials has also been made easier.

A number of new publishing houses are producing teaching materials, including textbooks and syllabuses. While these teaching materials vary in quality, the phenomenon itself proves that spontaneous, market-regulated publishing is far ahead of the centrally steered transformation processes.

### The hidden curriculum

In Poland, moral or ethical education is transmitted through many channels. The first is the school's atmosphere, an ambiance resulting partly from the teacher's intentional activity and partly from the way the students perceive their school.

The second channel is through textbooks and syllabuses which can convey moral standards.

The third channel is religious instruction.

The fourth channel for moral education can be found in ethics or

philosophy courses at schools where they are offered.

The fifth channel depends on the availability of teachers outside the classroom during special hours in which they can discuss educational or training problems with students.

The sixth channel reflects the moral standards passed on to students during their civic education courses.

These channels should be studied and compared to other influential morality-shaping factors. In Poland these include parents, the Catholic Church and the mass media.

## V. THE STATUS OF MORAL EDUCATION IN POLAND

### The atmosphere at school; moral standards conveyed in textbooks

Not much more can be said about the atmosphere in schools and textbooks in conveying moral education. However, it should be noted that more is known about the first than the second channel. The formative atmosphere in schools has been studied quite extensively. A few studies have concentrated on Polish language textbooks used in primary schools. The intention of the researchers was to discover if the choice of personalities used in the texts influenced moral guidance.

### Religious instruction

Two hours of religious instruction were introduced to all Polish schools in the autumn of 1990. The Minister of Education defined its purpose in a regulation dated 14 April 1993. The following are excerpts from this regulation:

- 1.1 Primary and post-primary public schools ... shall offer their pupils religious and ethical instruction as part of the curriculum. In primary school religious instruction shall be offered to those pupils whose parents (legal custodians) express such a wish, and in post-primary schools it shall be offered to those pupils who themselves express such a wish or whose parents do so. Pupils reaching the age of maturity (18+ in Poland - AJ) decide for themselves....
- 1.3 Participation or non-participation in religious instruction at school may not be a cause for discrimination by anyone in any form.
- 2.1 The school is obliged to organize religious instruction for groups of not fewer than seven pupils of the same form...
- 3.1 For pupils who express such a wish or whose parents do so the school shall organize ethical instruction, based on approved syllabi...
- 3.3 Religious or ethical instruction shall not be offered to pupils who have stated or whose parents have stated that they receive religious instruction outside the educational system or that they consciously renounce it...

- 3.4** Religious instruction shall be based on the curricula approved by appropriate authorities of the Catholic Church, Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church and by the supreme authorities of other churches or denominational groups and shall be submitted to the Ministry of Education for its information. The same principles shall apply to religious instruction textbooks...
- 9.1** The religion (ethics) mark shall be written on the school certificate ... In order to eliminate any acts of intolerance, there may not be any indication of the kind of religion (or ethics).
- 9.2** The religion (ethics) mark shall have no impact on the pupil's promotion to the next grade.

The subject of religious instruction in schools and the previous excerpts prompted the following comments:

1. In the autumn of 1989, a non-communist, Polish government came to power for the first time in forty-five years. Censorship was abolished and newspapers became a forum for discussion on the role and place of religious instruction. For years religious instruction had not been available in schools; it was taught on church premises which were supported and built through the generosity of congregations. Although the idea of introducing religious instruction to schools had widespread support, many people felt that church premises provided a better learning environment. Despite this argument and press discussions, the decision to introduce religion into schools was agreed upon between the Prime Minister and the Catholic Church authorities and only later extended to other churches. Despite the current status of religious instruction in schools, many people still object to how the decision was made.
2. One striking feature of the ministerial regulation is that ethics is treated as a substitute for religion. When the regulation became public, concerns were raised that ethics would be treated as a "para-religion". Some thought the church would intervene in the teaching of ethics and turn it into a milder form of religion. This did not happen. Nevertheless, university ethics scholars are much opposed to the idea of treating ethics as a substitute for religion.

3. The state authorities (the Ministry) gave up the right to take a stance on religious instruction textbooks or syllabuses; they will only receive copies of them "for information".

