

Pregledni znanstveni članek/Article (1.02)

Bogoslavni vestnik/Theological Quarterly 81 (2021) 3, 733—745

Besedilo prejeto/Received:05/2021; sprejeto/Accepted:08/2021

UDK/UDC: 366.1:37.01:27

DOI: 10.34291/BV2021/03/Osewska

© 2021 Osewska et al., CC BY 4.0

Elżbieta Osewska and Józef Stala

The Human Being Lost in Consumerism: A Polish Perspective and Challenges in Religious Education

*V potrošništvu izgubljeno človeško bitje:
poljski pogled in izzivi verske vzgoje*

Abstract: The contemporary educational context is very diversified, but in most European countries is based on postmodernity with all its conditions, with special emphasis on individualism, consumerism and cultural changes. The predominance of ‚the dictatorship of consumerism‘ leaves most Christian among them Poles in a position where, if they wish to retain their cultural independence, must understand the present challenges and stand against a powerful ideological tsunami. Taking into consideration a variety of challenges and threats arising from ‚liquid modernity‘, among them strong consumerism, it is important in accord with personalistic theory inspirations to support Christian religious education. This article explores the changes that have taken place in Poland in the last 30 years – the transition from a socialist to a capitalist society, with emphasis put on the challenges posed by consumerism. Then, evaluates consumerism and its consequences in the light of Pope John Paul II’s teaching. In the last part presents the most important conclusions for Christian Religious Education in schools, especially the need for more issue-oriented education in order to help pupils to be critical thinkers discerning contemporary social, cultural and moral issues.

Keywords: Christian religious education, consumerism, individualism, personalistic approach, Poland

Povzetek: Sodobni vzgojni kontekst je zelo raznolik, a v večini evropskih držav temelji na postmoderni z vsemi njenimi pogojenostmi, zlasti na individualizmu, na potrošništvu in na kulturnih spremembah. Prevlada »diktature potrošništva« vodi večino kristjanov med Poljaki v položaj, v katerem morajo razumeti sedanje izzive in se upreti močnemu ideološkemu viharju, če želijo ohraniti svojo kulturno samostojnost. Upoštevajoč različne izzive in nevarnosti, ki izhajajo iz ‚tekoče moderne‘, med njimi izrazito potrošništvo, je v skladu z navdihmi personalistične teorije pomembno podpirati krščansko versko vzgojo. Članek obravnava spremembe, ki so se zgodile na Poljskem v zadnjih tridesetih letih – prehod

iz socialistične v kapitalistično družbo s poudarkom na izzivih, spodbujenih zaradi potrošništva. Nato ovrednoti potrošništvo in njegove posledice v luči nauka papeža Janeza Pavla II. V zadnjem delu pa predstavi najpomembnejše sklepe za krščansko versko vzgojo v šolah, zlasti potrebo po bolj tematsko usmerjenem pouku: učencem naj bi pomagal, da postanejo kritični misleci, ki presojujejo sodobna družbena, kulturna in moralna vprašanja.

Ključne besede: krščanska verska vzgoja, potrošništvo, individualizem, personalistični pristop, Poljska

1. Introduction

In the Christian view, the person has its dignity and, at the same time, is called to become who he/she is by ontological nature. A critical analysis of the situation of the contemporary human being, as well as the current educational challenges arising predominantly from the historical, political, ideological, juridical, social, cultural, religious, economic and financial context, leads to some conclusions (Bahovec 2015). Among them, especially one related to the main issue of this article is that in the European society of the 21st century, the human being is inundated with proposals of consumption which has increased to unprecedented extents. ‚A consumer society‘ not only implies that people take, use and consume, as this has always been an indispensable element of life. What has changed is the wide range of products available for consumption. Unlike the productive society that contributes to industry development, contemporary society has enthroned consumption – it is consumption that our social position depends on. In order to function well, today’s society does not seek righteous people, devoted workers, economic farmers or talented innovators, but naive, thoughtless consumers. Thus, the existential dilemma of a contemporary man is as follows: do I consume to live, or do I live in order to consume?

In order to respond to the above dilemma and present challenges, the authors of this article give a critical assessment of Polish socio-cultural reality, then evaluate consumerism through critical reflection in the light of Pope John Paul II’s teaching and consequently give conclusions in order to change Christian Religious Education.

