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Multidimensional Human Spirituality in the Thought of Stefan Kunowski (1909–1977)

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the concept of human spirituality in the thought of Stefan Kunowski. Kunowski conceptualizes human spirituality as a multidimensional phenomenon, and views it through the lens of interwoven and complementary dimensions: rationality, freedom, the capacity for valuing, creativity, and religiosity. He argues that educational activities should aim for the integral development of the human person, encompassing both the material and spiritual aspects of life. The article explores the various facets of human spirituality within the context of pedagogical practices, drawing on Kunowski's vision.

The goal of this analysis is not to criticize or evaluate Kunowski's perspectives, but to connect them through a shared belief in the individual's potential and the corresponding need to create appropriate conditions for the development of students' spirituality. Spirituality, perceived as a stable core of personal actions, embodies human potential in personal, social, and cultural dimensions. The educational process, therefore, should strive for the harmonious development of the student, promoting an integral formation of their humanity, which includes attention to both material and spiritual elements. The article concludes with pedeutological reflections on the nature of spirituality within the broader context of discovering the ultimate meaning of human existence.

KEYWORDS
human spirituality, values, development, education, transcendence

SPI Vol. 27, 2024/3
e-ISSN 2450-5366

DOI: 10.12775/SPI.2024.3.007en
Submitted: 19.02.2024
Accepted: 19.03.2024

Introduction

Reflection on the essence and distinctive features of human action offers deeper discernment of the frequently posed question: who is man? Despite the growing understanding of the mysteries of the human psyche, we are still—according to Mieczysław A. Krąpiec—constantly striving to shed new light on the complex nature of the human being (Krąpiec 1999). Stanislaw Kowalczyk suggests that it is impossible to fully comprehend the existential richness of humanity, as it is indefinable, multifaceted, and continuously evolving. Each life of a human person is characterized by attributes and dimensions such as spirituality, autonomy of existence, subjectivity, individuality, sensitivity to values, dynamism, self-fulfillment, orientation toward social life, and religiousness (Kowalczyk 2002).

The human condition is uniquely defined by openness to transcendence and a form of self-transcendence, which distinguishes humans from other living beings. However, the dimension of transcendence is understood differently, depending on its potential manifestations in human life. Kowalczyk argues that "the person is a psycho-physical whole, a two-dimensional entity," comprising both material and spiritual elements. Thus, the human being "is not the sum of corporeality and psyche, but their ontological subject." Humans cannot be reduced to elements of the evolutionary biocosm; their spirituality, where "reason and freedom are found only in the world of spirit, while they are absent in the world of matter itself," must also be considered (Kowalczyk 2002: 201–205). In the human being, there is no division or hierarchy between these structures. Instead, there is an integration of nature and spirit, forming a personal unity dynamically fulfilled through action. This unity stems from the fact that "the human body is stigmatized by the soul, which acts as the integrating and guiding form in relation to the body" (Kowalczyk 2002: 205).

In the view of psychotherapist Viktor E. Frankl, humanity is a psycho-physical organism that can be regarded both as an instrumental tool and as an entity capable of action and self-expression. Human beings possess a spiritual nature precisely because they embody a dignity that is "essentially independent of any vital or social utility" (Frankl 2017: 260). Psychologist Kazimierz Popielski

identifies spirituality as a quality unique to the species *Homo sapiens*. Spirituality cannot be reduced to either material or vital qualities, and develops and flourishes within a social context. According to Popielski, spirituality becomes part of the ontic structure of a person through self-transcendental experiences that shape the person in their individual being. He explains that the qualities connecting the spiritual and existential dimensions of humanity are desires and aspirations (Popielski 2009). When these are more deeply realized, they form the foundation for constructing an individual's personality (Popielski 2009).

Even in an age of secularization, the transcendence of the human being does not vanish; it persists, sustained by an understanding of the meaning of humanity and the acknowledgment of higher values. The term "expressionism of the spirit," introduced by Gottfried Benn in 1986 and later revisited and updated by Ulrich Beck, captures the transformations in the worldviews of twentieth-century societies shifting towards the plasticity of humanity's operational principles and the emergence of new thought constructs within new social movements (Beck 2012).

