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Critical Pedagogy of Religion – an Outline

Introduction

This article aims to present the beginnings and the development of the pedagogy of religion from the critical paradigm angle. The main task is to introduce 20th century studies in the pedagogy of religion as ideologically involved analytical views in the area of critical interpretation. The article refers to the German tradition of religious education which was established at the beginning of the 20th century and flourished in the time between World War I and World War II, benefiting from the programme ideas of liberal theology and emancipative tendencies¹. Interestingly, the critical revision of religious education in the Protestant Church in Germany was a bottom-up initiative of school teachers and educators. In the academic world such an approach was represented by Otto Baumgarten and Richard Kabisch who, basing on the pedagogy of reform, advocated diminishing the position of the Church both in social life and education². In their understanding, religious education was not directly meant to shape piousness or theological, monotheistic or evangelical attitudes, but above all it aimed at developing humanity in its excellence, as it was designed by God. Their theses were unpopular as they were critical towards the fundamentals of education and religious teaching of the time. The conclusion drawn was that pedagogy of religion adversely affected the “interests” of protestant Churches. This stage in the development of pedagogy of religion – dated from the beginning of the 20th century – was associated with a critical approach, mainly with the basic meaning of this term. Critical thought – especially critical theory, hermeneutics and critical pedagogy – was directly referred to only in the second half of the 20th century, thanks to G. Otto, H. J. Doger and J. Lott. These authors were the first to propose a radical change in the paradigm of the pedagogy of religion: from kerygmatic and confessionary to ideological and critical. This change involved accepting F.D. Schleiermacher’s criteria for the relation between pedagogical theory and education practice, which

¹ See *Teologia liberalna* [Liberal Theology], [in:] H. Vorgrimler, *Nowy leksykon teologiczny wiara – objawianie – dogmat* [New Lexicon of Theology: Faith – Epiphany – Dogma], Warsaw 2005, pp. 380–381.

² See M. Konieczny, *Emancypacja* [Emancipation], [in:] *Leksykon pedagogiki religii* [Lexicon of Pedagogy of Religion], C. Rogowski (ed.), Warsaw 2007, pp. 157–161.

should be considered completely separate³. In this case, theory was not meant to improve the effectiveness of a given practice, but its role above all was to make the practice more conscious – in terms of all the conditions possible. It had very serious consequences for religious education, since the pedagogical theory revealed philosophical, social, ideological conditions, etc. in the paradigm of critical interpretation. This article will present the basic theses of the critical pedagogy of religion, including Polish contributions in the field, in particular the works of Cyprian Rogowski (e.g. about the hermeneutic interpretation of a religious symbol⁴) and of Bogusław Milerski (e.g. works concerning the hermeneutic pedagogy of religion⁵).

Pedagogy of religion

The 19th century was a crucial time for pedagogy of religion, because the criteria of pedagogical analysis began to be included in religious education. This approach was introduced by the 19th century protestant philosopher and theologian F. Schleiermacher who was giving lectures on pedagogy and theology at the University of Berlin in 1826. In his work he emphasized the urgent need to add an empirical and spiritual dimension to religious education. He also advocated opening it up to contemporary humanities. This idea led to establishing the foundations of liberal theology, which above all promoted finding contemporary interpretations of biblical texts. Other supporters of reviewing the existing forms of religious education were Charles Palmer, who published his work on protestant religious education in 1861 (entitled *Protestant Religious Education*), and Tuiskon Ziller, the main representative of herbartianism⁶. They both advocated including humanistic analyses into the sphere of religion, but their main postulate was correlating the influence of the social sciences and theology. The stance of liberal theologians in the following years led to the avid opposition of the so-called kerygmatic movement, supported by Karl Barth (1886–1968) and Gabriel Bohne (1885–1977), which considered the revelation of the Bible to be the most essential part of religious teaching⁷.

The notion of *pedagogy of religion* as a name for the field combining the scope of studies of theology and pedagogy was first introduced by a German theologian

³ See M. Patalon, *Teologia a pedagogika* [Theology and Pedagogy], [in:] *Leksykon pedagogiki religii...* [Lexicon of Pedagogy of Religion...], pp. 786–790.

⁴ See C. Rogowski, *Pedagogika religii. Podręcznik akademicki* [Pedagogy of Religion. University Textbook], Toruń 2011.

⁵ See B. Milerski, *Hermeneutyka pedagogiczna. Perspektywy pedagogiki religii* [Pedagogical Hermeneutics. Perspectives of the Pedagogy of Religion], Warszawa 2011.

⁶ B. Milerski, *Pedagogika religii* [Pedagogy of Religion], [in:] *Religia, Encyklopedia PWN*, t. 8, [Religion, Encyclopedia of PWN, vol. 8], pp. 51–53.

⁷ M. Patalon, *Teologia a pedagogika* [Theology and Pedagogy], [in:] *Leksykon pedagogiki religii...* [Lexicon of Pedagogy of Religion...], pp. 786–790.

and philosopher Max Reischle. In his dissertation *The Question of the Nature of Religion. Foundations for a Methodology of Theological Knowledge* (published in Freiburg in 1889), he stated that pedagogy of religion is not an independent field within religious studies, but it is a part of theology⁸. This is because the studies which belong to pedagogy of religion are always conditioned by a specific confession. Issues of religious education and childrearing belong in the structure of pastoral theology, which is a part of catechetics. At the same time, Otto Baumgarten and Richard Kabisch spoke in a slightly different tone. Their works initiated a new approach to religious education which derived from liberal theology and cultural emancipation. They proposed that the Church catechesis be distinguished from teaching religion at school. School religious education was supposed to be combined with humanistic education and practiced within public schooling. In this sense the confessional aspect was not the major goal of religious education at schools, its aim was mainly cultural⁹.

In the following years, catechetics, both Catholic and Protestant, started to benefit more and more from the achievements of pedagogy and psychology. At the beginning of the 20th century, O. Eberhardt and J. Gottler noticed that in the aspect of its problems and methods, pedagogy of religion gradually became more autonomous in the structure of Catholic theological teachings. Apparently, the more intensely pedagogy of religion was growing at that time, the stronger grew criticism of the traditional role of religion and the more visible the opposition to the role of the Church in the society became. The need for rapid changes in the language and the content of the religious message gradually led to the separation of pedagogical matter from pastoral theology¹⁰. The time abounded in lively discussions about the understanding of religious education and its needs. Many theologians and philosophers shared different views on the place, goals and tasks for the emerging independent field. Friedrich Niebergall was one of these people. In 1911, he published his manifesto *Die Entwicklung der Katechetik zur Religionspädagogik* [*The Development of Catechetics in the Direction of Pedagogy of Religion*]¹¹, in which he showed the innovativeness of studies covered by pedagogy of religion and their independence from classical Protestant catechetics. He suggested the need to create a discipline embracing the relationship between pedagogy and theology, with the dominant focus on pedagogy itself. This was one of the pio-

⁸ M. Reischle, *Die Frage nach dem Wesen der Religion. Grundlegung zu einer Methodologie der Religionsphilosophie* [The Question of the Nature of Religion. Foundations for a Methodology of Theological Knowledge], Freiburg 1889.