2. From Empty Shelves to Abundant Consumerism

According to Polish educationalist, Furmanek »consumerism is a subjectively and negatively perceived phenomenon of excessive individual consumption of goods« (2020). Scholars such as Gocko and Janowski emphasize that »consumerism is a worldview or attitude based on a selfishly understood concept of happiness /.../ in which the spiritual dimension in man is subordinate to the material one« (Gocko and Janowski 2002).

Consumerism is a phenomenon that goes beyond real needs to the buying and gathering of various material goods and the use of services offered by the market. Inordinate consumption is associated with satisfying our secondary needs, such as the lust for power, gaining prestige or higher social status. Thus consumerism is, on the one hand, enforced by personal factors, and on the other by cultural, civilizational changes. Apart from excessive accumulation of items or availing oneself of services that one perceives as indispensable, consumerism also encompasses building-specific images and promoting new styles of being (Osewska and Simonič 2019, 23–32).

In the period 1944–1989, when Poland was under the political influence of the USSR, we lacked the basic products that were essential for living, so that gaining them was part of a daily struggle to sustain oneself. The dramatic inability to satisfy consumer needs was deeply humiliating – we could not simply buy a product but had to ‚hunt‘ for it, ‚bag‘ it or get it thanks to one’s connections. The goods were not delivered regularly but ‚plumped‘ to the shops. In order to buy certain commodities, one often had to enrol on a special list; there were ‚queue committees‘ meant to keep order as only a few first were lucky enough to get what they had lined up for. In such circumstances, Poles learned how to be frugal and, as it was commonly called, »to make up something out of nothing«. Their creativity was virtually unique.

On the other hand, the situation contributed to forming strong bonds within the family, among friends and neighbours: people had to help each other in order to survive. Personal relationships were intense, authentic and vibrant (in contrast to the superficial actions taken in the public sphere, which were only a facade). The older generation of Poles who lived in a socialist state learned how to settle for little and focused on evolving culture instead (Cobel-Tokarska 2014, 22–37). Consumer revolution took place after the political transformation, especially among young and wealthy inhabitants of big cities. A rampant rush to consume resulted in many people living on credit, taking loans beyond reason in order to get the material goods of their dreams.

The Poles’ experience of Soviet socialism generated distrust and antagonism towards the system imposed on them and aroused an optimistic and even idealistic interest in the societies of Western Europe. Enslaved by the Soviet influence, Poles considered Western societies ideal: their citizens could grow, fully enjoying the rights they did not have under communism. Thus, Poles held great expectations about changing the socio-political system, the shift from enslavement to complete freedom. Unfortunately, the new reality disappointed their hopes as ‚the ideal world‘ on the other side of the Iron Curtain had more drawbacks than expected. The longed-for freedom turned out to be accompanied by political correctness.

Moreover, the free choice related to the realm of consumption proved to be illusive. Initially, Poles relished the chance to shop at supermarkets because they inadvertently assumed that – in contrast to socialism which deceived citizens and

lied to them – capitalism presented the truth, also as far as material goods were concerned. Learning the secrets of advertising mechanisms has been a painful experience for many Poles (Sowa 2003, 4–6). To this day, Polish seniors are easily manipulated by ‚usury companies‘ that present low-quality yet expensive products as healthy and indispensable.

Changes in Polish society manifested themselves in rising sales of many consumer goods, especially after 2004 – Poland formal accession to the European Union (Szlendak 2004). In 2007 purchases of flats and houses, especially in cities centres, received a boost from cheap mortgage credits, whose 2007 value reached 57 billion Polish zlotych (18 billion US\$), according to the Polish Banks Association. The most critical factors influencing consumption growth in Poland include an increase in real incomes, appreciation of the domestic currency, easy access to consumer credit, and growing consumer aspirations. The 21st century brought extreme manifestations of consumption of all goods in Poland, supported by the expansion of the Internet, international mobility, a convincing hedonistic pressure in the media and the increasing shopping practice in malls. Another trend characteristic of consumer societies is eating out. In the past, Poles liked eating at home in the family circle. In 2006, eating-out expenditure rose 19% compared to 2004 and is still growing despite the pandemic (Mróz and Janoś-Kresto 2006). Three main trends can be defined: ‚health and safety‘ (growing importance of product origins, quality, meals nutritional value and dietetic aspects), ‚convenience‘ (high demand for ‚fast food‘), ‚pleasure and experience-seeking‘ (interest in ethnic cuisines, attention to interiors design and courses composition, individualization of consumption). These developments demonstrate that consumption and related materialistic values have been gaining ground in Polish society (Kowalczyk and Czarniecka-Skubina 2015, 75–83). On the negative side, Poles noted the increase in individualism, consumerism and weakening of interpersonal ties. Problems connected with the new consumption models should consider the need to preserve natural resources and respect for the system of values (Jastrzębska-Smolaga 2000). Unfortunately, the consumption in Polish society slowly turns into consumerism when it ceases to be the means and becomes the goal of life and such a dominant activity that ‚have‘ is completely subordinated to what ‚to be‘ points out (Marianiński 2006; 2008).