The inner, spiritual life of humanity

The study of the soul, rooted in antiquity, provides the foundation for the abiding reflections of modern philosophers. Plato's theology, for instance, introduces a theory of the human spirit in which spirit is contrasted with matter, possesses the capacity to comprehend ideas, and act as the force that moves the body (Bocheński 1993). Aristotle, Plato's disciple, describes the soul as the form of an organic body capable of life. In his treatise *De anima* [*On the Soul*], Aristotle argues that the soul is the essence of living beings and their life principle. He differentiates between the vegetative and sensory organs, which exist within the rational soul as its components. Reason itself, according to Aristotle, is immaterial and spiritual, with two distinct functions: the theoretical mind and the practical mind. Rational cognition is linked to the will and the ability to make choices. Choices, in turn, are guided by prudence—reason that weighs the benefits and disadvantages of decisions, which in turn entails responsibility for one's actions (Siwek 1988). In *On the Soul* (Book I, Chapter 1), Aristotle writes,

"what looks most like an exclusive feature of the soul is thinking, but this, too, is a special kind of imagination" (Aristotle 1988: 48). Later, in Book III, Chapter 4, he states, "in view of what is called the reason of the soul, I call reason the power with which the soul thinks and makes judgments about things" (Aristotle 1988: 125). Aristotle's study of the soul deepened the understanding of human nature, and the entire body of his thought played a major role in shaping European intellectual history.

The foundation of Christian spirituality lies in God's revelation, as found in the sacred texts of the Bible, the New Testament, and the Tradition of the Church. According to Roman Jusiak, Christian spirituality is "a form of the spiritual life of a person who accepts God's revelation in Jesus Christ … which includes all manifestations of the Christian's inner life and behavior" (Jusiak 2016: 284–285). Christian spirituality is expressed through asceticism, prayer, meditation, and mystical experiences. The goal of the Christian is to continue developing spiritual life in order to overcome sin and achieve union with God. Christian values represent ethical ideals pursued in a spirit of freedom and responsibility, the most important of which is love of God and neighbor (Jusiak 2016). Andrzej Łuczyński comments on the spiritual life of humanity outside religious contexts, stating, "we speak of spiritual life when human life develops in conscious relation to spiritual reality" (Łuczyński 2016: 1570). This concept encompasses the entirety of human creative capacities, including thoughts, desires, sensations, instincts, and moral evaluations flowing from the intellectual and volitional spheres. Imagination plays a crucial role in the spiritual life of individuals, as it allows them to engage with the rich and diverse world, the beauty of nature, and connections with others through transcendental as well as purely humanistic experiences. This process involves seeking, discovering, and defining the meaning and purpose of life through the realization of various values (Łuczyński 2016: 1571), such as those found in science, art, religion, and ethics—values that attain a transcendental quality and remain impervious to the influence of historical events (Kotłowski 1968).

According to the materialist worldview, the existence of God in nature, the cosmos, or society is deemed impossible. In the nineteenth century, as Stefan Kunowski notes, Marxist-Leninist ideology, grounded in the philosophy of materialism, asserted that the

world consists solely of matter in constant motion, which evolves into increasingly refined material states, culminating in human consciousness and spirituality. Spiritual phenomena were understood as material in nature as they originate from the organized matter of the human brain (Kunowski 1993). Consequently, scientific-atheistic education, aimed at the permanent transformation of consciousness and the development of a socialist personality, began to play a fundamental role. Marxist-Leninist ideology thus focused on the formation of a "new man" through five dimensions of education: intellectual, moral, physical, aesthetic and polytheistic. Socialist ideology sought to synthesize all values and truths unfettered by religion (Kunowski 1993).

Stefan Kunowski, who analyzed the socialist system and its impact on education, highlighted its neglect of the comprehensive development of the human being by excluding the spiritual dimension from its framework. He opposed these trends by championing the ideas of personalism, particularly Christian personalism, which experienced a resurgence after World War II. Kunowski regarded this perspective as an opportunity to deepen anthropological and pedagogical reflection, taking into account "the substantiality of the person, his/her indestructible qualities, spirituality, reason, and individuality" (Kunowski 2000: 68).

