New Approaches of Ethical Criticism in Children's Literature Teaching

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ABSTRACT

It seems that no branch of philosophy is more interested in the scientific community than ethics, the philosophy of morality, because lately there has been an increasing interest in ethics, although it has always lasted and has not abated. However, with more pronounced questions of the culture of the 21st century, the question of human action in the context of perceiving the creation of "good" or "evil" is experiencing a heat, and very contradictory and contradictory scientific analyses and interpretations. The phenomenon of ethical reversal in many socio-humanistic fields, even in literary theory, recognized as ethical criticism – a critical orientation associated with the ethical characteristics of the text, has found its important role in the teaching of literature in elementary schools. In this context, literature for children seems to offer many interpretations in the field of ethical criticism, where elementary schools should be much more places where it should be also discussed about the role of literature in society, its (un) influence on current social changes, but also on the individual psychological development of the child. Literature for children and its teaching is very suitable for the study of ethical criticism due to a number of its characteristics and among the more remarkable are learning about interculturality and acceptance of Difference etc. However, it is important to note that ethical criticism in the 21st century also requires new ethical reinterpretations that often overlap with some established patterns of understanding ethics in children's literature. This paper examines ethical criticism in children's literature teaching and offers different guidelines for the study of ethics in children's literature.

Keywords Ethical criticism, teaching, children's literature, ideology

Introduction

We think that we are completely familiar with the concept of business ethics, ethics of social networks and privacy protection, cyber-ethics, political ethics, the concept of media ethics, ethics of religion, education etc. We constantly discuss the (non) ethics of the world around us, too often superficially understanding and or just experiencing this concept, and in art and literature that is related to development of contemporary contributes literary theories that to the development of ethical criticism, interdisciplinary link between philosophy and literary science.

The problem of acceptance of literature is generally a key problem in theory reception until today, but it is much older than this literary theory school and has been present since almost the beginnings of theoretical understanding of literature and that is, from ancient Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle. It is enough to recall the conviction of the critical thought of the enlightenment or the new criticism and idea that literature should not be valued by its ethical or

religious significance. However, T. S. Eliot, who emphasizes the opposite in his essay Religion and Literature, recalls how much literature, along with the factuality of its fiction, should be viewed and evaluated through the prism of ethical criteria (cf. Eliot, 1935, pp. 29-54). Especially since recent literature is just significantly lost in the gap of ethics, fiction and aesthetics, and neglects precisely ethical values what can have very negative repercussions. Not only literary theory, but also scientific disciplines such as psychology, pedagogy or methodology have drawn attention to the impact of literature and language teaching on participants in the educational process and its extreme importance in shaping the real world picture.

It is often said that literature is the best laboratory for studying human motives, emotions, and character. At the same time, while reading some piece of literature, through its heroes and characters, we understand our own selves better. While reading some piece of literature, we enter into certain relations with the heroes and characters described there. (Stojaković, 2000, p. 133)

In this sense, if a significant part of the approach to literature, from literary theory, through psychological-pedagogical-methodical,

philosophical-social approaches agree in something, it is the fact that there is a significant relation between the creator – the work and the characters in it – the reader, and that, therefore, it is inevitable to determine the influence that literature has on the pupil – the child as a reader in the process of teaching literature.

Literature class serves the literary education and development of literary culture. Therefore, the educational elements are determined at each lesson: new insights, new concepts, new terms, new definitions, new theories, points of view, attitudes, methods. (Rosandić, 2005, p. 82)

On the other hand, such a role of ethics in children's literature has been much abused in the past. Possible distinctly ideological hubs and contradictions in children's literature which require new ethical reinterpretations can be (cf. Pašić Kodrić & Pečenković, 2020, p. 5):

– Ethics, aesthetics and ideology in children's literature: many critics believe that the gap between the aesthetic and the unaesthetic in children's literature often hides ideology.

- Ethical criticism and empathy in children's literature, because through the expected empathy of the reader ideology is often implemented, or through the double subordination and the "rule of two good shoes".

Ethical criticism and the phenomenon of maternal and girl care, because especially classical children's literature abounds in different prejudices against mothers, girls, and women in general.