Poles are attached to Christianity. Therefore, currently, in Poland, Christian symbolism is found in shopping centres. However, it is objectified; used as a tool to achieve higher profit. Buying has become an ersatz sacred rite. Shopping centres are built ‚in the image‘ of temples: they are supposed to attract consumers with their grandeur, decorativeness and distinctiveness. Consumers believe the advertising and almost generally consent to the structure of supermarkets going around all spheres of their lives. Thus, this structure becomes the main point of reference to which all other structures are compared (Pieszak 2013, 78–81). The new ‚religion‘ is built on beautiful adornments found in shopping malls: fountains, exotic plants, music, or the shopping calendar that spotlights dates and festivals before which one ought to shop extensively.

In this context, a consumer becomes a valuable member of society: he/she buys quickly, acquires and uses new goods and feels at ease with the world of advertising, companies, brands and products. It seems that the contemporary human has given up the dictum »I think, therefore I am« or »I love, therefore I am« and leans towards »I consume, therefore I am«. A contemporary Pole will work harder and harder, focusing on receiving a higher salary and looking out for his interests in order to strengthen his position as a consumer. A postmodern consumer is not only focused on possessing, hoarding and showing material goods; he also has – hitherto unknown to him – new desires, sensations, pleasures and experiences. The world of the media and carefully targeted advertising only fuels the pressure to gain things faster and more effectively. This violent shift from a productive society to a consumer society has made a breakthrough in all aspects of personal, family, working, social and cultural life (Halawa and Wróbel 2008, 13–19).

Polish expert, Kawecki points out that, in order to satisfy his artificially induced desires, a postmodern man can turn into a workaholic, ruin his health, neglect his family, lie to friends and concede to corruption. He will do all this to be in the centre of consumption, use recognizable brands and impress others. Thus, regular consumption becomes a constant pursuit of material goods and appeasing desires (Kawecki 2011, 23–32). Postmodern consumption entails shopping addiction, hoarding, and drawing attention to oneself. What is more, an ambitious consumer is aware that things are disposable, so that his deepest desires will not be satisfied as there will always be something new, more alluring to get. Life, therefore, becomes a constant striving towards obtaining the new, a social position and recognition.

In contemporary society, people consume goods pervasively because of their symbolic meaning rather than their utilitarian nature (Wątroba 2009, 153). That is why they often choose products advertised by huge, global companies identified everywhere. According to new assumptions, our position and prestige are determined by the logo of recognizable companies – our belonging to a more or less affluent social group depends on it. Moreover, they also carry cultural codes: experts in global corporations use cultural codes to effectively market products that target consumers from various cultures. Especially in Poland, where people did not have easy access to basic commodities, the availability or even overabundance of goods initially contributed to consumers' confusion. Later they learned that a recognizable brand guarantees their distinction in the crowd (Barber 2007). Paradoxically, global companies develop products desired by various social groups. Thus, every consumer will find an item that will be precious to him, recognized and accepted in his in-group.

Consumption propaganda, rapidly developing due to information technologies, creates the impression that one belongs to a particular group only if one buys certain products. In postmodern society, the propaganda is not only about controlling consumer's behaviour but also about creating a consumer's culture mainly through exerting a massive influence on the media by the corporation and bank

presidents. By being in control of creating and publishing content in the media, global corporations have a substantial impact on consumers, which can be perceived as consumer indoctrination (Safamacha 2015, 133; Osewska 2020).

3. Consumerism in the Light of John Paul II's Teaching

Pope John Paul II emphasized the phenomenon of growing consumerism: »The only goal which counts is the pursuit of one's own material well-being. The so-called ‚quality of life‘ is interpreted primarily or exclusively as economic efficiency, inordinate consumerism, physical beauty and pleasure, to the neglect of the more profound dimensions – interpersonal, spiritual and religious – of existence.« (1997b, no. 23)

The pope from Poland underlined the specific problems, challenges and threats emerging in modern societies.