The concept of spirituality in the thought of Stefan Kunowski

To competently confront the issue of human spirituality as described by the philosopher and pedagogue Stefan Kunowski, it is first necessary to situate his ideas within the context of the three-factor theory of human development. In the 1930s, German psychologist and philosopher William Stern (1871–1938) proposed that human development is determined by two factors: heredity and environment. This theory was opposed by proponents of Christian philosophy and later by socialist educators, as these two deterministic forces situated humans as passive and submissive beings, unable to oppose the convergence of these influences or shape their own lives. Kunowski, while accepting Stern's two-factor theory, positioned himself in partial opposition to it by introducing a third developmental factor: the independence of the educated person. This factor

emphasizes human rationality and freedom as stimuli in the pursuit of full humanity. Within this context, spirituality—defined as the personality factors that give individuals their unique identity—takes on great importance (Kunowski 1993).

According to Kunowski, spirituality as the third developmental factor "is substantive to the nature of man, i.e., it is permanent in man, exists by itself, and is the object of spontaneous manifestations of thought, speech, judgments, aspirations, creativity, and impulses beyond temporality and sensuality" (Kunowski 1993: 193). In view of this, human spirituality is characterized by reasoning, valuing, freedom, creativity, and religious openness—traits that are inherently human (Kunowski 1993). Kunowski's comprehensive concept of spirituality was strongly influenced by German academic philosophy at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, particularly its study of cognition and the theory of values. One prominent figure in this intellectual tradition was Heinrich Rickert (1863–1936), who identified a chain of cause and effect in which goodness corresponds objectively to values, while a valuing attitude arises subjectively, ultimately resulting in a worldview constructed on these foundations.

Kunowski incorporated this perspective, acknowledging a set of values—logic, aesthetics, mysticism, ethics, eroticism, and the philosophy of religion—that shape human consciousness, form attitudes toward values, and expand individual autonomy (Kunowski 2003). Rickert described values as existing independently of tangible reality: "although they do not exist, they are nevertheless something that we can best express by saying that they are obligatory" (Rickert 2022: 320). He further stated, "value as value is valid regardless of the existence by which it is required or acknowledged—it is this and nothing else that we want to understand by transcendence" (Rickert 2022: 329). Kunowski's conception of upbringing and development is embedded in a personalist theory, where the focus is the individual as a person of intrinsic value, capable of subjective growth, and positioned as the ultimate goal of the educational process. This is consistent with Kunowski's understanding of upbringing as "taking a person out of a lower state (a certain natural state) and bringing him into a higher state (a state of culture), which is, moreover, not the final point on the path of development, but the starting point for an even higher one" (Nowak 2003: 159). Kunowski viewed the human being

three-dimensionally, in anthropological, teleological, and methodological aspects. This personalist optic emphasizes seeing the human being as a person, particularly as the "idea" of the person, intertwined with participation in the world of values and the fulfillment of these values in life. Within this framework, the ultimate aim of education is the full realization of the human person: their self-fulfillment (Nowak 2003).

Kunowski adapted the concept of the "three-dimensional" person from the French personalist Emmanuel Mounier, who posited that the person (*la personne*) embodies three spiritual dimensions: physical embodiment in matter, the pursuit of one's vocation through reflection, and self-renunciation as a form of giving oneself to the community. Thus, the person is simultaneously embodied, socialized, and spiritualized (Kunowski 2000). Kunowski elaborates that on the path to the formation of individuality, the person faces various temptations and dangers, such as the risk of being lost in materialism, an excessive and idealistic spiritualization lacking humility, or psychological decadence which may result in self-isolation and confinement. Furthermore, there is the potential for "absorption" into social masses, leading to depersonalization or the surrender of one's will to the leader of a given community. In view of the above, Kunowski advocates for a personalistic society, one that functions best when guided by love for the collective human community (Kunowski 2000).

Kunowski describes human personality as "a dynamic process in which the individual excels in the world of values (through those values which he/she adopts as his/her own, which he/she incorporates into the totality of his/her life)" (Kunowski 1946: 46). Consequently, the goal of upbringing should be the development of personality on a cultural (spiritual) basis. In discussing the concept of personality, Kunowski employs the terms *non-empirical* or *supra-empirical*, which indicates that personal development involves an awareness of being a person capable of engaging with and experiencing cultural values (Kunowski 1946).

