

Editorial

The term “subjectivity” is undoubtedly crucial for the culture of the turn of 21st century. It is used to denote the relationship between the individual and the socio-cultural reality. The term “subjectivity” is used not only as a descriptive category, but also normative – it is used to indicate the postulated state that is based on a rational, critical attitude to the world. In this context, its opposite is an uncritical subordination to the imposed opinions, leading to the objectification of individuals. The interpretation of subjectivity as a critical approach to dominant worldviews dates back to the Enlightenment. Its representative, Immanuel Kant, explained that enlightenment is the ability to “use one’s own reason, without foreign leadership”.

At the same time, limiting the history of the category of “subjectivity” to thoughts inspired by the Enlightenment would be a great simplification and, in a sense, an appropriation. Although the term “subjectivity” over the centuries has been used in a completely different (metaphysical) sense, there have been attempts to account for the subjectivity of individuals, in the modern sense of the word, since antiquity. When Thomas Aquinas presented his theory of moral efficiency, built on that of Aristotle, he regarded cardinal virtues as traits that enable the individual to achieve subjectivity, or cohesion of action, in which reason drives the sensual desires that are conditioned by human corporeality.

In this issue of the journal *Paedagogia Christiana*, we study the role of religious education in shaping the subjectivity of individuals. It is a question entangled in mental prejudices, according to which religion limits subjectivity, thus inducing people to accept a vision of the world that is justified by

religious normativity, instead of using reason to solve dilemmas related to worldview and morality. The implication of these prejudices is that religious education is recognized as a factor that limits the reflexivity and subjectivity of people participating in religious education.

Acceptance of the above-mentioned, culturally based visions often makes it impossible to see the depth of the problem. The socio-cultural changes we are witnessing are difficult to explain with stereotypical beliefs. On the one hand, at the turn of the 21st century, we are experiencing a culture that – despite the secularization and widespread use of the category of “subjectivity” – subordinates the individual to consumer values, and supports hedonistic and utilitarian mentality. On the other hand, the attempts to withdraw individuals from market-oriented objectification often employ a fundamentalist view of a religion, which is interpreted in a way that is foreign to its understanding as proclaimed in religious education.

Therefore, what role does or can religious education play in developing the subjectivity of individuals? What is its significance for the individual’s interpretation of the surrounding world and their everyday experience (including transcendent reality)? Does religious education lead to reflection on the world, creating an alternative worldview to contemporary ones, or does it impose a specific worldview without stimulating critical thinking? What conditions should religious education fulfil in order to strengthen reflexivity and support the development of the subjectivity of individuals, and what conditions lead to the weakening of these processes?

It should be emphasized that, since the 1980s, these questions have been posed in the field of pedagogy of religion. Moreover, one of the principles of modern pedagogy of religion is the orientation on the subject (*Subjekt-orientierung*). This principle is proclaimed by both Catholic and Protestant representatives of this discipline. However, it is not about catering for the tastes of subjects of religious education, but about shaping the subjectivity of man through broadly understood religious education, taking into account individual (subjective) existential, social and cultural conditions. This approach is at the same time a bridge between purely theoretical considerations and analyses based on empirical studies of religious education processes.

The problem of the subjectivity of individuals, however, is much deeper than the problem of critical thinking. According to the abovementioned Thomistic thought, it should be said that the will, inspired by the discovered good, plays an important role in practical reasoning. The individual is therefore able to make choices different from those of the majority of the members his group, only when he discovers such a good. This desire gives

his will the strength to overcome the pressure exerted on him by the group. Consequently, orientation in religious doctrine does not in itself lead to subjectivity, i.e. it does not give the strength to oppose the currently dominant – mainly consumption – lifestyles.

These statements lead to further questions: What role does religious initiation play in religious education? Does religious education, reduced to teaching about religion/religions, lead to subjectivity of the students or only to critical reflection on religion, which does not necessarily connect with the subjectivity of individuals' functioning in the current socio-cultural context? To what extent does the changing culture affect the relationship between religious education and subjectivity? How does the new social context, often labelled the age of migration, social pluralism, globalization, the risk society, or "late modernity", stimulate religious education in shaping subjectivity?

We are aware that answering such difficult questions requires a very broad perspective. This is why the questions we ask are directed towards philosophers, theologians, psychologists, sociologists and pedagogues. The articles contained in this issue are only an inspiration to rise the contemporary problem of the relationship between religious education and the development of individual subjectivity. We kindly thank everyone who responded to our invitation and attempted to reflect on this question.

The first two articles refer to Christian revelation. In the first of them, Zbigniew Marek and Anna Walulik analyse Jesus's discussion with a powerful Jewish teacher called Nikodemus, to address the question of the relation between subjectivity of upbringing and education. In the second article, Renata Jasnos provides an interesting introduction to subjective biblical discourses, in which God is the partner of man. This reflection leads to the conclusion that religious education no longer prepares people to take up a dispute with God – a dispute that is not a manifestation of indifference towards God or a rejection of God, but an expression of human subjectivity and misunderstanding of God's interference in the life of the individual. The author argues that entering into a dispute with God is an expression of the search for answers to important existential issues. The question of to what extent these postulates are valid finds an answer in the next text. Janusz Mariański, referring to sociological research conducted over many years, presents the characteristics of Polish youth in the aspect of their interest in religious issues.

The reflection on the subjectivity of the individual in religious education is continued in the following articles, whose authors refer to either philosophical thought or known pedagogical concepts. Katarzyna Wrońska tries

to answer the question about religious humanist education, starting from the writings of the prominent Renaissance humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam. In turn, Stanisław Chrobak presents the concept of man contained in Jan Bosco's preventive pedagogy. José Luis Rodríguez-Sáez, Araceli del Pozo Armentia and Alfonso Salgado Ruiz delve into the pedagogical thought of Saint Ludovico Pavoni; when he came out to meet orphans and abandoned children, he showed a passion not only for enabling their relationship with Jesus, but also for empowering them for better functioning in contemporary society. The next author, Julita Orzelska, looks for inspiration in the works of the prominent Protestant theologian, Paul Tillich, in answering the question of how to strengthen the subjectivity of the individual. Wojciech Sadłoń's article reveals differences between approaches to religious socialization that result from the theory of rational choice and the theory of morphogenesis. This part of the issue ends with an article by Jan Rutkowski, which includes an analysis of the relationship between concepts of moral education, liberal education and natural law.

The authors of the last three texts take up issues that can shed light on various aspects of the subjectivity of the individual. Leszek Waga refers to a certain structural aspect of social research procedure, and tries to show the special importance of subjectivity within it. He uses the category "subjectivity squared" to describe the consequences of the mutual overlapping of the subjectivity of people studied and of the researchers. In the next article, Dominika Budzanowska-Weglenda and Marcin Yewdokimow discuss the changing place of ascetic practices in Catholic consecrated life, using data collected during qualitative interviews. They demonstrate how nuns from a cloistered monastery understand ascetic practices in their life. The last article, by Lidia Marszałek, is devoted to the meaning of natural religious education in the family for building basic hope in the child's life in the context of his later life-long functioning.

By inviting you to read, we hope that this lecture will encourage you to conduct further research in this area, and to reflect in depth on both the functions of religious education in upbringing of modern man, and the tasks that religious education should carry out, in order to properly fulfil these functions in the lives of maturing individuals.

Jarosław Horowski, Wojciech Sadłoń