»In earlier stages of development, the human being always lived under the weight of necessity. The needs were few and were determined, to a degree, by the objective structures of his physical make-up. Economic activity was directed towards satisfying these needs. It is clear that today the problem is not only one of supplying people with a sufficient quantity of goods, but also of responding to a *demand for quality*: the quality of the goods to be produced and consumed, the quality of the services to be enjoyed, the quality of the environment and life in general. To call for an existence that is qualitatively more satisfying is of itself legitimate, but one cannot fail to draw attention to the new responsibilities and dangers connected with this phase of history. How new needs arise and are defined is always marked by a more or less appropriate concept of man and his true good. A given culture reveals its overall understanding of life through the choices it makes in production and consumption. It is here that *the phenomenon of consumerism* arises /.../ In itself, an economic system does not possess the criteria for correctly distinguishing new and higher forms of satisfying human needs from artificial new needs which hinder the formation of a mature personality.« (1997a, no. 36)

Referring strongly to the assumptions of personalistic philosophy, John Paul II ceaselessly recalled the primacy of the person over the object, being over having, ethics over technology and love over justice (1997d, no. 15–16). These precepts basically cannot ‚function‘ separately in social life; they are so closely related that the implementation of one is impossible without the others. Since they constitute a system of principles, it is only within this coherent system, in the mutual relations of persons, that they may be accurately formulated and interpreted.

John Paul II contrasts the community of people, which may be called ‚the civilization of persons‘, with the utilitarian ‚civilization of things‘ in which persons are

objects for use just as things. The precept ,to be more' over ,to have more', therefore, must be associated with the conviction that personalization of social life cannot be ,carried out' if we do not respect the person as essentially having a value that is entirely incomparable with the world of objects. That is why it is crucial to stress the spiritual sphere of human life, which will enable the consumer to overcome the egoism that threatens him (1996, no. 8; 1997c, no. 6). In the encyclical letter, *Sollicitudo rei socialis* John Paul II rightly points out that mere possession of things and goods does not, by itself, perfect the person as it does not contribute significantly to enriching his ,being', to fulfilling his human vocation in its entirety (1997e, no. 28, 33; 1997d, no. 15). Indeed, consumerism may provide certain erratic pleasures, yet it does not bring true joy, which may be experienced only in a community where one shares everything with others.

The common good may be the primary factor around which the society of persons is built. When many people refer to the common good in their being and actions, then a new quality appears, which may be called ,we' (Wojtyła 2020). The Polish pope often argued that what Europe needs is not consumers but persons who respect the dignity of the human person and are ready to work for the sake of the common good (John Paul II 2003, no. 99).

John Paul II perceived personalism as the foundation for the actions of the human being and an opportunity to overcome consumerism. At the beginning of the 21st century, the personalistic social message is necessary if the human person is to be sensitive to the good beyond consumption, not only in Poland but also in every country. As John Paul II writes, this »social message will gain credibility more immediately from the *witness of actions* than as a result of its internal logic and consistency« (1997a, no. 57).

Despite a strong dictate that one must fulfil only one's personal, sometimes selfish aspirations mainly related to consumption, many contemporary Poles act for the benefit of others – either on their own or within various charitable organizations supporting people all over the world (Marody and Giza–Poleszczuk, 2004, 337). According to John Paul II, man becomes a fuller human being if he gives himself sincerely to others. Catholic personalism highlights the situation in which man is no longer neighbour-oriented and becomes blind to God, as the love of one's neighbour is one of the paths towards the Creator. Thus, personalism contrasts materialistic consumerism with the culture of solidarity and selfless love (Stala and Vodičar 2019).

Only the culture of love with its sensitivity, empathy, compassion and mercy may resist callous consumerism. When the culture of wealth turns a man into someone insensitive to the other, it becomes indispensable to liberate him in various ways from his egoistic desire to possess. »In our service of charity, we must be inspired and distinguished by a specific attitude: we must care for the other as a person for whom God has made us responsible. As disciples of Jesus, we are called to become neighbours to everyone (Lk 10:29-37), and to show special favour to those who are poorest, most alone and most in need.« (John Paul

II. 1997b, no. 87) An excellent example of this are the activities organised within *Caritas Polska (Caritas Poland)*, a charitable institution established in 1926, abolished by the communists and reactivated in 1990. Since 2004 it has had the status of a public benefit organization. It runs professional care and educational centres: Caritas Nursing Stations, rehabilitation centres, nursing and care facilities, nursing homes, Occupational Therapy Workshops, Single Mother Homes, feeding the poor, daycare centres for children, the elderly and other centres/initiatives. The works of Caritas stem from the idea of helping other people. Caritas engages volunteers (including children, the young as well as the elderly) in many of its activities. In the group of emergency aid organizations, there are Parish Caritas Teams and Caritas School Circles – they function in almost 5,000 parishes, with approximately 63,000 associated members (2014). Among parish organizations that provide emergency aid, one may find: Volunteering, Legal Counseling, Help to the Disabled People, Association of Disabled Adults, Maltese Medical Service, Sick Support Group, Children’s Community, as well as volunteering within various congregations and orders (Osewska 2017).