With these considerations in mind, we now turn to Kunowski's theory of development, which introduces a third factor—spirituality—into the process of shaping human personality. As Marian Nowak explains, for Kunowski, "the supreme aim of upbringing becomes that man should be able to unite the whole of his life around

some spiritual center, which is most often perceived in the category of the person" (Nowak 2008: 302). Kunowski identifies five dimensions that characterize human spirituality: rationality, the capacity to value, freedom, creativity, and religiosity. These dimensions form the specific framework through which Kunowski's interpretation of spirituality is further articulated.

Rational spirituality—conditioned by human reason

According to Kunowski, "human spirituality is rational, i.e. capable of objective cognition of reality in the process of mental abstraction, which extracts the essential features of an object from the perceived material, forming from them the content of a true concept, consistent with the actual state of affairs" (Kunowski 1993: 189). In order to better understand this statement, it is helpful to refer to the definition of a person formulated by Boethius at the turn of the fifth and sixth centuries. Boethius described man as an individual substance of rational nature (Kijewska 2011). The attributes of a human being include individual and singular existence, possessing a unique set of properties, and being guided by the reason inherent to his or her species in nature. St. Thomas Aquinas elaborates that, through the principle of induction, it is possible to arrive at the knowledge of a principle from the whole and to form a specific theory around a distinct issue. However, human cognition will never be fully complete or exhaustive—as this quality belongs solely to God. The divine pattern is revealed in human cognitive capacity, as the light of thought comes from God (St. Thomas Aquinas 1981: 93, 115).

Aquinas also grappled with defining truth, which he described as "the conformity of the judgments of the human intellect with the objective state of affairs" (St. Thomas Aquinas, 1998: a. 1–2). From this definition, it follows that two elements are necessary for truth to manifest: the cognitive subject and the object of cognition. The subject is the human being, equipped with intellect, and the object is objective reality. Truth is accessible through human cognitive abilities, while ethical truth, as Kowalczyk explains, is "that value which should encompass the whole human person. Truth cannot be grasped only in terms of possession, as it is primarily concerned with the essence of being human" (Kowalczyk 2006: 176).

Tadeusz Styczeń reflects on the essence of human cognition, stating that to know is "to understand to the end, that is, to explain something definitively, to see through to the bottom what is seen and directly experienced" (Styczeń 1986: 251). He elaborates further on this point, by referring to the thought of Karol Wojtyła, who drew attention to the "difficulty of final explanation." According to Wojtyła, cognition should not settle for merely stating experiential facts; instead, "understanding to the end" involves two components: the "obviousness of experience" and the subsequent "obviousness of understanding." Wojtyła explains that only by achieving both can human cognition meet the cognitive demand from which questions arise (Styczeń 1986: 252). The question of truth is intrinsically linked to inquiries about the meaning of human life, which includes moral, artistic, ideological, and religious values. Truth should also be considered in its social dimension as a "common good for all." It fosters interpersonal fraternity and functions as a unifying element for spiritual communities (Kowalczyk 2006).

In the act of cognition, the problem lies in discerning truth, as Rickert notes, because truth and falsehood are often intermingled; in other words, there are both certain and uncertain judgments. It is essential to determine that an argument is true and that the content of the judgment is objective. Truth is that which is conceived or understood as true in a mental process and then fulfilled. One of truth's defining attributes is its obligatory nature, which grants it the highest theoretical dignity and, as Rickert asserts, even transcendental dignity. Addressing Plato's doctrine of ideas, which has its theoretical foundation in European metaphysics, Rickert points out that the doctrine also touches upon the supernatural "spirit" as the "true world" which transcends human empirical thought. Humanity, Rickert argues, has the right to presuppose something beyond the sensory world (Rickert 2022). Man, as a subject of intellectual cognition, acquires knowledge about the object of his exploration—namely, the reality that truly exists. However, life is far richer than the capacities of human cognition, and the knowledge that man seeks to attain and understand contains an inexhaustible source within itself (Kowalczyk 2006). Similarly, Mieczysław A. Krąpiec comments on the truthfulness of human cognition, noting that while man has various ways of understanding reality, these methods must always account for the real

existence of specific beings. In this way, human cognition finds its justification in truth (Krąpiec 2008).