⁹ B. Milerski, *Pedagogika religii* [Pedagogy of Religion], [in:] *Pedagogika, subdyscypliny i dziedziny wiedzy o edukacji...* [Pedagogy, Subfields and Areas of Knowledge about Education...], pp. 45–68; C. Rogowski, *Pedagogika religii* [Pedagogy of Religion], [in:] *Leksykon pedagogiki religii...* [Lexicon of Pedagogy of Religion...], pp. 561–565.

¹⁰ B. Milerski, *Pedagogika religii* [Pedagogy of Religion], [in:] *Pedagogika, subdyscypliny i dziedziny wiedzy o edukacji...* [Pedagogy, Subfields and Areas of Knowledge about Education...], pp. 47–49.

¹¹ F. Niebergall, *Die Entwicklung der Katechetik zur Religionspädagogik* [The Development of Catechetics in the Direction of Pedagogy of Religion], Berlin 1911.

neering ideas to build a pedagogical field, basing on the criteria of education studies, independent of Protestant theology. The major role of this new field was to develop ways of teaching religion. This moment marks the beginning of a large intellectual movement within Protestant catechetics, which aimed at building pedagogy of religion understood as an autonomous field of theology supported by the studies and solutions of pedagogy and general psychology¹². The situation was similar in the circles of Catholic theologians, where Joseph Göttler, head of the department of pedagogy and Catholic catechesis at the University of Munich, published works concerning the issues of religious education. There was, however, a difference between the Protestant and Catholic understanding of the new field. The former tradition situated pedagogy of religion as an independent pedagogical field, while the latter treated it as a subsidiary of catechetics, defining its purpose as a methodological renewal¹³.

The result of the work for the renewal and modernisation of religious education in German-speaking countries was the creation of new periodicals and journals strictly dedicated to didactic and religious issues. They were, among others, "Christlich-Pädagogische Blätter" published in Vienna, "Katechetische Blätter" and "Zeitschrift für den Evangelischen Religionsunterricht" and "Monatsblätter für den Evangelischen Religionsunterricht". They were only issued until the 1930s. The main subjects concerned the internal development of Christian catechetics in general, but also the creation of contemporary religious education open to the current problems and dilemmas of the 20th century. They also featured a contestation of the dominant role of the Evangelical Church in a democratic society. In this case, the development of religious education was understood as working out mechanisms for the effective transmission of religious content, which would correspond to the unstable social situation. These changes concerned both the language of transmission and the reinterpretation and updating of the theological content. The idea of creating a pedagogical discipline supporting contemporary open religious education was based primarily on designing the most effective educational models. While the shape of these models was fluid and corresponded with the current social and cultural needs, it was intended to be applicable by various Christian Churches in a pluralistic society¹⁴.

The development of religious education theory in Germany was halted in the 1930s due to the political and social situation, since the Nazi state, using religious education for ideological purposes, reduced its methodological and academic context. Simultaneously, in the inter-war period, Protestant theology much appre-

¹² See B. Milerski, *Nurty w ewangelickiej pedagogice religii w XX wieku* [Trends in the Protestant Pedagogy of Religion in the 20th Century], "Paedagogia Christiana" vol. 8: 2001; *idem*, *Elementy pedagogiki religijnej. Status edukacji religijnej w Niemczech* [Elements of Pedagogy of Religion. The Status of Religious Education in Germany], Warsaw 1998.

¹³ B. Milerski, *Pedagogika religii* [Pedagogy of Religion], [in:] *Pedagogika, subdyscypliny i dziedziny wiedzy o edukacji...* [Pedagogy, Subfields and Areas of Knowledge about Education...], p. 49.

¹⁴ J. Bagrowicz, *Edukacja religijna współczesnej młodzieży* [The Religious Education of Contemporary Youth], Toruń 2000, pp. 275–289.

ciated the kerygmatic current represented by both Catholic and Protestant theologians, e.g. J. A., Jungmann, G. Bohne, O. Hammelsbeck and H. Kittel. By definition, this approach considerably eliminated the context of contemporary educational issues from the scope of theological analysis¹⁵.

In the following decades of the 20th century, starting from the 1950s, pedagogy of religion as a scientific discipline was becoming increasingly important in the context of social challenges, such as: cultural revolution, remodelling of family life, emancipation processes, secularisation and criticism of undemocratic authority in the Church. The German journal combining research in theology and education "Der Evangelische Erzieher" was instituted in 1948. In 1954, the Evangelical Church created the centre of the Munster Comenius-Institute, which worked on interdisciplinary studies integrating theological analysis with contemporary theories of education. At that time, intense criticism of the dialectical theology¹⁶ and kerygmatic conception of education¹⁷ led to the emergence of new theories and models in religious education, directly drawing from the systems of philosophical anthropology. Works by Martin Stallmann, Hans Stock, Gert Otto and, later, Hans--Bernhard Kaufmann, Dieter Stoodt, and Klaus Weggenast, introduced the methods of hermeneutics, phenomenology and emancipative criticism into religious education¹⁸. In Germany, the decades of the seventies and eighties brought stabilisation and institutional development in universities and state-run departments of the pedagogy of religion. The notion of the Protestant pedagogy of religion too came into use at that time. It denoted the area in educational studies that combined protestant theology and education theory. The Catholic Church also started introducing catechesis open to the findings of contemporary education theory. In 1984, the magazine "Jahrbuch der Religionspädagogik" was established. It covered issues of cross-denominational openness as well as interreligious and ecumenical dialogue in the scope of studies of pedagogy of religion¹⁹.

¹⁵ See J. Bagrowicz, *Problematyka katechizacji młodzieży w nurcie katechezy kerygmatycznej* [The Catechisation of Youth in Kerygmatic Catechesis], "Studia Theologica Varsoviensia", 1996, Vol. 34, No. 1, pp. 183–200.

¹⁶ *Dialectical theology* – a period in the development of theology of the 20th century, dated 1920–1933. Main representatives: Karl Barth, Eduard Thurneysen, Friedrich Gogarten, Emil Brunner, Rudolf Bultmann and Georg Merz. This concept objected to the liberal theology of the early 20th century, and tried to address the existential and theological questions associated with the events of World War I. See M. Patalon, *Teologia a pedagogika* [Theology and Pedagogy], [in:] *Leksykon pedagogiki religii...* [Lexicon of Pedagogy of Religion...], pp. 786–790.

¹⁷ *Kerygmatic theology* – a trend in Catholic theology combining systematic and pastoral theology, in order to effectively influence the development of faith in the Christian community. See J. Bagrowicz, *Problematyka katechizacji młodzieży w nurcie katechezy kerygmatycznej* [The Catechisation of Youth in Kerygmatic Catechesis], pp. 183–200.

¹⁸ See B. Milerski, *Pedagogika religii* [Pedagogy of Religion], [in:] *Religia, Encyklopedia PWN...*, [Religion, Encyclopedia of PWN...], pp. 52–53.