The contemporary human being faces a huge challenge that arises from a meaningless pursuit to enhance his abilities in the sphere of consumption. Inordinate ‘dispensability’ of material goods of all kinds often turns the human person into someone with a narrow range of perception and experience, a slave of possession and immediate satisfaction. Moreover, consumption has dominated other walks of life, some even as significant as science, morality, art and religion (Jacyno 2007, 56). In this context, educators, especially in Religious Education, need to reformulate their aims within a more educational language responding to the present challenges.

4. Conclusions and guidelines for Religious Education (RE)

Philosophical, theological, pedagogical and existential perspectives show that consumerism contributes to the destruction of the human being in various ways (Vodičar 2016). Constant pursuit to possess absorbs the person, wreaks havoc within the person and their relationships with others. A young person who consumes excessively experiences various limitations to his existence and yet feels that their desires and expectations are limitless even though they are almost entirely reduced to the materialistic realm.

Consumerism fuels egocentrism and hinders human growth; therefore, adequate education is urgently needed, especially a RE that will support the person to resist such enslavement. It is crucial to show that the overabundance of goods translates into human’s oppression. Therefore, moral and religious education must help educate the person to follow moral rules when satisfying their needs (Osewska 2020). The young person needs to reflect on what he/she possesses and what he/she truly needs.

»To call for an existence which is qualitatively more satisfying is of itself legitimate, but one cannot fail to draw attention to the new responsibilities and dangers connected with this phase of history /.../ In singling out new needs and new means to meet them, one must be guided by a comprehensive picture of man which respects all the dimensions of his being and which subordinates his material and instinctive dimensions to his interior and spiritual ones. If, on the contrary, a direct appeal is made to his instincts - while ignoring in various ways the reality of the person as intelligent and free - then *consumer attitudes* and *lifestyles* can be created which are objectively improper and often damaging to his physical and spiritual health.« (John Paul II 1997a, no. 36)

Moreover, consumerism highly contributes to the crisis of identity, especially among young Poles who, when confronted with a new reality, struggle with answering the question: »to be or to have? Shall I present myself to my peers as a posh consumer or someone who adheres to values?« This dilemma is a huge challenge for contemporary education in families, schools, and other educational institutions, but it is directly connected with RE in Polish schools. In the case of the Roman Catholic faith, the dominant one in Poland, the curriculum and textbooks are meticulously prepared by Church authorities and made known to the competent state authority. Other confessions and religious associations possess equal rights (Małosa and Zajac 2009). The moral formation is one of the crucial tasks of Catholic Religious Education, which concentrates on forming responsible attitudes of pupils and their capacity for moral judgment based on conscience. The sole knowledge of what is morally good and what is morally wrong is insufficient. On the one hand, moral education opens a human being for love, grace and mercy, shaping the attitude of penance and reconciliation; on the other hand, it exhibits the relationship between freedom and truth. A fundamental norm for moral formation is the command of love (Congregation for the Clergy 1997, no. 23).

Succumbing to consumerism may imply that freedom is misinterpreted, especially by the younger generation of Poles: here, freedom does not serve man's growth but his excessive consumption, not only in the sphere of material goods but also as a stimulant. Therefore, freedom must be shown to be good, which was and still is highly precious to the older generations of Poles. Young generations need to be educated on how to exercise it wisely.

Inordinate consumption leads to focusing on oneself and abandoning the precept of solidarity with the other. This is manifested by throwing away food, clothes, everyday objects that could still serve other people. So parents, teachers, and pedagogues are called to help young Poles be sensitive to their neighbours' needs, show solidarity, and share with others. In Polish schools, there are still initiatives to support those parts of the world in which people suffer poverty and hunger. However, the number of initiatives among children and youth is decreasing with the development of the consumer society. Instead, the older generation of Poles is still very attentive to the needs of others, and in the case of catastrophes and war, in particular, they regularly participate in financial and material fundraising.