Spirituality of values—conditioned by the human capacity to value

According to Stefan Kunowski, "human spirituality is capable of valuing and evaluating all objects of experience in relation to itself (subjectively) as good, beautiful, true, noble, etc., and therefore valuing flows from the ability to love and connect with goodness, beauty, truth in one's experience. Thus, spirituality can create the highest ideals of Goodness, Beauty, Truth, and Holiness and live these ideals" (Kunowski 1993). When it comes to valuing objects through the application of knowledge, human beings can assess their worth both in terms of intrinsic value and market value. When it comes to making judgments about human relationships, evaluations and decisions should refer to objective criteria. The wisdom derived from rational thinking and knowledge distinguishes man as a rational being. In constructing a personal hierarchy of values, man must rely on an understanding of the surrounding world and act in accordance with its laws. Additionally, he must be capable of selecting the most appropriate course of action from the options available to him (Gutek 2007).

Kazimierz Popielski identifies several stages in the process of selecting and consolidating values: (1) discovery of values, (2) acceptance of values, (3) clarification of values, (4) crystallization of values, (5) purification of values, (6) internalization of values, (7) localization of values, and (8) fulfillment of values (Popielski 2009). According to Popielski, the process begins with the discovery of values, which are received as signals in mental structures in the form of intelligible information. This discovery is accompanied by the emotional acceptance of values through personal experiences. The next stage involves the clarification of values, where individuals decide to adopt certain values as their own and establish a hierarchy among them. Subsequently, the stages of crystallization and purification occur, during which individuals deepen and refine their value structure, removing any destructive or conflicting notions. Only after this process of

sorting and refining does internalization take place, i.e. the adoption and fulfilment of values that the individual deems worthy and significant.

The final stages of the process are localization and fulfillment of values. During these stages, the person's dialogical personality—one oriented toward both personal potential and relationships with others—grows. Fulfillment involves aligning personal motivation with these values, which then become closely linked to life goals. These values also provide meaning and direction to the individual's life (Popielski 2009). Stefan Kunowski posits that "valuing is the most basic activity of human personality" (Kunowski 2003: 51). The process of a personality maturing to value unfolds across the biological, psychological, social, and spiritual spheres. In the spiritual sphere, Kunowski writes, "there will be a kind of fusion of values, a complete correspondence between objective and supreme value (God) and subjective value, in which Life in God takes place" (Kunowski 2003: 51).

Katarzyna Olbrycht observes that as a person's autonomy in valuing increases, their psychic spheres become more integrated. In this process, the emotional and volitional spheres are subordinated to the intellectual sphere, allowing for a transition from merely recognizing values to actively fulfilling them within the individual's personality. The richness of a person's axiological system—their capacity for valuing—depends on the degree of integration in their personality development (Olbrycht 2000). Stefan Kunowski referred to the totality of activities, causes, and effects linking values to human behavior as "value introception." He defined this as "a spiritual process in the development of personality, consisting in assigning or establishing a value trait and connecting it to a certain thing, goal, or norm" (Kunowski 2003: 17). According to Kunowski, it is important to recognize that value introception occurs during the stage of character formation, primarily in adolescence, and engages all of a person's psychic functions.

Marian Nowak elaborates on the concept of value introception as "the process of taking the aims of others as one's own." He explains that this type of action is manifested through appropriate attitudes, which can be observed in the actions of the student, the teacher, and their interaction with objective reality. According to Nowak, the

most significant elements in this process are the personal acts of both teacher and student, as well as their decisions regarding the choice of values. These values should be universal and expansive that integrate the student's personality and all aspects and elements of the educational process (Nowak 2008: 522). Valuing and the introception of values are fundamental processes in the formation of personality. A person's will and character require the establishment and internalization of a scale of values, enabling the individual to apply them in various life situations. These values must be "assimilated so well that they can be applied involuntarily and chosen … without hesitation" (Kunowski 2003: 97). In light of this, it is particularly significant to stress that young people, in the process of their upbringing, must develop their own guiding anthropology—a coherent set of values with specific qualities that become integral to their worldview and guide them throughout life (Cichoń 1996).