- Ethical background of the character of a boy or young man hero, rebel, detective or wizard in children's literature: children's male characters are often portrayed with great admixtures of chauvinism and glorification of a dominant or even violent male identity.

– Ethical components of collective grief and national vulnerability in children's literature: children's literature often has national and political power. - Negative aspects of classical fairy tales: in classical fairy tales, there are the most obvious examples of all the above, but we should not forget all the other genres in children's literature.

Because of all this, ethical criticism, even in terms of very different interpretations of what ethics in literature means today, must have its clear role and place in children's literature. All conflicting views of proponents and opponents of ethics in literature in general, and in children's literature, must be taken seriously. Especially in the context knowledge about multiculturality of and interculturality, but also in the context of ideology today, because children's literature inevitably makes great impact on young readers and their psychological and social development in particular.

Methods and Materials

In this paper the method of ethical criticism in teaching methodology is used as a base, but also the method of narrative analysis, literary history and criticism. The appearance of the ethical upheaval, that, not so long ago, legitimized itself in many socio-humanistic fields, including literary theory, where is called ethical criticism – a critical orientation of the text, has changed the picture of understanding the "role" of ethics in literature. In the 1980s philosophers started to speak much more about the role of ethics in literature (E. Levinas, M. C. Nussbaum, R. Rorty), as well as literary critics such as Frank. R. Leavis, G. Marshall, W. C. Booth, J. Hills Miller etc. (cf. Ćurković Nimac, 2012, p. 328). In this context, it seems that children's literature,

especially in the elementary school classroom, has particular importance. Because of all this, it should be much more discussion in schools on literature classes about the role of literature in society, its (non) influence on the individual and current social changes, etc. Children's literature in elementary school teaching is a very suitable ground for studying this phenomenon because of its many characteristics, and among the more substitutable ones are certainly learning about interculturality and accepting otherness and strangeness, getting to know oneself through contact with foreign and different, etc. For this reason, this paper offers possible guidance for preoccupations specific ethical more in elementary school literature teaching, through

nurturing the ethical aspects of multiculturality and interculturality, but also by understanding ideology in children's literature.

Issues of cultural diversity are one of the fundamental features of the modern world. With the development of imagology as a special branch of comparative literature, but also with the special contribution of postcolonial and feminist criticism, as well as social and cultural anthropology, social psychology, sociology, philosophy, ethics, semiotics, geopolitics, cultural geography, contemporary geoculturology etc., and generally different processes globalization (hybrid identities, constant mobility, global space, etc.), multidisciplinary knowledge of understanding otherness and foreignness has reached a very enviable level.

The only true voyage of discovery, the only fountain of Eternal Youth, would be not to visit strange lands, but to possess other eyes... (Proust, 1929)

Comparative imagology, as an interdisciplinary science that studies the entire history of culture, would entail the exploration and systematization of images that generally occur in human consciousness, in the way that these images are present in us in the form of reality or memory, and which testify above all to a particular state of culture. These images imply not only seeing everything else, different and alien in the eyes of the beholder, but also own image of the observer, because it would be impossible to compare anything without a certain awareness about yourself. They have a changing character because they are always historically and socially conditioned. Thus, we can talk about auto-image (self-image) and hetero-image (image of another), and even stereotypes are interpreted as

imago-typical systems conditioned by certain conditions. In primarily patriarchal cultures, the other would imply not only everything foreign, but also women.

Through the analysis of texts as linguistic mediators of reality, comparative imagology, starting from the point of view of such rational constructivism, finds the models of collective observations and representations in particular national communities. (Konstantinović, 2006, p. 12) But today's understanding of comparative imagery goes far beyond the original comparative point of view as it was once imagined in the *L'etranger tel qu'on le voire* by Fernand Baldensperger and Paul Van Tieghen, who are also considered to be the founders of contemporary literary comparative studies, although it is precisely these two important authors who have clearly drawn attention to the enormous contribution of travel writers and travel literature in this regard (cf. Konstantinović, 2006, pp. 11-12).