A critical analysis of the situation of contemporary consumerism in Poland, as well as the current educational conditions arising predominantly from the political, social, cultural, educational and religious context, leads to the following conclusions:

- a. If the new reality called postmodernity or ‚liquid modernity‘ modifies and mixes the existing assumptions, norms and tenets, then it is crucial to help the young generation to consciously discern and choose so that they do not succumb to the imposed socio-cultural trends, but are capable of making their own deliberate decisions (Platovnjak 2017).
- b. Undermining the significance and potential of human reason for the sake of the domination of feelings, instincts and desires should encourage the family and RE in school to undertake conscious ‚education of emotions‘, showing that a person is not only subject to them but may work to understand better and control emotions. On the other hand, intellectual education should not consist in thoughtless reproduction of mental content but should include preparing young people to present their arguments respectfully towards partners in a discussion. (Vodičar 2017)
- c. Current reinforcement of individualization and consumerism that deepens egocentrism and weakens bonds with others requires a responsible emphasis on the significance of community in human life and growth, as well as a proper introduction to the life of a community (Osewska and Stala 2015).
- d. A characteristic trait of human living in postmodern society is ‚the crisis of meaning‘, which often leads to tragic consumerism, so RE should be focused on supporting young people in their search for comprehensive meaning in life (Crawford and Rossiter 2006).
- e. Faced with marginalization or removal of the virtue of self-giving from popular, contemporary culture, RE needs to emphasize the topic of role models, authorities, and leaders who sacrifice themselves for others and thanks to these role models, children and youth will recognize the significance of these virtues (Horonowski 2020).
- f. In the face of axiological chaos (promoted in postmodernity), which leads to anomie, RE must return to the proper understanding of virtues and values so that they are not another tool to manipulate society or simply conducive to political correctness. This means that RE in schools should cooperate with the family in the axiological sphere and search for suitable education models towards values.
- g. Postmodernity has turned consumption into consumerism, which considers consuming as the primary goal of life, a religion *per se*. While returning to the civilization of love, promoted by Pope John Paul II, in which being always has been a priority over having, it is necessary that the family and school jointly educate humans to discover human dignity regardless of material goods.
- h. In order to save the truth about humans and human dignity in the face of emer-

ging reductionisms of the human into consumer activities, it is necessary to educate in a way that fosters the correct answer to the question: who is human? The texts by Karola Wojtyła / John Paul II may be of great help here as they reveal all the dimensions of the human and human life, emphasizing the dignity of the person as the one created in the image of God, saved by Jesus Christ and constantly transformed by the Holy Spirit. Since it is of prime importance, RE must incorporate the criterion of human dignity and service to the real good of the human being.

- i. RE must be able to access the deepest possible understanding of the religion's convictions, appreciate the demands it makes on believers, but also engage with the actual pedagogical, ideological and socio-cultural challenges. It attempts to understand and engage with the inner world of the religion which cannot be adequately observed from the outside but demands theological knowledge and spiritual sensitivity (Davies 2019).
- j. Consumerism is strongly promoted by global companies and political action, so in order to dispose pupils towards personal change, RE must be authentic, support what comes from within them, and it must have the personal authorship and appropriation of personal change.
- k. Work in the field of education is urgently needed, including the education of young people to be wise consumers in the responsible use of their power of choice, the formation of a strong sense of responsibility, critical thinking and capability to respond to the contemporary challenges.
- l. Responsible education provided in the 21st century should be educationally realistic (recognizing threats and making the right educational decisions) as well as integral, that is, covering all spheres. It is crucial not to miss out on any aspect of the life and growth of a person. In the Christian perspective, an integral education must include not only earthly goals but also the redemptive purpose in life.
- m. Succumbing to consumerism undermines the hierarchy of values – today/at this moment it is the material goods which are on top. It is therefore, reasonable and responsible to educate in the formation of values and, within Christian pedagogy, to also encourage a formation in virtue.
- n. Consumerism is also associated with the destruction of the natural environment as disordered use of things ruins the resources of the planet. That is why it is necessary to make people sensitive to the ecological issue and educate children and youth in such a way that they respect nature both in their immediate surroundings as well as globally (Vodičar and Stala 2018, 415–427; Stala 2012, 41–59).