¹⁹ C. Rogowski, *Czasopisma pedagogiczno-religijne niemieckojęzyczne* [Magazines on the Pedagogy of Religion of German Speaking Countries], [in:] *Leksykon pedagogiki religii...* [Lexicon of Pedagogy of Religion...], pp. 89–90.

The pedagogy of religion practiced in the United States represented a different cultural and linguistic tradition. It was initially dominated by Protestant theologians, but quickly acquired an interdisciplinary and ecumenical character. This was possible because it cultivated religious education based on the so-called Sunday schooling, which operated from the mid-eighteenth century. Sunday schooling was introduced by an English theologian R. Raikes (1736–1811), who conducted education for children primarily about religion but also in general knowledge. At first it was an initiative of a few churches, then it transformed into a wider enterprise, with lay people serving as teachers. In 1803, the London Sunday School Union was established in Great Britain and by 1880 it had 12 million registered students. In 1824, the American Sunday School Union was founded in Philadelphia. Its goal was to establish a school in every American town. In the following decades, the range of Sunday education covered the area of the whole of the United States²⁰.

At the end of the 19th century, the need for profound discussion and reflection upon religious education resulted in the establishment of the Religious Education Association – REA (Religious Education Association) in 1903. William R. Harper, president of the University of Chicago, became the chairman. In his inaugural speech he indicated that the association's activity will be of an open and scientific nature. The next to speak at the first convention was George A. Coe, one of the precursors of the dialectical vision of religious education. According to this concept, based on the binary anthropological perspective, a human is both a social and religious being. The first approach puts a child in the central point of a schooling system, but at the same time it grants them a deep axiological nature and a transcendental reference point. In this case, pedagogy of religion contributes to dialectical religious education, understood here as one of the essential elements of the overall educational process. Another participant of the first congress was John Dewey, who in his lecture postulated that all research in the field of the pedagogy of religion should meet methodological conditions identical to those in other educational studies. The above discussion resulted in formulating the most relevant conclusion: contemporary religious education should develop alongside general education, and it should meet the same scientific and social requirements for verification²¹.

Successive annual conferences led to outlining a common goal for religious education, which was namely the mutual bilateral correlation of religious and educational dimensions in academic and social areas. The journal "Religious Education", which was established in Chicago in 1906, became the development centre of open and ecumenical reflection on religious education in America. In 1917, G. A. Coe published his first work in the field of religious pedagogy on the

²⁰ See M. Patalon, *Teologia a pedagogika* [Theology and Pedagogy], [in:] *Leksykon pedagogiki religii...* [Lexicon of Pedagogy of Religion...], pp. 786–790.

²¹ See B. Milerski, *Pedagogika religii* [Pedagogy of Religion], [in:] *Pedagogika, subdyscypliny i dziedziny wiedzy o edukacji...* [Pedagogy, Subfields and Areas of Knowledge about Education...], pp. 47–48.

American ground: *A Social Theory of Religious Education*. It concerned theoretical principles of religious education, which were not to be limited to social or theological sciences, but were an autonomous combination of the two source disciplines²².

Alongside REA, the Catholic scientists community established the "Journal of Religious Instruction" in 1931, which was transformed in 1947 into the "Catholic Educator". At that time, religious education studies began to include psychological analyses, and Granville S. Hall established "The American Journal of Religious Psychology and Education". In the following years, the REA activists widely promoted the idea of religious education as part of academic studies. Consequently, universities started opening institutes and chairs of pedagogy of religion within their religious studies departments. In America, the seventies and eighties of the previous century brought the discussion about a common religious education for Christian denominations. It was also the time of opening up to cross-religious dialogue, especially of Christianity with Judaism, Islam or religions of the East; and in the next stage – starting a cultural discourse with atheism²³.

The last decades of the 20th century brought a great revival in British religious education, which, unlike the American and German traditions, did not have a rich academic past. It was not until the 1980s that pedagogy of religion acquired its institutional structure as a scientific field, with the great role of an Anglican activist, John Hull. Starting in 1971, when Hull became the editor-in-chief of "The British Journal of Religious Education", the academic basis of Anglican religious education started developing its form. Institutes and chairs of pedagogy of religion were established. They were, however, not a part of theological faculties or studies of religion, but indeed of pedagogical faculties. British religious education became a strong pillar in the area of international interdisciplinary studies²⁴. The second half of the 20th century witnessed a very intensive development of pedagogy of religion as an academic sub-discipline. New educational concepts were created, since educational studies, philosophy, psychology and sociology introduced further dimensions for analysis. These new trends included the hermeneutic, existential and emancipation-critical pedagogy of religion in particular, but also the psychology of religion which developed in the following years and started uncovering the unconscious dimensions, so far non-existent in religious education. Towards the end of the 20th century, pedagogy of religion developed primarily in English- and German-speaking countries, obtaining the status of an independent field. The established institutes and departments became scientific institutions, which made way for cross-cultural cooperation.

The cultural and political situation in democratic countries at the end of the previous century was very diverse and societies struggled with many problems

²² *Ibid.* p. 48.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

resulting from cultural and social changes. In this dynamic structure, religion in general along with particular Churches was trying to redefine its role in the social hierarchy. Pedagogy of religion became a self-reflective and critical area, challenging also religion as such. General education, which comprised religious classes too, required that both the content and objectives of religious education be consistent with the basic objectives and framework of a pluralistic society. The particular national Churches became involved to act for the benefit of modern society at the same time trying to respond to individual and social needs. The notions of tolerance, freedom, equality, diversity, etc. were no longer just slogans from the past, but became the common reality of Western European countries and the whole world. In those circumstances, religions of the world and national Churches started seeking a modern means of communication that would allow them to participate in the debate about social challenges of the 21st century²⁵.

Currently the term “pedagogy of religion” is an ambiguous category, and there are a few reasons for that. Firstly, there are several language traditions, the most important of which are associated with German and English-speaking countries. Secondly, it is a relatively fresh concept, present in academic studies only since the mid-20th century. Thirdly, there is no consensus on the mutual relations and boundaries between the fields comprising pedagogy of religion, namely pedagogy and theology. Fourthly – a consequence of the previous point – the lack of consent on the relationship between the above fields results in inconsistencies in studies within pedagogy of religion²⁶.

The linguistic diversity of the notion of pedagogy of religion results not only from inconsistencies in translations, but also from the different understanding and interpretation of such close concepts as catechetics, religious instruction in schools, religious education, and the pedagogy of religion. In the German-speaking tradition, where the concept originates, the situation is quite clear: pedagogy of religion – *Religionspädagogik* – and catechetics – *Katechetik*, differ in their subject matter. In the history of German pedagogy and theology, these concepts always had a different subject and meaning. To put it simply: catechetics belonged to a given confession and served its purpose, while the pedagogy of religion was associated with the process of religious education in connection with the state institutions. The case is different in the English-speaking tradition, where the notion of the pedagogy of religion is not explicitly expressed, but is replaced by the concept of religious education or the theory of religious education. Both concepts refer to practical and theoretical pedagogical reflection on the subject of religion, while “catechetics”, and “religious instruction”, are sporadically used and only in the context of a given Church or confession where they are recognized as a means of evangelisation. The situation in Poland is much more diverse, especially due to

²⁵ *Idem*, *Elementy pedagogiki religijnej* [Elements of Pedagogy of Religion], Warsaw 1998.