Examining this issue, they came to the observation that, in conditions when communication between peoples was not yet so intense, first of all, travel writers, through their descriptions of how they saw a foreign nation, created common stereotypes among readers, simplified collective ideas about certain characteristic features of these nations. (Konstantinović, 2006, p. 12)

Namely, the insistence on a more detailed analysis of the motif of traveling in children's literature, as well as on travelogues in elementary school teaching, promotes cultural diversity and understanding of its central categories, as well as its own affiliation with gender, nation, religion and culture, as well as the acquisition of present and future positive social and awareness in pupils, implying, of course, intercultural sensibility.

Literature lesson provides the pupil with the opportunity to establish a new relationship with himself/herself and the world, to build social, moral and aesthetic consciousness, and to ideologically and philosophically choose, to build a worldview. (Rosandić, 2005: 82)

Also, distinguished knowledge enables a more realistic and objective view of all current mobility processes in the world, its globalization and complex migration processes, the emergence of centers of power, but also the breaking of prejudices and established images of nations, "us" and "them", gender and other changes involving the appearance of society, psychology and culture.

In this process, it could be a transformation, or we could view it as a process of collecting what the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1984) calls "cultural capital". The term signifies a stock of our knowledge, whether in our heads or shown by a collection of cultural artifacts – like souvenirs. (Crang, 2008, p. 63)

All this implies, therefore, the acquisition of the so-called cultural capital, whose importance does not need to be elaborated further, because it is evident in itself, and children's literature too offers a unique opportunity in this sense. It can nurture and build cultural capital among pupils, as well as among lecturers, because learning is always a mutual, interactive process.

Travel is a spatial practice that is at the heart of geography. In its beginnings, geography was based on the stories of travelers; mixing reports of varying degrees of heroism and truthfulness, it has long been her function to tell people here what's going on there". (Crang, 2008, p. 64)

It has already been mentioned that travel motifs in children's literature and knowledge about them implies a highly multidisciplinary character, and therefore, given its genre multilayer, it also offers a multidisciplinary correlation with various subjects and areas such as feminist criticism, but also social and cultural anthropology, social psychology, sociology, philosophy, ethics, semiotics, geopolitics, cultural geography, contemporary geoculturology, etc. If one syncretic, intermediate considers the and intertextual aspects of travel motifs in general, the correlations of knowledge with other scientific and artistic fields reach almost all teaching subjects in elementary school. And not only in the humanities and social sciences and the arts (history, sociology, philosophy, foreign languages, democracy and human rights, music and art, etc.), but also the natural sciences (geography, culture of life, etc.), and what all together make a very important segment of education especially in elementary school. On the other hand, children's literature abounds in ideologies. It is enough to take only classical fairy tales as an example. Namely, some literary theorists, psychologists and pedagogues doubt the pedagogical-psychological value of certain classical fairy tales, believing that they separate children too much from real life, overemphasize imagination, mysticism and superstition. They also believe that many classical fairy tales can create hatred and inequality between the gender, but also among people of different social statuses, that many classical fairy

tales develop misogyny, chauvinism, but also misandry, sadism and monarchist feelings, to teach children from an early age the "importance" of materialism and social status and position in society, etc (cf. Pašić Kodrić & Oprhal, 2019: 1883). And ideology would, in its broadest sense, imply a form in which the dominant force legitimizes itself, naturalizing or universalizing beliefs in order to make them self-evident by excluding other forms of thought. We often say that something is "too ideological" if some ideas and attitudes are imposed and masked to favor an established agenda, because in terms of ethical considerations "good" and "bad", especially in the world of children's literature, but also in life, is not easy to recognize. On the other hand, it is certainly a fact that in Islamic literature, as well as in Christian, Jewish etc., there are many discourses that require reinterpretation, and that not only classical fairy tales, then some religious corpora of children's literature too contain many topics, at least worthy of serious adult additional thematisation which should not necessarily be tied to religious norms, but to patriarchal, established and widely known patterns of thought and behavior. And that through the links of such discourses with the desire for control and power, but also through taking into account the general climate and the period of emergence of these discourses. This primarily refers to the themes and motives of sacrificing, punishing and killing children in some religious corpora of children's literature, feelings of guilt for not fulfilling religious norms, misogynistic and one-sided portraval of the role of women as mothers and wives. But also the themes and motives of the superiority of one religion over others, the themes and motifs of the vague relationship of fiction and faction in such discourses and the impossibility of interpreting their ever-present symbolism, too expectations high in terms of children's responsibility and maturity, because adulthood in such discourses is seen differently from of how we see and understand it today, etc.