The theory of individualization, according to which the individual is the basic reality, has been strongly associated with consumerism imposed by global companies, as well as neoliberal freedom that is to satisfy the needs of individuals. Gradually, this leads to adopting subjectivism, lawlessness, egocentrism, egoism, emphasis on emotions not only by students but also by many educators, which is

far more dangerous. Consumerism and demoralization are often strengthened by ideological slogans that spread mainly thanks to Information and Communication technology. As a result, theories of education that have been developed over centuries are now being disrupted. Many teachers, educators, parents and priests in Poland understand that the problem is growing, but they are not prepared to face ‚predatory‘ consumerism. Therefore, it is necessary to return to the personalistic assumptions and formation of social virtues: love, solidarity, sacrifice, self-denial, responsibility and temperance in particular.

References

- Bahovec, Igor.** 2015. Christianity in confrontation with individualism and crisis of Western culture: person, community, dialog, reflexivity, and relationship ethics. *Bogoslovni vestnik* 75, no. 2:335–346.
- Barber, Benjamin R.** 2007. *Consumed: How Markets Corrupt Children, Infantilize Adults, and Swallow Citizens Whole*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Cobel-Tokarska, Marta.** 2014. W jakiej Polsce żyliśmy? Historyczno-społeczne tło przemian obyczajowych w PRL-u [What Kind of Poland Did We Live In? Historical and Social Background of Custom Changes in the People’s Republic of Poland]. In: Marta Cobel-Tokarska, ed. *Od obyczaju do mody. Przemiany życia codziennego*, 22-37. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej.
- Congregation for the Clergy.** 1997. General Directory for Catechesis. Vatican, 11. 8. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cclegry/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_17041998_directory-for-catechesis_en.html (accessed 5. 5. 2021).
- Crawford, Marisa, and Rossiter Graham.** 2006. *Reasons for Leaving. Education and young people’s search for meaning, identity and spirituality: A handbook*. Camberwell: ACER Press.
- Davies, Tanya.** 2019. Religious education and social literacy: the ‚white elephant‘ of Australian public education. *British Journal of Religious Education* 41, no. 2:124–133. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2017.1324758>
- Furmanek, Waldemar.** 2010. Konsumeryzm, konsumpcjonizm, wyzwania dla edukacji [Consumerism and Other Challenges Posed to Education]. *Bazhum*, 1. 1. http://bazhum.muzhp.pl/media/files/Edukacja_Technika_Informatyka/Edukacja_Technika_Informatyka-r-2010-t1-n1/Edukacja_Technika_Informatyka-r-2010-t1-n1-s13-22/Edukacja_Technika_Informatyka-r2010-t1-n1-s13-22.pdf (accessed 25. 8. 2020).
- Gocko, Jerzy, and Paweł Janowski.** 2002. Konsumpcjonizm [Consumerism]. In: Andrzej Szostek, Bogusław Migut, Robert Sawa, Krzysztof Gózdź, Józef Herbut, Stanisław Olczak and Remigiusz Popowski, eds. *Encyklopedia Katolicka*. Vol. 9, 741–742. Lublin: KUL.
- Halawa, Mateusz, and Paulina Wróbel, eds.** 2008. *Bauman o popkulturze [Zygmunt Bauman on Popculture]*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Akademickie i Profesjonalne.
- Horowski, Jarosław.** 2020. Christian religious education and the development of moral virtues: a neo-Thomistic approach. *British Journal of Religious Education* 42, no. 4:447–458. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2020.1752618>
- Jacyno, Małgorzata.** 2007. *Kultura indywidualizmu [The Culture of Individualism]*. Warsaw: PWN.
- Jastrzębska-Smolaga, Halina.** 2000. *W kierunku trwałej konsumpcji: Dylematy, zagrożenia, szanse*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- John Paul II.** 1996. Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris consortio. In: *Adhortacje Ojca Świętego Jana Pawła II.*, 87–208. Kraków: Znak.
- . 1997a. Encyclical Letter Centesimus annus. In: *Encykliki Ojca Świętego Jana Pawła II.*, 617–702. Kraków: Znak.
- . 1997b. Encyclical Letter Evangelium Vitae. In: *Encykliki Ojca Świętego Jana Pawła II.*, 838–987. Kraków: Znak.
- . 1997c. Encyclical Letter Laborem exercens (14 IX 1981). In: *Encykliki Ojca Świętego Jana Pawła II.*, 141–213. Kraków: Znak.
- . 1997d. Encyclical Letter Redemptor Hominis (4 III 1979). In: *Encykliki Ojca Świętego Jana Pawła II.*, 5–76. Kraków: Znak.
- . 1997e. Encyclical Letter Sollicitudo rei socia-