Free spirituality—conditioned by the human desire for freedom

Kunowski posits that "human spirituality is free, the expression of which is the freedom of the will in choosing the good and the possibility of taking moral responsibility for oneself, one's life and actions, and for other people" (Kunowski 1993: 190). Dietrich von Hildebrandt comments on the nature of moral values, asserting that "norms rooted in learned values have … the character of a call, a kind of command appealing to our conscience" (Biesaga 1989: 156). He describes this as categoricality—a moral obligation or imperative. On the basis of this assertion, he concludes that moral values have primacy over all other types of values; as they constitute the "fundamental data" by means of which human beings commit themselves to goodness. An individual who embodies moral values adopts attitudes marked by integrity, fidelity, a sense of responsibility, and respect for truth and goodness. These values are fundamentally decisive for the moral well-being of the person. It is from these moral values that the human capacity to direct the will toward goodness in life arises, along with the ability to remain free in morally important situations, while upholding accountability for one's actions (Jankowska, Krasoń 2009).

Reflecting on the importance of moral values, we must consider the profound influence of freedom, tolerance, and sacrifice. Józef Tischner's words, "If you want, you can...," makes it clear that the intrinsic connection between free will and the understanding of freedom as a value. Through values, individuals find meaning and purpose in life. It is also through values such as tolerance, the common good, community, and openness to dialogue that a person "learns" how to coexist with others and achieve mutual understanding. Tischner characterizes this as sacrifice, describing it as "allowing my … will to be good for the other. The act of sacrifice is the pinnacle axiological experience of which man is capable" (Tischner 2011: 535). Through encounters with others, individuals not only affirm their own values but also learn to understand and respect the preferences and values of others, gaining clarity on how to act responsibly and what actions to refrain from. Even amidst the freedom of choice, an inherent categorical imperative guides our decision-making (Tischner 2011: 532–537).

Jan Szymczyk asserts that "without social freedom, man cannot develop his basic personality" (Szymczyk 2004: 64). This means that the truth and goodness derived from freedom influence the development of the individual's personality and perception of social freedom. The personal cultivation of goodness naturally contributes to the common good, grounded in the "solidarity among the members of the society," which can be regarded as a unique socio-moral norm (Szymczyk 2004: 75). Viktor Frankl adds another dimension, noting that individuals continually take a stance toward life's values and general human values, which determines their responses to irrevocable circumstances. In confronting these values with their fate, individuals metaphorically "carry them on their shoulders" and, in moments of suffering or moral test, turn to their conscience. Conscience, acting as a moral compass, safeguards autonomy and steers individuals toward responsible decisions. Ignoring this inner voice, Frankl warns, leads to conformity and moral decline (Frankl 2017).

Freedom, therefore, manifests itself most fully in acts of goodness. Misunderstood or misused freedom, however, has destructive consequences, and erodes both individual integrity and human dignity (Kiereś 2009). In view of the above, it is clear that humans are in a continuous process of learning to express emotions and to embody

values authentically in their lives. Goodness, love, and freedom are not external constructs but arise from within, representing "inner experiences of how to be human" (Krąpiec 2008: 729).

Creative spirituality—conditioned by human invention and creativity

In Kunowski's concept, "man's spirituality is creative; it does not content itself with merely receiving and experiencing ready-made works of culture, but strives to seek novelty, either through processing work to refine matter for the benefit of people, or through original creativity, invention and discovery in the creation of technology, science and culture, transforming the natural reality" (Kunowski 1993: 190). The issue of creative spirituality must be considered in the context of cultural and aesthetic values. According to Popielski, values are integral to the structure of cultural life; culture "lives" through values, and values "live" through culture (Popielski 2009: 178).

Aesthetic values bring beauty into human life, though beauty itself can be interpreted in ambiguous ways. One can speak of categorical beauty and metaphysical beauty. Metaphysical beauty has a transcendental value because it arises from the unity of truth and goodness. Categorical beauty, on the other hand, is activated during the contemplation of works of art or natural phenomena, as well as through the cathartic function of art, which engages human expressivity and originality (Kowalczyk 2006). Humans perceive manifestations of beauty in ornamentation, charm, subtlety, sublimity, and the picturesque or poetic aspects of things (Tatarkiewicz 1975). Aesthetic experiences can evoke both pleasure and displeasure. According to Władysław Tatarkiewicz, this corresponds to aesthetic hedonism, which holds that "an aesthetic experience has only as much value as it contains pleasure. The measure of this value lies only be the intensity and permanence of pleasure, but since its intensity escapes measurement, what remains is only its lasting impact on individuals and generations" (Tatarkiewicz 1975: 378).