In contrast, some of the religious corpora of children's literature deserve praise and admiration, especially in the context of nurturing the ethics of virtues, which within these themes and motifs include a sense of spirituality, truth and justice, respect for hierarchy in society, community and family, nurturing family relations and human relations in general, especially friendships, faith in ideals and true intangible values, etc. All this points to the fact that it is very difficult to speak in general about the phenomenon of ethics in children's literature, without clear concretization of literary works and that black and white understanding of ethical postulates simply cannot be an objective opinion, both in life and in literature.

Namely, the discourse on children's literature is generally not, cannot and should not be a dictatorial planner of the future, a controller of children's minds and support for the normativity of adults

Results

In this context, it would be very useful to show at which levels and how teaching that involves understanding ethical criticism would best meet the goals and objectives of teaching children's literature, because clearly defining teaching goals and objectives crucially contributes to its quality, as inevitable and a useful process on which the results of teaching and acceptance of knowledge directly depend. As the best indicators of effectiveness in teaching, they enable lecturers to choose the best teaching methods, consider its outcomes and standards and learning in general, but also to motivate pupils with clear instructions to dedicate themselves to better and more efficient implementation and adoption, because only merely presenting the goals and tasks of learning by the lecturer, without listening to their (non) acceptance, motivating and drawing the pupils' attention to accept them, as much as possible, would certainly not make sense.

It is also extremely important to mention that educational and functional tasks and goals of teaching must be better interconnected and ultimately represent an integrated system of elements that coordinate and improve the quality of teaching. In this sense, detailed development and implementation of curricula that includes the best standards of teaching, quality of teaching and acceptance of knowledge and general learning outcomes, with the most objective assessment, should be an extremely important factor in all educational processes at all educational levels.

Educational or material goals and tasks of teaching units in children's literature, which include knowledge of ethical criticism, would include a different and rich spectrum of knowledge.

The scope and intensity of the acquisition and transfer of knowledge about the importance and understanding of ethical criticism in children's literature would depend primarily on the school age of pupils, but it is important to mention that the study of ethical criticism, with the choice of different methods, should take a place in all elementary class teaching, and even in kindergartens.

Specifically, in addition to acquiring basic knowledge about children's literature, knowledge about the nature of literary genres etc., in the elementary class teaching pupils should learn, in more details, about the leitmotifs of travel in children's literature and the need to distinguish this motif from travelogue as a genre. And all this is possible with "deep reading" and different types of reading, and can be achieved by adopting an understanding the different elements of the text in a literary work. Depending on the school age and individual maturity, in elementary class teaching, students should acquire knowledge in the field of gender criticism, postcolonial criticism, cognitive criticism, interculturality and multiculturality etc. Also, pupils should be acquainted not only with the phenomena of ethics and aesthetics, but also with ideology, empathy and potential challenges and possible manipulations in literature. Children are unaware of ethical values and ethical character in general, and children's literature teaches them all this too, because children acquire their first knowledge, first visions, attitudes and perceptions of society, and their own roles in it, from the texts too. Because of all that, it would the best to use travel motifs continuously to clarify the ethics of interculturality and multiculturality, ethics of gender, post colonialism etc., because although these phenomena may sound too difficult and incomprehensible to children, their adaptation of can be quite realistic and possible since children's literature is very rich in material in this sense, but also should be ethically reinterpreted today.

Travelogue and travel literature can be studied in the final grades of elementary school, when students have already adopted certain ideas and basic knowledge about the usual structure of literary genres, distinguishing between literary and non-literary texts, the relationship between fiction and fiction in literature, the phenomenon of evaluating literature based on its aesthetic, but also ethical principles, etc. Easily from these positions pupils can expand knowledge, or get to know and understand in more detail all the complexity, but also the challenging nature of genre and literature in general. In this way, pupils before high school would gain basic insights into a more complex approach to the emergence of the literary genre than they were previously accustomed to. And then, from the beginning of high school, through the whole teaching of literature, all this knowledge through application ethical critiques in literature could be continuously expanded on various examples.