²⁶ See C. Rogowski, *Pedagogika religii* [Pedagogy of Religion], [in:] *Leksykon pedagogiki religii...* [Lexicon of Pedagogy of Religion...], pp. 561–598.

the ongoing discussion between advocates of catechetics and the pedagogy of religion. Basically, the polemic concerns the extent of distinction and independence between theology and pedagogy²⁷.

The development and status of religious education in Poland directly depended on the legal conditions of religion instruction in the general state education. Before the Second World War, in accordance with the 1921 Constitution, religion was an obligatory subject at all levels of education for students under 18 years of age. The Concordat of 1925 indicated the exceptional and dominant role of the Roman Catholic Church in the structure of the Polish State. The situation began to change radically in the post-Second World War Poland. Already in 1945 under the decree of the Provisional Government of National Unity, the Concordat ceased to have effect. The next step was complete separation of the Church from the state, which was introduced in 1952 and in turn led to the withdrawal of religion lessons from Polish schools. From 1961/1962, religion classes were held only as extra-curricular activities, outside educational buildings. This situation lasted until 1989, when, in the aftermath of democratic transition, religion returned to schools. It was not until the 1990s, however, that the notion of religious education appeared in pedagogical discussions for the first time, although studies in this area had been present much earlier. At the beginning of the 20th century, a figure worth mentioning, Walenty Gadowski, postulated complementing the Catholic catechesis with pedagogical context. Also in the Protestant Church, activists sought ways for growth: in the 1930s Karol Banzel advocated opening a chair of the pedagogy of religion at the faculty of evangelical theology. At the same time, Sergiusz Hessen indicated new sources and needs for development in Polish religious education. After the Second World War, especially in the academic circles of the Catholic University of Lublin, works on religious education were written, but only within the Catholic confession. In the 1970s, Stefan Kunowski formed the foundations of the Polish pedagogy of religion. He did not refer directly to the sources of European pedagogy of religion, but combined the analysis of the Catholic catechetical doctrine with the achievements of humanistic pedagogy. The 1980s brought another precursor – Janusz Tarnowski – who described the theory of Christian education from the pedagogical perspective, considering the philosophical and theological contexts. Along with the strictly pedagogical research, there were works in the field of catechetics, but enriched with a broad methodological context as well as a thorough anthropological perspective. We may refer here to the works of Marian Finke, Mieczysław Majewski, Jan Charytański, and in particular Władysław Kubikin, because he was the one to initiate a catechetical didactics programme. That moment marked the beginning of Polish religious education developing in two independent dimensions. The first of them was the traditional catechetics, based primarily on the sources

²⁷ See J. Bagrowicz *Pedagogika religii* [Pedagogy of Religion], [in:] *Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku...* [Pedagogic Encyclopaedia of the 21st Century...], pp. 242–249.

from catechetics and pastoral theology. The second was the pedagogy of religion, which used sources from both religion and pedagogy, as well as from philosophy, sociology and psychology²⁸.

To this day, there have been numerous political and educational polemics regarding the status and scope of religious education in Poland. It is only over the last twenty years that we have been observing increased activity in academic studies recognizing the achievements and wealth of European and worldwide pedagogy of religion. The socio-political situation of recent years has made it possible to conduct educational research on the pedagogy of religion, independent of catechetical studies. This has resulted in the growing awareness of an urgent need to reinterpret the status of religious education in the new reality. A renewal of religious education seemed necessary due to dynamic changes in the Polish society after 1989, but also because of the shift in status of the Roman Catholic Church in contemporary society. The debate on changes in religious education still continues. And even setting aside the political context and focusing on academic analysis and research, pedagogy of religion as well as catechetics found themselves in an authentic impasse in embracing and responding to the needs of the Polish society of the 21st century. This crisis seems to result from several reasons:

- an implicit dispute between the supporters and the opponents of the pedagogy of religion and catechetics preventing the transfer of theoretical and practical knowledge from one context into another;
- the permanent hostile attitude of the Roman Catholic Church towards theoretical models of contemporary education and practical recommendations for their implementation;
- the discourse on religious education giving prominence to power and politics, and not to the methodology of the social sciences, in particular educational, psychological and sociological disciplines;
- religious education based on the pedagogy of religion is still a new field without an independent status in the context of Polish pedagogy.

The paradigms of the pedagogy of religion

Representatives of the contemporary pedagogy of religion create their own theoretical concepts drawing from the theology of religion²⁹ in its broad sense,

²⁸ See B. Milerski, *Pedagogika religii* [Pedagogy of Religion], [in:] *Religia, Encyklopedia PWN...* [Religion, Encyclopaedia of PWN...], pp. 54–55.

²⁹ See J. Pawlik, *Teologia religii* [Theology of Religion], [in:] *Leksykon pedagogiki religii...* [Lexicon of Pedagogy of Religion...], pp. 797–799; *Teologia religii, Chrześcijański punkt widzenia* [Theology of Religion, Christian Point of View], G. Dziewulski (ed.), Łódź–Kraków 2007; M. Patalon, *Pedagogika ekumenizmu...* [Pedagogy of Ecumenism...], pp. 159–171.

but also from various philosophical systems³⁰ as well as cultural pedagogy³¹ and critical pedagogy³². These concepts embrace the educational activity of individual Churches, but also analyse the religious dimension of general humanistic education based on a specific anthropology corresponding to the current socio-cultural changes. These are mainly works from the area of the pedagogy and philosophy of education, covering the specific religious content of a given denomination or Church. The contemporary global pedagogy of religion is diverse and heterogeneous: the differences root both from the cultural and linguistic background, but also from differing approaches to the subject matter. At this point, certain source communities and paradigms of religious educational thought should be mentioned. The first scope here is the American pedagogy of religion being tightly bound with the situation in the United States, the second – the European pedagogy of religion including studies in German-speaking countries like Germany, Austria and Switzerland covering also Scandinavian academic output, as well as English-language analyses in Great Britain. The few existing Polish studies into the pedagogy of religion can also be categorized as a part of the paradigm of European research.

American religious education has traditions dating back to the 19th century and earlier. Nowadays, it mainly draws from three foundations: neopragmatic philosophy, psychology of religion, and cultural studies. The fundamental pedagogical research in the field of the psychology of religion at the end of the 20th century was led by J. W. Fowler, a professor of theology and anthropology at Emor University in Atlanta, and Daniel S. Schipani who worked within the critical theory based on cultural studies. A crucial development in the area of pedagogical and religious studies was the merger of The Religious Education Association (REA) with The Association of Professors and Researchers in Religious Education (APRRE) into one institution REA:APRRE – working for ecumenical and cross-religious studies in North America. This organisation gathers not only professors and researchers, but also the community of teachers and clergy representatives of the world's largest religions. Currently the most important activists in the field of religious education include among others L. M. A. Bowman, Th. Brelsford, R. H. Cram, P. Gilmour, B. A. Keely, R. Nishioka, E. B. Price, A. C. Vrame, and A. S. Wimberly, who all contribute to the methodological and systematic foundation for this field in America³³.