4. Placing religion or ethics marks on school certificates was the consequence of both concerns and anxieties which had to be taken into consideration. During debates, many people expressed the view that religious instruction marks should not be placed on school certificates. They argued that the absence of a mark in religious instruction on the certificate would cause the student to be perceived as an atheist, which might breed resentment and lead to acts of discrimination. These concerns are justified as the mark is an infringement on one of the few positive remnants of the communist state: no person was required to declare religion or lack of religion on any official documents.

Let us now take a look at the scope of religious education and its significance in shaping the ethical attitudes of future generations.

According to studies conducted by the Central Opinion Polling Bureau (CBOS), a majority of pupils attended catholic religious instruction studies in 1993. However, attendance patterns varied considerably. In village primary schools the average attendance rate was almost 100 per cent compared to small towns which had a 70-80 per cent turn out and large cities with a population of over half-a-million whose attendance rate stabilized at 44 per cent (Kicinski, 1993). Little is known about the attendance of religious instruction by pupils of other denominations.

Most Poles believe religious instruction is formatively important and can avert disregard for or violation of ethical standards. Oddly enough, this same view is held by many of those indifferent to religion. Sociologist Krzysztof Kicinski, who researched this area commented:

Religion has played a very important role in the ethical culture of societies and the moral motivation of man. In the Judeo-Christian tradition ..., to which we belong, ethical and religious ideas developed in close association. People obeyed moral principles and standards, with the Ten Commandments in the forefront, mainly because it was required by religion ... Negation of God was seen as negation of morality ... However if a sociologist looks at the entire human

history, including both the distant past as well as modern times, he must admit that such a relationship is not universal ... (Kicinski, 1993).

At present, it is impossible to check whether the hours spent in religious instruction help or hinder the acceptance of moral standards. Educational authorities have no relevant data and no one is researching the impact. For now, the existence of impact must remain a matter of faith.

Analyzing the syllabuses used in religious instruction does not provide information on impact either. Syllabi submitted to the Ministry for catholic religion date from 1971. They seem to contain few elements on ethics, but this impression may result from the special wording used which makes it difficult for an outsider to fully comprehend the possible depth. Relationships between people are represented by love of one's neighbour, parents, family and country, social obligations, work, justice and heroism. The "Outline of Religious Instruction Curriculum" specifies the following objectives for seventh and eighth grade pupils (ages 14-15):

- (a) The aim of religious instruction in this period is to acquaint pupils with the principles of Christian ethics, shape their moral consciousness through familiarization with the principles and motives of morality....
- (b) We shall point out the connection between sacramental and moral life....
- (c) We shall teach pupils to look for moral life guidance and solutions to their problems in the Scriptures, and particularly in the Gospel (Outline of Religious Instruction Curriculum, 1971, p.14).

Out of the sixteen points which refer to moral issues, the following two concern the attitude to other people:

- 10. The right attitude to others finds expression in different forms of social life (family, group of friends, nation, state, international contacts).
- 11. Love of one's neighbours is expressed in respect, concern about their name and respect for their property (Outline of Religious Instruction Curriculum, 1971, p. 24).

The curriculum does not mention the problem of attitudes toward those who are different on the grounds of religion or nationality. The religious instruction curriculum for secondary schools states that:

with respect to reality ... pupils need to be familiarized with the most urgent problems of contemporary human life, such as poverty, suffering, injustice, hypocrisy and evil, in order for the young to understand their obligation to build a better world on the principles of justice and love and to encourage them to look for solutions in and with the Church (p. 2).

For grade four (the last secondary school grade) the curriculum provides six topics, one entitled "The World and Its Problems". This section includes the following statement:

Based on the Gospel and the latest teaching of the Church let us try to take a stance on such topics as peace, freedom, international understanding, racial, religious, ideological and national discrimination, famine, technological progress; culture, road traffic, spare time... (p. 34).

Things look a little different in the religious instruction curricula prepared by the authorities of other denominations.

The biggest non-catholic Christian church in Poland is the Orthodox Church, whose members account for approximately 1 per cent of Poland's total population. Orthodox church membership is often tantamount to being a national minority representative since the membership of this church includes the majority of Poland's Byelorussians and a significant part of its Ukrainians.