Functional or formal goals and tasks of teaching units in children's literature that would nurture ethical criticism range from ethics, aesthetics, ideology, empathy, the phenomenon of maternal care etc., but also travel motifs and travelogues in literature as well. Namely, especially ethical criticism and its mentioned literary content provides great opportunities for experiencing, enjoying, coexisting, imagining, inventing and developing cognitive abilities: observing. remembering, concluding, assessing, evaluating, etc. (Rosandić, 2005, p. 82). This applies in particular to observations and memories "through the eyes of a story" in the context of ethics, aesthetics, ideology, empathy, national vulnerabilities in literature, but also in the motifs of travel. And in general in the way children's literature "sees the difference", "with my own eyes", evaluating and comparing these views, subjective and objective opinion and conclusions, etc. Namely, through various types of imagination and reflection through a more detailed approach to all ethical phenomena, but also e.g. motifs of travel and travelogues in teaching literature, pupils can hear the nature of different cultures, their customs and cultivate a sense of imagining strangeness with a desire to discover it and coexist with it. This type of thinking would certainly lead to the development of imagination, but also to the strengthening and evaluation of their own cultural values and the culture to which they belong in general. It would also form and practice intellectual sensibility and all other cognitive abilities of pupils: sensory, communicative, practical, as and intellectual-emotional activities and functions involving the development of different thought processes that accept an understanding of the concepts of ideology and manipulation, difference, otherness, hybridity, both within the framework of the genre and within the framework of society.

Among other things, all this would encourage pupils to form their own attitude without imposing other opinions, getting used to and nurturing the beauty of inevitable differences in the world around us in processes that involve practicing awareness of the positivity and richness of cultural differences. But also awareness of gender differences in the context of equality, collective ideology and manipulation, and the beauty of own thinking and nurturing individual and critical thinking, because only then young readers can understand the text and what the effects of such positioning could be. Educational goals and tasks of teaching units in children's literature that could study and teach ethical criticism in elementary classroom are numerous, so they are practically difficult to exhaust, and should always and necessarily include pupil's formation and nurturing a number of positive personality traits with a combination of "didactic attitude" and "fulfillment of desires" from children's literature. Some of the educational goals in elementary class teaching in the context of ethical criticism and children's literature can be in:

- Defining, understanding and getting to know the concept of ethics, ethical criticism, ideology, manipulation, empathy etc. and knowledge about own cultures, but also other cultures through understanding diversity. This way the world we live in could have less ethno-national, religious and other forms of intolerance and different tensions.

- Recalling numerous forms of differences between people, which are not an obstacle to positive interpersonal relationships;

- Application of a sensitive pattern of behavior in all life circumstances;

- Developing a creative and refined personality through storytelling;

- Acquisition of cultural capital and the formation of a cosmopolitan worldview as a "garden of diversity";

– Ability to think analytically about different types of social, political and cultural actions and objective judgments;

- Creating new hypotheses, conclusions, ideas, but also concrete strategies for nurturing and building a higher level of empathy, respect, love and understanding among people;

- Formation of constructive remarks for the improvement of existing and future individual, social, political, cultural, etc. problems;

 Encouraging future positive social engagement within the own community, but also outside of it in terms of readiness to be exposed to intercultural communication;

- Ability to develop individuality and one's own critical thinking, recognition of ideology and manipulation in educational contexts;

- Analyzing one's own shortcomings, virtues, strengths, wills, feelings, etc. in the realization of the above, etc.

In this sense, drama in particular as a genre in children's literature contains several methods that teachers could use to support children in examining ethical issues in the context of education.

From the above examples, it can be concluded that the educational aspects of children's literature should be based on helping pupils to understand the ethical potential of literature, without strict set, imposing opinions, norms of behavior and suffocation of children's individuality by adults.