Roman Ingarden argues that a work of art is valuable when it is true by virtue of its exclusive property of being a work of art. Such a work can be said to embody truth or an idea within itself (Ingarden

1957). In art theory, attention has been drawn to the notion that a work of art should convey moral values and communicate a message to humanity, for example social or political ideals, such as patriotism, or deal with themes of historical truth. Carl Gustav Jung's fascination with spirituality attributed to it a profound power inherent in the human unconscious. This unconscious manifests itself in the "artistic creeds" of creators. For Jung, direct engagement with a work of art is of paramount importance for the viewer, who discerns the inner vision of humanity, the spiritual essence of life, or even the cosmos. The symbolic codes embedded in art resonate not only with highly sensitive individuals but also with broader segments of society.

From a psychological point of view, Jung argued that art simultaneously reflects material and spiritual dimensions, as well as the extent to which humanity has distanced itself from nature. This separation creates a gap between nature and the mind, consciousness and unconsciousness—dualities that characterize both the human psyche and the eras in which it exists. Jung observed that when human rationality reaches its limits, mystery and the inexplicable remain, opening a metaphysical, spiritual realm accessible only to certain individuals (Jung 2018). As Marc Chagall suggested, and Jung echoed, in today's world, "everything can be deformed except for the heart, human love, and the quest to know God" (Jung 2018: 360). Viktor Frankl on the other hand, draws our attention to the values that can be realized through creative acts. He noted that admiration for the beauty of nature or art provides a pathway to experiencing the meaning of life (Frankl 2017). The religious-sacral dimension of beauty deserves special attention as it manifests itself in architecture, sculpture, and stained glass, particularly in forms like the *Biblia pauperum*, Orthodox icons, or the art of the Italian Renaissance. This dimension of art invites aesthetic and spiritual experiences that connect individuals to the divine and supernatural. According to Kowalczyk, "the religious dimension of art is discernible only to a person who is inwardly open to absolute-transcendental reality, and the moral integrity of the recipient of works of art is equally essential" (Kowalczyk 2006: 180–181).

Religious spirituality—conditioned by metaphysical depth and human transcendence

The last aspect of human spirituality mentioned by Kunowski is its openness to metaphysical depths. He asserts that spirituality "transcends the boundaries of sensory experience (transcendence) and reaches as far as cognition of the sources of being, the Absolute, and God. Thus, human spirituality, in its depths, embodies a religious attitude, seeks God, and desires union with Him, a concept which Christianity has expressed in the term: *anima humana naturaliter christiana*" (Kunowski 1993: 190). According to Frankl, human beings are characterized by an anthropological-existential spirituality that is dual as it comprises both religious consciousness and unconsciousness. This duality reflects an inherent, immanent reference to the Absolute. Frankl explains, "even if unconsciously, yet we are always directed intentionally towards God; we remain, if even in the unconscious, always in intentional reference to God" (Frankl 1978: 57). This suggests that humanity is not only rational but also intrinsically spiritual, always oriented toward transcendence.

Henryk Wójtowicz elaborates on this idea, stating that "thoughts, spiritual attitudes, feelings, religious actions, and all that through which God is known—the entirety of a person's life, including feeling, will, action, and cognition as a *medium quo*—bears a relation to religious experience" (Wójtowicz 1986: 158). The affirmation of life, including one's own existence, arises from the experience of human fragility, finiteness, and the fear of death. Reality, being random and changeable, is explored through rational thought, leading to the conclusion that the Absolute is the ultimate cause of everything. Consequently, the human need to entrust existence to God as a higher being intensifies, solidifying man's identity as a religious being—*homo religiosus* (Zdybicka 1982). Religious experience, in this context, is described as "an entirely personally experienced cognition of religious realities, the essence of which is man's striving for union with God by loving Him in every person and creature in order to attain higher powers for fulfilling the fullness of his highest vocation after having freed himself from all evil through prayer, living according to the word of God and receiving the saving power of God" (Wójtowicz 1986: 157).