Other, far less numerous denominations do not take advantage of the opportunity to give religious instruction in schools but prefer to use their own church facilities. For instance, the United Methodist Church runs religious instruction on its premises. The curriculum includes a 30-hour "Christian Life - Basic Ethics" section and introduces the notion of ecumenicalism.

The secondary school curriculum for religious instruction of the Seventh Day Adventists Church, a non-catholic denomination, pays special attention to ethical issues and attitudes toward one's neighbours. It provides "A Philosophy of Christian Education" for grade one and "Studies of the Ten Commandments" for grade four. The curriculum tackles a number of moral dilemmas, including "The Principles and Codes of conduct in Business" in grade one and "Principles of Christian Economics" in grade four. The curriculum stresses the need for ecumenicalism in the following statement:

**Above all we must remember the fundamental principles of Christian culture, love of God and one's neighbours, tolerance, freedom of religion and belief ... as**

well as the need to serve as a worthy example and to work for the well-being of the nation (Curriculum, p.5).

In turn, the Pentecostal Church emphasizes ethical education across all age groups. Children aged 13-15 are supposed to discuss the Christian attitude toward the state, nation, authorities, law and taxes. "Civic Duties" and "Principles of Social Coexistence" are also included. Secondary school pupils focus on religious tolerance for non-Christian religions.

This exhausts the list of religious instruction curricula possessed by the Ministry of Education. The fact that the Ministry does not have curricula for other churches proves its lack of interest in this area which, given its inability to influence them, is justified.

Recently conducted sociological research shows that non-catholics feel anxious about catholic intolerance. They think that the introduction of religious instruction into schools has only made the gap between the number of catholics and non-catholics more manifest and therefore has produced a less favorable climate for religious minorities.

### Ethical and philosophical education

As mentioned before, Poland's scholars on ethics and morality are unhappy about the way ethics is treated as a substitute for religious instruction. So in the course for 1992 they developed three different curricula which were submitted to and approved by the Ministry.

#### 1. "Primary school ethics curriculum" by Dr. Jędrzej Stanisławek

The author assumed that ethics taught in primary schools should fulfil educational, counselling, moral, intellectual, recreational and therapeutic functions:

The educational function of introducing young people into adult life and the counselling function of helping with personal problems and minimizing sorrows are in the forefront. Their complement is the moral function. The course of ethics should ennoble and help the young conquer utilitarian and materialistic inclinations ...

Irrespective of its educational function, the course of ethics has an intellectual objective, namely to familiarize pupils with philosophy, a subject very different from other school subjects.

Finally, lessons in ethics serve both recreational and therapeutic purposes, for they give pupils an opportunity to talk about their own problems, forget about the everyday routine and cheer themselves up.

Taught in grades four to eight, the course of ethics has been divided into thirty-six broad topics:

#### **MAN**

- What is a human being? Soul versus body. Old and new concepts of soul.
- Man's two major problems: survival and the choice of an aim in life and lifestyle.
- The loneliness of human experience; man's mental framework.
- Hardship and suffering. Is pleasure very important?

#### **MAN AND THE WORLD**

- Man and nature. Does the world love human beings?
- The question of God. God as mystery and hope. Religion.
- A fellow human being: opportunities and threats.

#### **THREE WEIGHTY DILEMMAS**

- Dilemma 1: Is it worth trying to achieve something in life?
- Dilemma 2: Should we adapt ourselves to our environment and act the way others do? My way.
- Dilemma 3: Should we only do things which will bring us some personal benefit or advantage?

#### **THE QUESTION OF ETHICAL CHOICE**

- The difficulty of choosing an aim for life. Has man received any aims from nature/God?
- The troublesome consequences of chance happenings. The lack of certainty as to the method of behaviour.
- Whom to believe? Who is in authority?

#### **MAN AND OTHERS**

- Justice and fairness. Why do some do better than others?
- Brotherhood. Love of one's neighbour. Sacrifice. Why should we help other people?
- Honesty. Is it worthwhile to be honest?
- Gratitude. What do we owe and to whom? Whom should we be grateful to?
- Tolerance and its limits. Respect for another person.

