

REVIEW / PRACA POGLĄDOWA

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WISDOM OF THE ELDERLY

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Summary

In the studies on wisdom of the elderly, there are two kinds of wisdom: pragmatic and transcendent (spiritual), which is a general respond to the world and is associated with the level of personality development. Through its

specific context, old age creates conditions for achieving wisdom. The fact whether these opportunities will be used and lead to the development of human personality in old age depends on the individuals.

Streszczenie

W badaniach nad mądrością osób starszych wyróżnia się dwa rodzaje mądrości: pragmatyczną i transcendentną (duchową), która jest ogólnym ustosunkowaniem do świata i związana jest z poziomem rozwoju osobowości. Przez swój

specyficzny kontekst, starość stwarza warunki do osiągnięcia mądrości. Tylko od konkretnych jednostek zależy czy wykorzystają te możliwości i doprowadzą do rozwoju osobowości człowieka w okresie starości.

Key words: wisdom, elderly

Słowa kluczowe: mądrość, osoby starsze

In the literature on research on the wisdom of the elderly the division into pragmatic and spiritual (transcendent) wisdom can be found. It is based on the old philosophical knowledge dividing wisdom into practical or social and metaphysical, that is contemplative [1, 2].

The main features of pragmatic wisdom are sense and experience. According to Smith and Baltes, a wise man has exceptional knowledge of the course of life and life's problems, as well as the accuracy of judgements and advise in difficult life situations. A wise person possesses the richness and originality of life experience. Old age is associated with wisdom, but it does not guarantee it [3].

Spanish writer and educator, working in the sixteenth century, JL Vives claimed that wisdom is to consider what is good the good and what is true the real. Therefore, wisdom is understanding and following values, but along with history, a man and appreciated by him values change. For example, research on values of older people conducted in the years 1986 - 1987 proved to be dominant: among the values of life - health, life and the joy of life and the family; of the socio-political honesty and integrity as well as peace and harmony were valued the most; spiritual values of the people surveyed included the kindness, and good, friendship, love, affection, and the truth and truthfulness, among material values – money

and material security; religion and other religious values came eighth.

According to Zych, wisdom is expressed in the well-considered experimenting, the ability to predict the future, showing skills as well as the courage to look into the future and in innovative thinking. The element of practical wisdom is being responsible for oneself and another man and fate of the nation at the same time [4].

In turn, the transcendent wisdom is an aspect of personal development, which falls in with the period of late adulthood. According to Erikson, wisdom it is a virtue (strong side of ego), which arises from the clash between integrity and despair in the last stage of a human life. Old age is a period of development, which is characterized by a decrease in physical and mental activity in everyday activities. Wisdom allows the maintenance and transmission of integrity of the experience gained over the past years. The elderly are able to keep curiosity and liveliness of mind that allow replenishment of the collected years of experience, despite the reduced adaptability to changes in your life. People with the virtue of wisdom can serve as a model for younger generations sine their lifestyle combines sense for fullness and completeness. These features protect them from feeling despair, dependence and hopelessness [5].

Transcendent wisdom is achieved when feelings and thoughts are integrated with activities. It is an attribute of not only understanding, but also of the whole personality; it is the final stage in the process called spiritual development. The turning point in achieving this kind of wisdom is to change the attitude to the world, the people and oneself. This involves freedom from a personal and, at the same time, assessing point of perceiving the reality. Relations with the environment take on the objective, transpersonal character. This manifests itself in a philosophical attitude to life, the distance to its events, followed by inner peace. A person who has a transcendent wisdom has an affirming attitude to life, does not judge the world, people or oneself; and can be characterised by: serenity, understanding, humility, the ability to self-limitation; can also settle human dilemmas and accurately predict events; has a strong will and is able to endure the failure maintaining mental balance.

Old age in itself does not guarantee wisdom or spiritual development; however, it creates the conditions for their achievement. These conditions are: a wealth of experience (experience of transience, loss of goods, relative judgements, getting rid of illusions about the opportunities to fully manage their own lives); withdrawal from professional, social and family life, leading to peace of mind allowing a profound experience; simple lifestyle strengthening the ritual character of daily activities; a decrease of vital energy and weakness of drives helping to reflect and concentrate.

To conclude, transcendent wisdom differs from the pragmatic wisdom. Pragmatic wisdom directs attention to an entity outside, the practical aspects of life, while the transcendent wisdom is related to paying attention to the outside world and focusing it on the interior. Pragmatic wisdom provides a sense of security and confidence in one's abilities, yet transcendent wisdom provides lasting sense of meaning of life and inner peace. The first of these kinds of wisdom is also linked with active participation in social life, the other with passivity and withdrawal. Pragmatic wisdom expresses the personal attitude to the world and transcendent wisdom attitude free from personal involvement. Pragmatic wisdom is usually a natural consequence of life experience, while gaining the transcendent wisdom requires supportive conditions [1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10].

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