³⁰ Especially the philosophy of dialogue, existentialism, phenomenology, hermeneutics or personalistic philosophy. See M. Buber, *Ja i Ty. Wybór pism filozoficznych* [I and Thou], Warsaw 1992; E. Levinas, *Całość i nieskończoność. Esej o zewnętrznosci* [Totality and Infinity. An Essay on Exteriority], Warsaw 1998; J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu* [Philosophy of Drama], Kraków 1990; M. Heidegger, *Bycie i czas* [Being and Time], transl. B. Baran, Warszawa 1994; H. G. Gadamer, *Prawda i metoda. Zarys hermeneutyki filozoficznej* [Truth and Method], transl. B. Baran, Warszawa 2004.

³¹ See B. Milerski, *Pedagogika kultury* [Pedagogy of Culture], [in:] *Pedagogika, podręcznik akademicki...* [Pedagogy, University Textbook...], pp. 220–231.

³² See T. Szkudlarek, *Ibid.*, pp. 363–377.

³³ B. Milerski, *Pedagogika religii* [Pedagogy of Religion], [in:] *Pedagogika, subdyscypliny i dziedziny wiedzy o edukacji...* [Pedagogy, Subfields and Areas of Knowledge about Education...], pp. 47–68; *idem*,

In the European pedagogy of religion, from the very beginning to the present day, the German-language tradition has been playing a great role. The key stage in the development of this field seems to be the period after the Second Vatican Council, especially the turn of the seventies and eighties, when the Catholic and Protestant research centres from Germany, Austria, Switzerland and the Scandinavian countries opened up to cooperation. It can be assumed that this process was started in 1978 in Germany by the community of Catholic religious educators who founded the journal “Religionspädagogische Beiträge. Zeitschrift der Arbeitsgemeinschaft Katholischer Katechetik-Dozenten”, which was published first in Kaarst, then in Kassel, and now, after changing the auspices to Arbeitsgemeinschaft Katholische Religionspädagogik Katechetik (AKRK) – in Mainz. The year 1991 brings the establishment of the “Osterreichisches Religionspädagogische Forum” in Graz, Austria, strengthening the cooperation of representatives of various confessions in Christian pedagogy of religion. Back in 1982, the community of Evangelical educators initiated the foundation of the periodical “Schulfach Religion” in Vienna; and the Faculty of Theology of the University in Vienna has now become involved in creating this magazine. The annual “Jahrbuch der Religionspädagogik” has been published in Neukirchen-Vluyn in Germany since 1984. It presents ecumenical content openly and promotes the dialogue between Catholic and Protestant pedagogy of religion. Karl E. Nipkow, a professor at the University of Tübingen, was a significant contributor to the development of the Protestant educational theory. At present, faculties and chairs of pedagogy of religion operate in many theological and pedagogical universities and colleges in European German-speaking countries. Currently the most important representatives of Evangelical religious education include: G. Adam, Peter Biehl, H.-J. Fraas, J. Lahnemann, Michael Meyer-Blanck, G. Schmidt, Heinz Schmidt, and Friedrich Schweitzer, whilst the Catholic pedagogy of religion is represented by G. Bitter, Anton A. Bucher, Rudolf Englert, Norbert Mette, Hans-Georg Ziebertz, and H. A. Zwergel³⁴.

The situation looks similar in the English-speaking tradition, where pedagogy of religion developed most intensively in the 1980s, mainly owing to John M. Hull from the Department of Education at the University of Birmingham. In Great Britain, the most active academic communities are directly related to periodicals on religious education, such as “The British Journal of Religious Education”, “Retoday” and “Journal of Beliefs & Values: Studies in Religion and Education”, as well as societies and organisations focusing on religious education, like The Professional Council for Religious Education or Christian Education. Several research

Pedagogika religii [Pedagogy of Religion], [in:] *Religia, Encyklopedia PWN* [Religion, Encyclopedia of PWN], p. 53; J. Bagrowicz, *Pedagogika religii* [Pedagogy of Religion], [in:] *Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku...* [Pedagogic Encyclopedia of the 21st Century...], pp. 242–248.

³⁴ B. Milerski, *Pedagogika religii* [Pedagogy of Religion], [in:] *Pedagogika, subdyscypliny i dziedziny wiedzy o edukacji...* [Pedagogy, Subfields and Areas of Knowledge about Education...], pp. 47–68; *idem*, *Pedagogika religii* [Pedagogy of Religion], [in:] *Religia, Encyklopedia PWN* [Religion, Encyclopedia of PWN], p. 53; J. Bagrowicz, *Pedagogika religii* [Pedagogy of Religion], [in:] *Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku...* [Pedagogic Encyclopaedia of the 21st Century...], pp. 244–248.

institutes have been established as well, including The Culham College Institute, Welsh National Centre for Religious Education run by L. J. Francis, and the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit headed by R. Jackson. The latter conducts international research on religious education with reference to politics and culture³⁵.

Polish pedagogy of religion received a strong intellectual impulse in the early 1990s. In 1990, Władysław Kubik established a chair of pedagogy of religion at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Society of Jesus in Krakow (today's Jesuit University "Ignatianum"). Since that moment, the term *pedagogy of religion* has been present in the dictionary of social and theological disciplines. Then, also in Krakow, the journals "Rocznik sekcji Pedagogiki Religijnej" ["Yearbook of Religious Pedagogy Section" and "Horyzonty Wychowania" ["Horizons of Education"] were established, and the publishing series "Library of Religious Pedagogy" was initiated. This research centre induced the creation of common ground for discussion on the scope of cooperation between theology and pedagogy at the academic level. The second key factor in the development of the Polish pedagogy of religion was the establishment of the Christian Education Department headed by Jerzy Bagrowicz at the Institute of Pedagogy of the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun. The next step was the founding of the periodical "Pedagogia Christiana" in 1997, edited by Bagrowicz, which included interdisciplinary works combining the scope of theology and pedagogy. The journal also noticeably attempted to overcome confessionary limitations. The third impulse was establishing a chair of pedagogy of religion headed by Bogusław Milerski at the Christian Theological Academy in Warsaw. This initiative was all the more significant as it involved researchers of religious education from outside the Catholic community, which promoted balance in intellectual works concerning the whole of Christianity. The following years brought further developments: in 2001 Jerzy Bagrowicz established the Department of Catechetics and Pedagogy of Religion at the Faculty of Theology of Nicolaus Copernicus University, and a year later Cyprian Rogowski founded a parallel chair at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn. At the same time the Department of Christian Pedagogy and Dialogue, led by Romuald Niparko, was established at the University of Adam Mickiewicz in Poznań. The culmination and confirmation of the international range of Polish pedagogy of religion was the founding of the journal "Keryks" that publishes current research output in Polish and German language versions. It was possible thanks to Cyprian Rogowski and collaboration with the Catholic University of Lublin and the University of Vienna³⁶.