**THE MAN WITHIN**

- Duties of man. Duties toward others and duties toward oneself. Is an ethical code possible?
- Egoism versus self-care. Why are we egoistic?
- Culture. Curbing passion and good upbringing. How does man differ from animals?
- Dignity and freedom.
- Patriotism. The patriotism of a late twentieth century Pole.
- Persistence. Why is it so difficult?

**MAN'S EVERYDAY PROBLEMS**

- What helps us deal with problems: reason, experience, faith, intuition or sheer luck?
- Happiness. The pursuit of harmony in life.
- The advice of the wise - ethicists and philosophers (Socrates, Aristotle, Stoics, other great thinkers).
- How to act both wisely, efficiently and honestly?

**THE ADULT**

- The problems of adults.
- The world of adults and the world of children/teenagers.
- How do adults cope with the problem of survival and ethical choices?
- How shall I run my life? Should I already start thinking about it?"

2. "A core ethics curriculum for secondary schools" by Dr. Jacek Holowka and Dr. Magdalena Sroda.

The authors have distinguished the following aims in secondary school ethics courses.

1. To familiarize students with the main trends of philosophical reflection over morality.
2. To prepare students for discerning and solving moral dilemmas on their own.
3. To review modern ethical issues.
4. To present the main meta-ethical issues.

The review of modern ethical issues (aim no. 3) includes the following topics:

- Individual autonomy and the respect for other people:

Personal dignity, human dignity, human rights, independence, privacy, surveillance, subjugation, respect for the property of others, courage,

domination and sadism, weak will, emotional dependence, group pressure.

- Sexual ethics:

Love, desire, sex, puberty, faithfulness, betrayal, emotional deviations, homosexuality, contraception, abortion, pornography, prostitution, the sense of guilt.

- The moral aspect of politics:

Freedom, civil rights, respect for the will of the majority, civil disobedience, discrimination, pacifism, authority, totalitarianism.

- Standards of social coexistence:

Religious tolerance, tolerance of deviations, kindness, friendship, conformity, solidarity, egoism, altruism, discrimination, suicide, censorship, credibility of public institutions, professional ethics.

- Retributive justice:

Capital punishment, the educational role of prisons, responsibility of juvenile delinquents and their parents, relapsed criminals. terrorism.

- Distributive justice:

The equal opportunity principle, justice and equality, redistribution of the national product, charity, duties toward future generations and distant societies.

- Medical ethics:

Attitudes toward AIDS, medical experiments, euthanasia, non-accountability, a doctor's obligations toward a patient, respect for the dead.

3. Secondary comprehensive school ethics curriculum by Professor Andrzej Potocki et al.

The curriculum focuses on the following topics:

Grade 1:

- ethics as a science and practical activity;
- main directions in ethics;
- links between ethics and law;

- general versus specific standards;
- human behaviour and its moral evaluation;
- consciousness and freedom as elements of human behaviour;
- the role of conscience in decision making;
- the beginning of individual life;
- survival and development;
- the end of individual life.

### **Grade 2:**

- anthropological concepts and moral standards;
- man as a carnal, spiritual or carnal and spiritual being;
- man as a cognitive and desiring being;
- man as a free and responsible being;
- marriage and family;
- extramarital sex;
- homosexuality;
- man and religion.

### **Grade 3:**

- man and goodness;
- man as a creator of culture;
- the role of language in the creation of culture and interpersonal relations;
- man and work;
- man and diseases and disabilities;
- man and death.

### **Grade 4:**

- conscience as a criterion for the evaluation of human behaviour;
- conscience versus the positive and natural law;
- theory of value and human behaviour;
- man and society;
- justice as a basic principle of social life;
- work, pay and poverty;
- ethics versus politics;
- national and international ethics.

The curriculum also contains sets of topics designed specifically for use in secondary medical and business schools.

As for philosophy courses, they are currently not available in Polish schools. In 1992, preparations for the return of philosophy to schools were under way and a core curriculum was developed. However, no decisions have been made by the Ministry concerning the proposed curriculum or the incorporation of philosophy into the school system. Here is the proposed core curriculum:

**Aims of philosophy teaching in secondary schools:**

- To train students in critical thinking, to develop their skills in both presenting and defending their viewpoint in dialogue.
- To make students aware of the special nature of philosophical questions, their origins, development and cultural role.
- To develop a student's self-awareness through familiarization with issues of existential and moral importance.