Discussion

Ethical issues in children's literature teaching would imply, therefore, a wide range of values that inform the reader in the context of moral codes. All this includes concern about the impossibility of specifying what is basically good and what is bad in life, even in children's literature. What are these rules, how to, at least roughly, recognize and define them, and how, precisely, these rules and to what extent, without harsh imposition with full respect for the child's personality and individuality, should govern children's choices and decisions? Each area of ethics also includes politically charged questions about how to live together and structure human society: What is bad? What is good? Which institutions should be established to create a more enlightened and inclusive world? Is there even a distinct political power of children's literature? The main goal of this study was to draw the attention to children's literature lecturers to the importance of studying ethical criticism in teaching of literature, precisely because new approaches to ethical criticism is not sufficiently represented in teaching and not sufficiently researched. In addition to general knowledge of literature, elementary school pupils would be able to adopt an awareness of the nature of the differences that surround them, as well as the processes of increasing migration in the world we

witness daily, which are unfortunately often accompanied by many conflicts, conflicts, local and global cultural misunderstandings, prejudice, intolerance, and, alas, wars.

Because, exactly as Mark Twain put it nicely in *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), the cultural capital that is gained through the traveling and through the reading and knowledge about traveling is surely the "most beautiful lasting property" an individual has can afford with little learning and effort.

Travel is fatal to preiudice. bigotry. and narrowmindedness. and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad. wholesome. charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime. (Twain, 1869)

The introduction of ethical critique in the study of children's literature offers an essentially new insight into the study of children's literature. This especially refers to the understanding of some important phenomena such as the ideology of "education". Of course, given the extreme complexity of these issues, ethical criticism itself more often opens up ethical problems without necessarily always offering clear solutions. With the indication that the best texts in children's along with literature are those that, the imagination, motivate children to build and to explore their own ideas about morality and develop critical thinking in time.

Conclusion

Ethical criticism in children's literature teaching could be nurtured in those possible ways:

- With "all a time" awareness that, especially classical children's literature, is written by adults, not children, and that children's literature abounds in various forms of ideology which was once called "good behavior pedagogy";

- With much more insisting on "deep reading": Namely, especially in the elementary schools, teachers should more insist on "deep reading" of children's literature texts, because knowing "how to read" is not the same as "to read". But, unfortunately, in elementary schools reading is often done only for the purpose of phonemic consciousness.

- With much more insisting on greater representation of all Differences in children's

literature in elementary schools through learning about multiculturality and interculturality, gender, otherness and foreignness;

- With insisting on a more detailed analysis of the motif of traveling in children's literature and the ethical context of learning about the beauty of differences through the motifs of traveling;

This is precisely what develops different types of development in children: language development, cognitive development, social-emotional development, artistic development (cf. Finazzo, 1996, pp. 6-11).

So, this kind of literature study in schools would certainly prepare pupils in time for richer and sophisticated engagements in more the contemporary processes of intercultural communication and the modern world of differences by fostering multicultural and intercultural sensibility. Precisely for this reason, the so-called school culture has a big role in this process and must be nurtured more because values and norms, one of the main elements of culture, provides the school staff to act jointly. The first resistance to change in school comes from school culture (cf. Titrek et al., 2019, p. 138).

Children's literature in elementary schools is an excellent instrument for fostering different ethical values, precisely building and nurturing the aforementioned intercultural and other compatible competencies, as well as for a better understanding of literature and the mother tongue, which is also the task of the school. In this sense, the ethical reinterpretation that this paper strives for would have a clear goal: to ethically reinterpret basic ethical postulates in the context of 21st century knowledge, taking into account the balance between proponents and opponents of ethics and the role and importance of ethical criticism in children's literature. The role of literature in growing up is immeasurable and multiple: literature opens new vistas to the youngest readers, reveals distant and exotic countries, rich vocabulary, develops empathy and compassion for others and different, gives examples of good and bad practice, influences the formation of young readers' identities. aesthetic and artistic values... And children's literature, first in the preschool education, but much more in elementary school teaching, has always, and even today, gained importance precisely through ethical

criticism. Because its connection with the interpretation and analysis of literary works constantly and always includes ethical components, because first within the family, but also in kindergartens, especially in elementary schools, it must be discussed about the ethical, sociological and other preoccupations of the text, the role of literature in society, its (non) impact on the individual and current social changes. All this in no way conditions or diminishes the importance and role of the aesthetic nature of literature, nor, specifically in schools, diminishes the aesthetic component of education.

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