³⁵ B. Milerski, *Pedagogika religii* [Pedagogy of Religion], [in:] *Religia, Encyklopedia PWN* [Religion, Encyclopaedia of PWN], pp. 53–54; *idem*, *Pedagogika religii* [Pedagogy of Religion], [in:] *Pedagogika, subdyscypliny i dziedziny wiedzy o edukacji...* [Pedagogy, Subfields and Areas of Knowledge about Education...], pp. 55–68.

³⁶ C. Rogowski, *Pedagogika religii* [Pedagogy of Religion], *Leksykon pedagogiki religii...* [Lexicon of Pedagogy of Religion...], pp. 561–565.

Pedagogy of religion in the last decade has received institutional and organisational foundations which enable development in a very broad spectrum of subjects. Researchers during this time made attempts "...to embrace the achievements of European pedagogy of religion, especially from German-speaking areas; they developed theoretical foundations of religious education in various teaching environments (parishes, schools, peer groups, etc.), addressed the subjects of religious education in a pluralistic society, pedagogical status of teaching religion at school and the educational dimension of schooling"³⁷. Close cooperation between Polish and German educators has also been established, and it resulted in the annual Polish-German Congresses of Religious Education, held since 2009, as well as in creating the international journal "Keryks"³⁸.

In the entire discourse of pedagogy of religion at the turn of the 20th and 21st-century, understood as a critical field for contemporary social and cultural changes, a strong tendency to seek up-to-date content and tools has become more and more prominent. The works representing this trend are present especially in contemporary discussions on the shape of theories, concepts, trends or models of today's religious education. This assortment of notions, however, amounts to two key questions, namely: what educational theories should contemporary religious education be based on, and what tools or methods should be used to convey its content. Both matters are inextricably intertwined, because usually a particular theory entails the use of a specific method or epistemic tool. The chosen theory also determines the thematic area. It affects the proportion between the particular disciplines of knowledge, specifically between theology and pedagogy.

Critical studies in the pedagogy of religion

In the second half of the 20th century, the pedagogy of religion developed rapidly, also due to entering research co-operations with other disciplines. Germany, Austria, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the USA, Scandinavian countries and Poland are all exemplary countries where the reflection of religious education basing on Protestantism, Catholicism or Anglicanism has become extremely important for understanding the contemporary socio-cultural changes. At the same time, the development of pedagogy of religion has been connected with a practical analysis of the role and place of religion in everyday life: originally in the individual dimension, then in the community, and consequently also in the society. The links between teaching religion in schools and general education in a pluralis-

³⁷ B. Milerski, *Pedagogika religii* [Pedagogy of Religion], [in:] *Religia, Encyklopedia PWN...* [Religion, Encyclopaedia of PWN...], p. 54.

³⁸ C. Rogowski, *Czasopisma pedagogiczno-religijne niemieckojęzyczne* [Magazines on Pedagogy of Religion in the German Language], [in:] *Leksykon pedagogiki religii...* [Lexicon of Pedagogy of Religion], pp. 89–90.

tic society, have in time become both the main category of description and the topic of works in the field of religious pedagogy. The emergence of works within the social sciences, which embraced the notion of religion objectively, created a new space in which broadly understood religious education had to be redefined. What required further specification was the relationship between religious education and such categories as: *human development in the process of upbringing and teaching, family, social change, social pluralism, communication and media*, as well as many other contemporary social phenomena³⁹. Thanks to the findings of the contemporary social sciences, especially general psychology and the psychology of human development, pedagogy of religion has been faced with a significant challenge in the overall process of education and childrearing. The key questions of the following text are: what exactly is the overall education/childrearing process, how should it be understood in this context, and what would be the challenge for pedagogy of religion?

The process of education and childrearing is defined as a set of activities aimed at shaping a human in the physical, intellectual, moral, spiritual or religious aspect⁴⁰. What is meant by “the human being” in this case is an indivisible and integral psycho-physical structure, seeking development in every sphere of their life. This is a significant provision for the entire educational process, because ideas for education and development of the human personality in limited areas only are always conditioned by a concrete ideological or political content. The history of the 20th century witnessed many of such educational models: fascism – raising a human in national socialism (for the nation), Nazism – raising a human within a race (for the chosen “race”), and communism – raising a human in a secular community (for the common good). These are just some examples of overt educational ideologies that deliberately reduced anthropology to ideologically self-serving moulds. Interestingly, the above mentioned 20th-century examples prove that the category of religion was not always reduced or excluded (like in Stalinism, communism, etc.), but sometimes it was used systemically to justify ideological content and practical goals (Nazism, fascism, etc.). In this case, the comprehensive and integrating structure of education seems to be an alternative to overtly ideological childrearing theories, both in the individual space of

³⁹ The explanation of the critical research area was made here basing on the most current discussions on the Polish pedagogy of religion. See: B. Śliwerski, *Pedagogika* [Pedagogy], [in:] *Encyklopedia Pedagogiczna XXI wieku...* [Pedagogical Encyclopaedia of the 21st century...], pp. 100–102; J. Bagrowicz, *Pedagogika religii* [Pedagogy of Religion], *ibid.*, pp. 242–249; *idem*, *Pedagogika chrześcijańska* [Christian Pedagogy], *ibid.*, pp. 212–225; Z. Marek, *Religia w szkole* [Religion at School], *ibid.*, pp. 222–223; A. Rynio, *Wychowanie religijne* [Religious Education], *ibid.*, pp. 456–457; J. Niewęglowski, *Wychowanie chrześcijańskie* [Christian Education], *ibid.*, pp. 313–335; J. Mastalski, *Wychowanie w kulturze chrześcijańskiej* [Education in Christian Culture], *ibid.*, pp. 482–487. It should be noted, however, that these matters certainly do not cover the entire area of critical studies, but rather serve as an example of the most current discussions on the subject.

⁴⁰ J. Bagrowicz *Pedagogika religii* [Pedagogy of Religion], [in:] *Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku...* [Pedagogic Encyclopaedia of the 21st Century...], pp. 243–244.

freedom and development of every human being, and in the dimension of local communities and entire societies⁴¹.

Secondly, it is assumed here that the human psychological structure needs formation and an introduction into the socio-cultural space to undertake interactions, which then enable further personal and social development of the individual. This space is always conditioned by the particular rules, norms or principles of a given society. Rules and norms explicitly or implicitly representing values from a given ethics are also the basic teaching content of religious education. We refer here to contemporary open education addressing the concepts of axiology, namely: tolerance, respect for others, responsibility, dialogue skills and consciousness of participation and creation of culture, etc.

Thirdly, in every human there is a personal space expressing itself in the pursuit of freedom and the need for self-determination. This sphere also requires realising, eliciting and demonstrating how to existentially implement it. Developing it strengthens rational, predictable and coherent behaviours. It supports making choices about our worldview and it encourages attitudes that are morally and socially acceptable. Also in this context religion and the associated education not only introduces and justifies the above-mentioned concepts and values, but above all develops a coherent internal anthropology. It seems to respond to the current needs of individuals in a society, in particular to the essential personal needs to comprehend the most existentially important questions, such as the meaning of life, purpose for values and relationship with broadly understood transcendence⁴².