In Christian ethics, human deeds take on profound meaning. Wojtyła asserts that "deeds contain in themselves a real positive moral value, i.e., goodness. If, on the other hand, they contain evil, i.e., a negative value, then they bring with them the opposite of the moral perfection of the person; its devaluation" (Wojtyła 1991: 66). Similarly, Styczeń emphasizes that "the value of the human person is sometimes referred to as personal dignity," and human acts are characterized as either "decent or simply morally good" or morally bad (Styczeń 1986: 248). Accepted and well-lived religious values contribute to the construction of humanity and deepen the meaning of human life. Religious faith engages the entirety of a person—intellect, will, feelings, and actions, and therefore religious values shape personality, ethical attitudes, dignity, and respect for others (Kowalczyk 2006). Christian values are embodied in the commandments to love one's neighbor as oneself and to love God above all. Franz Brentano further elucidates that such values are illuminated by the "ray of light of natural knowledge" and are inherently right. Through loving our neighbor, we express love for God (Brentano 1989).

According to Kunowski, understanding the progression of a person in religious education requires acknowledging the transformations occurring across physical, intellectual, social, moral, and spiritual spheres. A person always possesses a certain potentiality—what Kunowski describes as a "pure possibility of being," and progresses through successive stages of development until achieving fulfillment through the imitation of Christ and God (Kunowski 1993: 97, 99). This process involves an upbringing grounded in the Christian religion, which takes into account both human needs and innate human dignity. Such an upbringing requires morally sound conclusions and attitudes, in accordance with natural law as expressed through the voice of conscience. Human actions, Kunowski argues, should be reasonable, conscious, and voluntary (Kunowski 1993).

Summary

What distinguishes humanity within the natural world is its uniqueness, reflected in creative work, interpersonal love, and life itself. Frankl observes, "When we realize that it is impossible to replace one human being with another, the role of the responsibility

for our own life and for sustaining it will appear to us in all its greatness" (Frankl 2009: 128). This statement unveils the realm of hidden potentialities and possibilities inherent in human existence. Spiritual culture must be recognized not only as a necessary condition for human life but also as a product of that life, constituting an essential aspect that distinguishes humans from the animal world. Human spirituality reveals a profound and elusive dimension of human nature that is difficult to grasp.

In his reflections on upbringing, Kunowski draws our attention to the various ways in which individuals transcend themselves while searching for their own paths in life and uncovering the meaning of existence. This is particularly relevant in the context of education. From a pedeutological perspective, teachers should continually reflect on the process of upbringing and explore new approaches to stimulating the holistic development of students. Spirituality, as the third factor in human development, naturally evolves in the school environment, but its growth is contingent upon the proper attitudes of teachers who instill in young people a desire to pursue truth, goodness, and beauty. According to Kunowski, when this educational guidance is absent, and young people are left to their own devices, and risk losing their way (Kunowski 1993).

John Paul II explains that what pushes a young person towards destructive behaviors is a "lack of clear and convincing reasons for living. Indeed, the lack of points of reference, the vacuum of values, the conviction that nothing is meaningful and worth living for, the tragic and destructive feeling of being an unknown bystander in an absurd universe, can push some to seek—in irritation and desperation—ways of escape" (John Paul II 1984: 98–99). The philosophical and psychological perspectives referenced above underscore the relational nature of human actions, and their individual and collective dimensions. They also call attention to the global scope of educational influence. In today's world, reflecting on the purpose and meaning of human life—particularly within educational contexts—has become increasingly pertinent.

According to Kunowski, turning toward spirituality and promoting transcendence is a valuable remedy for the growing sense of loneliness, alienation, aggression, and other pathological behaviors increasingly affecting young people. There is no doubt that alongside

the focus on intellectual development, contemporary education must also center on the spiritual growth of children and adolescents. Educational and upbringing activities should always aim at the integral development of the human being, which consists of both material and spiritual elements. An equally important task facing the educators, therefore, is to awaken and nurture the spirituality of young people, "so that it prevails over the whole, and to form on this basis the fullness of humanity in a fully developed and integrated human personality" (Kunowski 1993: 190). In conclusion, the importance of spirituality in the educational process, as articulated by Kunowski in his *Podstawy współczesnej pedagogiki* [*Foundations of Contemporary Pedagogy*], remains highly relevant. Spiritual progress acts as a benchmark for assessing the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the human person individual and facilitates the holistic development of the student.

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