**Topics:**

- Elements of general logic and rhetoric; it is proposed that the following areas be included: language and thought, the skill of asking questions, defining, classifying and arguing, discussions.
- Different approaches to philosophy - the main philosophical concepts as exemplified by the classical, positivist or linguistic approaches.
- Philosophy and other areas of culture; it is proposed that the following areas be included: philosophy and science, philosophy and religion, philosophy and art, philosophy and the general picture of the world, philosophy and ideology.
- Elements of the theory of reality; it is proposed that the following areas be included: disputes between realism and idealism, monism and pluralism; the nature and structure of the universe.
- Elements of philosophical anthropology.
- Elements of axiology and ethics; it is proposed that the following areas be included in these two points: the main concepts of man; man's natural and cultural environment; man and society; man and values; the main directions and schools of ethics; customs, morality and law.

For the aims of the philosophy course to be achieved, it is required that:

- Mention be made of at least the following philosophers and their contribution to philosophy and culture: Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Descartes, Hume, Kant and Hegel.
- Students be informed about contemporary philosophical directions and schools, including analytical philosophy, neo-positivism, phenomenology, existentialism, hermeneutics, philosophy of dialogue and neo-Thomism.
- Students be made aware of the Polish philosophical tradition.
- Students read philosophical texts.

No philosophy or ethics textbooks have been published yet, but some are in the process of being written and should be published during 1994.

Although it is impossible to determine accurately how many students are enrolled in ethics courses, their number is known to be very small. Even in very good secondary schools in large cities, not more than 15 percent of the student body studies ethics.

On top of that, ethics is not offered as part of an established curriculum. In Warsaw, ethics courses are available in only 15 per cent of all comprehensive secondary schools. The availability is even less in smaller towns. As for primary schools, ethics is only taught in a few of them. Pressure from tradition, the surrounding environment and parents coerces students into participating in religious instruction. None of these factors plays a role in a student's decision to study ethics. Since the ethics mark has no significance on the student achievement evaluation, it would appear that only interest in the subject or a teacher's personality could prompt enrolment in this course.

### Using the form/class teacher hours

Form teachers are a specific characteristic of the Polish education system. A form teacher is a teacher designated to take special care of a given class or form. This teacher deals with all the educational problems the students of that form may encounter. Form teachers always teach their subject to their form, and ideally the form has many hours of this subject per week. There is a tendency for form teachers to remain with their class for a few years, so that they can accompany the pupils through their development.

Most schools set aside one hour per week for the form teacher, who uses this hour to discuss educational problems. As a rule, the teachers themselves decide how to use their class hours and what topics to address. They may focus on current issues and events or follow a pre-planned agenda. The pupils and teachers often plan topics for form discussion together.

Since teachers cherish their autonomy with regard to form hours, finding out what really happens during these hours is not easy. Some of them are probably turned into lessons in the teacher's subject, many are used to discuss current issues and can include infringements on school discipline. Some teachers want and are able to use form hours wisely for the pupils' benefit. Those who want to, but do not know otherwise, can follow the teaching materials prepared by the Ministry. Their use is not obligatory but they can be a welcome reference guide.

In 1992-93 the Ministry organized a competition for support materials to be used during form hours. Almost 200 proposals were sent in, out of which four were found particularly interesting. These four were published by the Ministry in a special "Form Teacher Library" series in 1993.

In the course of analyzing these publications one notices that their authors tend to narrow the scope of educational problems to students' personal problems, their difficulties in accepting changes that occur during puberty and attitudes toward the opposite sex. The authors' views and opinions are identical to those held by the Catholic Church. A slightly wider topic range is proposed by the author of the third publication, who identifies the following areas:

- education for democratic citizenship;
- love of one's country;
- education for peace;
- family upbringing;
- growing up to love;
- work ethos;
- vocational counselling;
- being at one with nature;
- health and addiction;
- spare time;
- the purpose of life (M. Mstowska-Psciuk, 1993).