It seems, therefore, that the process of shaping and developing a human personality may substantially benefit from religious education as it enriches and broadens self-understanding, understanding others and the world. It should be clearly stated, however, that this is only possible within the *critical pedagogy of religion*, which implicitly embraces the assumption that the goal of every education is to enable a human being to achieve the autonomy and freedom that leads to internal maturity. This supposition applies to all education, including religious education, which aims at instilling in a human a personality with a *mature religious structure*. This concept derives from the psychology of religion and it denotes a personality which, on the one hand, is characterized by a fixed content and normative structure, and on the other is open and processual, recognizing as a priority its own freedom and independence in relation to all cultural and social structures, including structures within a given religion. This assumption is significant in a way that the identity of an individual and compatibility between religious and psychological dimensions can only be accomplished within a mature human psyche, which

⁴¹ However, it has to be recognized that religious education in its essence is also directly connected with the wide range of ideological conditions, which may result from religion itself. See *Pedagogika* [Pedagogy], B. Milerski, B. Śliwerski (eds.), pp. 241–242.

⁴² J. Bagrowicz *Pedagogika religii* [Pedagogy of Religion], [in:] *Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku...* [Pedagogical Encyclopaedia of the 21st Century...], pp. 244–247.

very often opposes traditional, conservative or fundamentalist forms of religious life. Transposing religious content into everyday life and vice versa, which results in the development of an autonomous human personality, is only possible when an individual is open and ready to change, has a strong identity and self-esteem and is capable of intrapersonal and social dialogue⁴³.

The state of mature religiosity facilitates forming a flexible psychological structure, which enables continuous development on the intellectual, psychological, axiological or spiritual level. In this case, the considerable explanation, consolidation and classification of moral values that religious content provides, can lead to the clarification and internalisation of norms and values in an individual's life. This allows not only contestation or dissonance with norms that the individual finds inconsistent with their convictions resulting from social relations, but it also enables creating one's own system of values that reinforces the sense of identity and boosts self-esteem. Furthermore, religious education advocates the sacralisation of values and seeks an inner sense in the transience of life and inevitability of death. Such interpretations can contribute to strengthening the sense of a person's security and emotional stability. Moreover, the introduction of a transcendent frame of reference, a higher sense or the meta-law present in religion in the concept of God, may result in building consent and an openness to one's own fate and to critical situations in the face of suffering, death or illness⁴⁴.

Another important issue for critical research in pedagogy of religion is the relationship between the content of religious education and a human's life at the family level⁴⁵. Assessment of the contemporary condition of the family usually results from ideological assumptions, most often associated with a given religious or ideological system. Regardless of the critical interpretations, there is a certain overlap in the content addressed by both the family and religion. Both these categories correlate on two levels: individual and religious. The individual scope defines the family as a primal element analysed independently of social structure. It covers all manifestations of religious life in practice, which affects the inner existence of the family, independently of the Church or religious community. The second level is the social dimension, where the family is not only set, but also it is a source of influence and it is conditioned by the religious life. The first dimen-

⁴³ There is a direct correlation between immature religiosity and ideological forms of social participation, where the higher the degree of immature religiosity, the higher the probability of using religion as a socio-political ideology. This process can lead to explicitly ideological education. See Z. Chlewiński, *Religijność dojrzała i niedojrzała* [Mature and Immature Religiosity], pp. 111–115, *Pedagogika* [Pedagogy], B. Milerski, B. Śliwerski (eds.), pp. 241–242.

⁴⁴ A part of the critical debate, expressed in the analyzes pointing to the adverse psychological consequences of the influence of religion on the human psyche is deliberately omitted here, due to the above introduction of the category of a religiously mature psyche. See J. Bagrowicz, *Pedagogika religii* [Pedagogy of Religion], [in:] *Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI...* [Pedagogical Encyclopaedia of the 21st Century...], pp. 243–249; Z. Chlewiński, *Religijność dojrzała i niedojrzała* [Mature and Immature Religiosity], pp. 105–114.

⁴⁵ The discussion around the definition of family is intentionally omitted, as this issue requires a separate detailed analysis, which is not the subject here.

sion shows the correlation between family religious practices and family development, and the second – between community religious practices and their social consequences⁴⁶.

Again, the religiosity referred to here is, by definition, mature religiosity, which seems to affect understanding and the existence of a family regardless of the role assumed in the structure of participation. Moreover, the processes mentioned here directly affects family members, not only when they derive from conscious intentions, plans or actions, but also when they are unconscious but consistent with a given system of activities and goals. Specifically, these would be the transpositions of the contents of social hierarchy, the natural order, the right of priority, roles within the community, individual rights, etc., which overlap with the theological content, and prove to have an existential or even practical meaning in the life of a family. Typical examples include the following: shared family meals interpreted as an expression of integration and the recognizing of the importance of each of the family members; shared prayer representing an awareness of common goals and equality before the law, that is, before transcendence; the strengthening of the authority of parents within the hierarchy resulting from the theological content; but also the uniqueness and individuality of each family member regardless of the place occupied or the role played, reflecting the structure of a religious community or the Church. This analysis mainly refers to the individual and personal dimension, where the content of religious education affects the everyday course of life of the whole family, but also on the other hand, sets goals and tasks, and thus the norms of action. These norms, in turn, apply to all family members, though not in the same way, which consequently reveals another dimension of the collaboration between religion and the family, namely – the dimension of socialisation.

As mentioned above, examples of mutual influence between religion and the family may support the harmonious and integral development of both a family and an individual, the more so if the religiousness at the community level is based on mature criteria and norms. These criteria originate directly from the mature religious psyche which embraces autonomy and freedom within a given church or religion. This, in turn, translates into the autonomy of individuals in the family, and independence corresponding to age and the life situation, but granted to every member in the family⁴⁷.

There is a strong correlation between the theological content in the social teaching of most Christian churches and the needs of a family understood as an element of the social structure. This correlation is most evident in socialisation in its broad sense, whose main sense is inclusion: initially including an individual

⁴⁶ J. Bagrowicz, *Pedagogika religii* [Pedagogy of Religion], [in:] *Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku...* [Pedagogic Encyclopedia of the 21st Century...], pp. 245–246.

⁴⁷ The issue of objectifying the family as a political category in the context of general and religious education is not the subject of a detailed analysis here, but it should be noted that this context is most often directly related to immature or not fully mature religiosity. See Z. Chlewiński, *Religijność dojrzała i niedojrzała...* [Mature and Immature Religiosity...], pp. 115–119.

in a family structure, and then the family in the social structure and in parallel including a family in the structure of the religious community. Family is not only the sum of the constituting individuals, but above all it is a partially independent unit, going beyond the quantitative understanding of the given group. This entity has its own structure of affinity, distinctive norms and moral values. The family is the subject of conditioning both from the side of society and religion, which means that it is treated as an end in itself – a supra-individual goal. It is shaped in terms of rights, obligations, privileges, and social and religious goals, which are aligned in order to support its internal development and partial independence from other social or religious entities. The family can also be used for manipulation, both in politics and in religion (by the Church). In this case, the family becomes a leverage in the broadly understood struggle for power, so its needs or internal goals are used as arguments. The family – implicitly and partly unconsciously – becomes an element of ideology, taught openly within the course of both general and religious education.