Only the author of the fourth publication has devoted a section to tolerance. On a few pages she provides an interesting account of stereotypes and prejudices toward others. Students are presented with the scapegoat theory of prejudice and taught to recognize their own and other people's aggressiveness (H. Hamer, 1993).

### Civic education

Curricula and textbooks used for civic education and social studies under communist rule were abolished in 1990. In the same year the Ministry began preparing curricula and textbooks for the new era of democracy. The task was undertaken by a variety of individuals and teams; some projects were prepared with foreign advisers. As a result, a number of curricula and handbooks were prepared and since 1991 have been used on an experimental basis.

The two most widely used civics curricula are W. Nalepinski's primary and K. Kicinski's secondary school curricula. Both were published in 1990, shortly after the political changes of 1989. Both were written quickly and at first had no accompanying textbooks. Both analyze civil society, the organization of the democratic state, Poland's position in the world and selected economic issues. Neither pays much attention to minority issues because when they were written there was not much awareness of minority problems and the authors were overwhelmed by the number of new topics they had to cover. The civics text published one year later (J. Mikolajewicz, 1993), which has since had two editions, has a good "Nation and State" section, presenting minority problems in discussion together with notions of patriotism, nationalism and chauvinism.

In 1993, a civics core curricula was developed. Like other core curricula it has not yet been approved. Its aims are:

... to show pupils a model of a lawful state based on democratic mechanisms and existing for the common good. Students should acquire knowledge of human and civic rights and duties that will be suited to their age. They should also be given an opportunity to understand basic legal procedures and to learn what key legally-permitted instruments can be used to further one's social position. The observation of the existing and the emerging social differences and conflicts should develop a student's social sensitivity and imagination.

Unfortunately, even though the civics core curriculum mentions tolerance as an important civil virtue, it does not cover any minority issues.

### Other forms

An important form of education for mutual understanding is the UNESCO-sponsored Associated Schools Project (ASP). It has a proven track record in a number of countries and a long history in Poland. However, the activities of the Associated Schools in the last few years seemed unsatisfactory to the Polish Commission for UNESCO, and in 1993, together with the Ministry of Education, the Commission decided to review them. The Commission distributed questionnaires which helped gather detailed information about their previous

activity and future plans. Eighty-eight schools were found to conform to ASP rules and more may have qualified if better efforts had been made. The directors of all Polish Associated Schools will meet in March 1994, to discuss aims, forms and methods of activity. Other subjects will include assistance from the Ministry of Education and experience sharing. The Education Section of the Polish National Commission for UNESCO launched a wide-ranging promotion of ASP's aims and objectives in 1994 in a number of schools across Poland.

Another programme designed to promote mutual understanding is UNESCO's linguistic summer camps for children. Playing a significant role in the implementation of the ASP idea, they contributed to the 1974 UNESCO Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding. The main goal of the camps is to provide Polish secondary school students with the possibility of improving their foreign language skills in a non-traditional learning setting. Summer linguistic camp programmes are designed to eliminate the language, social and cultural barriers among peoples. Topics like "Other Countries and Their Cultures" have aroused special interest among participants.

UNESCO has been organizing summer camps in Poland since 1958. In 1993, twenty-six camp meetings took place all over Poland in the following languages: English, German, French, Italian, Russian and Spanish. National Commissions for UNESCO and NGOs from twelve countries helped organize and finance the camps which were attended by 2,600 Polish students, 250 foreign teachers, 250 foreign students and Polish staff. We hope that in the future the number of UNESCO camps in Poland will continue to grow.

## **VI. EXPLORATIONS, EXPERIMENTS, INITIATIVES**

It should not take anyone by surprise to learn that Poland does not yet have an established teacher training system in ethics, philosophy or civics. It is only in the past few years that the laws have been changed allowing institutions of higher education to take on this initiative. Various non-governmental organizations have shown considerable ingenuity in helping to reform teacher

training by infusing the programmes with new ideas and initiatives. At the moment, ethics and civics programmes have been attracting so much attention from intellectuals, teachers and others that it appears as if a spontaneous social movement has been formed. However, this is not surprising. Curriculum development and teacher training are usually grass-roots initiatives, which educational authorities with the "political will" may exploit. Between 1989 and 1992, when the Ministry had the "political will" to introduce innovations, the grass-roots initiatives did not yet exist.

## VII. REVIEW OF CURRENT ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS

A. "Education for Citizenship in a Democratic Society" a Polish-American project. This project began in October 1991 and consists of two project teams who collaborate to form new curriculum guidelines and aides. The Polish team is led by Dr. Jacek Strzemieczny, who was the Director of the Teacher Training Department at the Ministry of Education until January 1994. Strzemieczny now heads the Bureau of Education for Citizenship which is part of the Open Society Foundation. The American team is led by Professor Richard Remy from Mershon Center at Ohio State University.

The project has produced a new civics curriculum, translations of American materials and methodological guidelines which have already been approved by the Ministry and entered in the register of curricula licensed for school use. The information is also being included in a publication called Lesson Scenarios for Civic Education. This publication contains more than eighty ready-to-use lesson scenarios grouped under the headings of: local government; fundamental principles of democracy; human rights; institutions of a democratic state; citizen activity and public opinion; market economy and challenges for Poland and the world. This group also developed the Training Programme for Educators on the new civics course and teaching about local elections. This course will be introduced in 1996.

All in all, Education for Citizenship in a Democratic Society is undoubtedly an important step in laying the educational foundations for international understanding. Already the project has produced several publications for teachers, written under the guidance of several prominent Polish and American experts whose high standards and understanding of school realities make the texts very useful materials.

**B. Education for Democracy Foundation.** This Foundation is chaired by Wiktor Kulerski, an active member of the independence movement and the 1990 deputy Minister of Education. The Foundation was established as a result of cooperation between the American Federation of Teachers and the Solidarity-sponsored Independent Education Group (an underground organization of the 1980s). The Foundation organizes training seminars for teacher trade unionists and seminars for both teachers and students, teaching them how to function in a democracy with emphasis on the methods of chairing meetings, making decisions, negotiating and settling conflicts, ect. The Foundation has published more than ten skills booklets on these subjects by both American and Polish authors.

**C. Teacher training centres.** In 1993, a three-year post-graduate teacher training centre opened in Warsaw. The programme, "Philosophy and Ethics", is run by the Institute of Applied Social Sciences of Warsaw University. Forty students participated in this center under the leadership of Professor Krzysztof Kicinski. It is worth noting that these are not the only Polish scholars keen on introducing philosophy and ethics into the Polish school system. Similar centres have opened at universities in Cracow, Lublin, Wroclaw and Olsztyn.

**D. In September 1993, a one-year training centre for ethics teachers** opened in Warsaw. This centre is run by the Ludwik Krzywicki Educational Society (a non-governmental organization) and receives some support from Warsaw's local educational authorities. It is likely to be a model followed by other cities.

E. Five years ago the Open Society monthly publication came out for the first time. Initially, this was a Ministry of Education publication. Now, it is published by the Open Society Foundation which has contributed tremendously to promoting human rights documents and civic education materials among teachers. The foundation also publishes civic education materials from foreign countries and disseminates objective information on Poland's minorities. Many of the foundation's publications can be used in both civics and history lessons.

Contributors to Open Society include representatives from Warsaw's academic circles and others who are well-known for their democratic or liberal orientation. Its large circulation contributes to its availability among teachers.

F. A series of Lipman materials entitled Philosophy for Children is being translated and adapted to Polish conditions. Dr. Robert Pilat, from the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Polish Academy of Sciences, is leading this effort. Dr. Pilat is aware that, prior to using the publication, teachers must be adequately trained and prepared.

G. Social morality is also promoted in Poland by the Helsinki Committee, the Stefan Batory Foundation and the Amnesty International-sponsored Human Rights Education Project.

## VII. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Poland is a country in transition, in education as well as in political and social areas. During transition periods, it is far easier to describe what is undesirable and should be rejected than to clarify goals and formulate plans for the future. The vagueness of documents and official statements does not help. The transition period is by definition open ended and there are a lot of questions which have not yet been answered.

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