Another important element of critical study and analysis in both the religious and general education is the category of modern society, in particular its pluralism. Distinctive features of contemporary society include not only increased communication dynamics, high technology, fast information transfer, etc., but above all, an unprecedented openness and permeability of the cultural content of local societies that go to make up global society. It is a multifaceted and heterogeneous process on the scale of the whole world. However, in this dynamic structure of constant changes taking place in the society of the 21st century, a human, as never before, urgently needs a way, a tool or a language to comprehend the surrounding reality. Rapid social changes engender particular effects, such as alienation and estrangement. In this case possessing a tool for understanding change allows not only finding a fundamental overview of the world, but also determining one's own position. Due to this fact, the knowledge coming from both the general and religious education seems an opportunity but also a necessity to build the broadest perspective of understanding possible. This understanding, this broad perspective for perceiving what currently surrounds us, requires an epistemic method of viewing an event at various angles, from different worldviews and different morals. It is a difficult method, regarded as utopian at times, but it seems to stem not from theoretical assumptions, but from the vital needs of a human in the 21st century. This broad understanding of the world and oneself is to facilitate the construction of a worldview that is possibly free from stereotypes, myths or cultural, social or religious dogmas. The above epistemological outline shows the mutual permeability of the goals and tasks of the general and religious education in the context of pluralistic society⁴⁸. There is also a strong correlation between a pluralistic society and contemporary religions. This correlation consists in the

⁴⁸ J. Bagrowicz, *Pedagogika religii* [Pedagogy of Religion], [in:] *Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku...* [Pedagogical Encyclopaedia of the 21st century...], p. 248.

hermeneutical dependence occurring in the culture of the 21st century between the global society and religions of the world. Basing on the internal context, pedagogy of religion reveals mutual relations between society and religion. The hermeneutics of connections has at least several aspects, but socialisation appears to be the most crucial one. When discussing socialisation, the pedagogy of religion, which is based on the social teaching of a given Church or religion, focuses its attention on trying to answer current questions and solving today's most pressing problems of a given religious group which is also a local community. Such an attitude may lead to more conscious understanding of rapid social changes, as it is constantly revised and reflected upon. In this case, religion directly affects human beings in their "here and now", i.e. the current situation, modifying the society locally and globally. There is, however, another side of the above influence, where pluralism and the ever-growing socio-cultural diversity are a challenge for religious education, but also a cause and driving force for internal changes in its structure. Religious education has the potential to influence the way how a human understands the modern world, due to expanding the sphere of conscious participation in it. But religions are also mobilized for internal development of their educational role. They are challenged to reformulate their language, and sometimes their theories and dogmas as well. Thus religions of the world exert an influence but also are influenced to develop by the surrounding world. Hence, contemporary religious education is one of the hermeneutic tools for understanding the world and a human being⁴⁹.

The dynamic structure of modern society makes room for the issue of new religious movements, where religious education, including the pedagogy of religion, can play quite a significant role providing reliable knowledge about new communities and denominations within specific religions, but also about isolated groups or ideological cults. In this matter, contemporary media and advanced communication technology play a double role. On the one hand, they are a source of very rich and easily available knowledge about world religions and new religious movements that would require long and tedious research several years earlier. On the other hand, however, these sources may be used to proliferate unproven and unreliable information, which may result in the spread of psychologically dangerous organisations and groups that meet the structural criteria of cognitive, emotional or psychological sects.

Alongside social, philosophical and psychological research, there have been instances of critical studies whose subject matter is the didactics and methodology of religious education. Following Bogusław Milerski, we can distinguish at least a few main methodological and subject matter problems in modern pedagogy of religion that constitute a critical academic discourse on religious education. The first one is the discussion on the current academic and methodological status of the pedagogy of religion, consisting in the search for theoretical foundations and

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

empirical justifications on the basis of the theory of science and research methodology. The second is the polemic about the contribution of the pedagogy of religion and the theory of general education. This contribution is discussed in the analysis of the correlation of both the theory and the tools of the above dimensions of education. The third area for discussion is the relationship between pedagogy of religion and cross-cultural education as a joint intellectual effort to respond to the contemporary needs of a pluralistic society⁵⁰.

Conclusion

Alongside the above-mentioned contemporary discussions on the critical pedagogy of religion, there are many more questions and issues that have not been addressed in this text. The essence of critical studies is noticing the instances of using religious content for obscure educational purposes, which usually go far beyond the standard scope of education. An instance of this could be the creating of a false opposition or a dichotomy between the course of general and religious education. These divisions usually result from political or ideological premises and are primarily based on the reduction of human cognitive capabilities, rejecting the tenet of the cumulative theory of knowledge. At this point, the integrating, holistic form of the general education, which inherently includes religion, seems to be to some extent a consequence of the critical studies in pedagogy of religion. Due to the mutual correlation of these dimensions of education, the general education may gain more width through the analysis of explicit and implicit areas of existence from the axiological sphere. In religious education, on the other hand, it may result in a methodological opening and accessing fundamental socio-cultural analyses. It should be remembered, however, that the priority in the critical paradigm of religious studies is not the possibility of their application or adaptation to current needs, but above all – the creation of a conscious and self-critical theory and pedagogical practice in the religious life of an individual.

Summary

Critical pedagogy of religion – an outline

The purpose of this article is to present the genesis and the development of religious education in the critical paradigm aspect. The main thesis introduces 20th century pedagogical and religious inquiries by means of analysis primarily involved in the phase of ideological and critical interpretation. A few major traditions connected with religious education are discussed, including the American, Anglo-Saxon and German research es-

⁵⁰ B. Milerski, *Pedagogika religii* [Pedagogy of Religion], [in:] *Pedagogika, subdyscypliny i dziedziny wiedzy o edukacji...* [Pedagogy, Subfields and Areas of Knowledge about Education...], pp. 60–67.

established at the beginning of the 20th century and most intensively developed over the interwar period, due to the demands of liberal theology and emancipation trends. The German analysis appears to be crucial, with its demands of critical reviews of religious upbringing in the Protestant Church in Germany, where they were initiated mainly by educators and school teachers. Religious education based on the critical paradigm was not focused on shaping theology, monotheism or even evangelicality then, but above all humanity in the excellent form of its Divine origin. The text not only presents the aspect of critical religious education, but at the same time discusses selected aspects of social, psychological or philosophical research. Therefore, the issues of upbringing and religious education receive a wider range of possible criteria and tools enabling its understanding. The research mostly concerns contemporary matters present in Polish religious education and a crucial role is played by the works of C. Rogowski, B. Milerski and J. Bagrowicz.

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