- lis (30 XII 1987). In: *Encykliki Ojca Świętego Jana Pawła II.*, 433–508. Kraków: Znak.
- . 2003. Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*. Wrocław: TUM.
- Janoś-Kreśto, Mirosława, and Bogdan Mróz, eds.** 2006. *Konsumenci i konsumpcja we współczesnej gospodarce*. Warsaw: Szkoła Główna Handlowa.
- Kawecki, Witold.** 2011. Kultura popularna a wychowanie do kultury wysokiej [Popular Culture and Education to High Culture]. In: Elżbieta Osewska, ed. *Wychowanie a wyzwania ponowoczesności*, 23–32. Warsaw: UKSW.
- Kowalczyk, Iwona, and Ewa Czarniecka-Skubina.** 2015. Eating out in Poland: History, Status, Perspectives and Trends. *Service Management* 16, no. 2:75–83.
- Mąkosza, Paweł, and Marian Zając.** 2009. Faithfulness to God and to people: Religious education in Poland. In: Hans-Georg Ziebertz and Ulrich Riegel, eds. *How teachers in Europe teach religion: An international empirical study in 16 countries*, 169–180. Berlin: LIT Verlag.
- Mariański, Janusz.** 2006. *Socjologia moralności*. Lublin: KUL.
- . 2008. *Spółczesność i moralność: Studia z katolickiej nauki społecznej i socjologii moralności*. Tarnów: Biblos.
- Marody, Mirosława, and Anna Giza-Poleszczuk.** 2004. *Przemiany więzi społecznych [Changes of Social Bonds]*. Warsaw: Scholar.
- Osewska, Elżbieta.** 2017. The Involvement of Lay Faithful in *Consecratio Mundi*. *The Person and the Challenges* 7, no. 2:81–92.
- . 2020. *Rodzina i szkoła w Polsce wobec współczesnych wyzwań wychowawczych [The Family and School in Poland and Contemporary Educational Challenges]*. Kraków: UPJPII.
- Osewska, Elżbieta, and Barbara Simonič.** 2019. A Civilization of Love according to John Paul II. *The Person and the Challenges* 9, no. 1:23–32.
- Osewska, Elżbieta, and Józef Stala.** 2015. *Die katholische Schule zu Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts am Beispiel Polens und Englands*. Warsaw: UKSW.
- Pieszak, Eryk.** 2014. *Człowiek i społeczeństwo konsumpcyjne [Man and Consumer Society]*. Poznań: UAM.
- Platovnjak, Ivan.** 2017. Vpliv religije in kulture na duhovnost in obratno. *Bogoslovni vestnik* 77, no. 2:337–344.
- Salamacha, Anna.** 2015. Zachowania konsumentów na rynku nieuczciwej konkurencji [Consumer's Behaviour in the Unfair Competition Market]. In: Leszek Karczewski and Henryk Kretek, eds. *Etyczne i społeczne uwarunkowania biznesu, gospodarki i zarządzania*. Opole: Oficyna Wydawnicza Politechniki.
- Sowa, Jan.** 2003. Dezerterzy społeczeństwa konsumpcji [Fugitives from a Consumer Society]. In: Piotr Marecki and Jan Sowa, eds. *Frustracja: Młodzi o nowym wspaniałym świecie*, 4–6. Kraków: Alternatywa Krakowska.
- Stala, Józef.** 2012. Der Mensch als Person: Die bestimmende Grundlage für Johannes Paul II. in seinem Bild von der Familie. *The Person and the Challenges* 2, no. 2:41–59.
- Stala, Józef, and Janez Vodičar.** 2019. The Lay Person and his Christian Vocation in the Teaching of Pope John Paul II. *The Person and the Challenges* 9, no. 1:49–63.
- Stern, Julian.** 2010. Research as pedagogy: building learning communities and religious understanding in RE. *British Journal of Religious Education* 32, no. 2:133–146.
- Szlendak, Tomasz.** 2004. *Supermarketyzacja: Religia i obyczaje seksualne młodzieży w kulturze konsumpcyjnej*. Wrocław: UW.
- Vodičar, Janez.** 2016. *Religijska antropologija [Religious Anthropology]*. Ljubljana: Teološka fakulteta.
- Vodičar, Janez, and Józef Stala.** 2018. Monoteizem in okoljska vzgoja [Monotheism and Environmental Education]. *Bogoslovni vestnik* 78, no. 2:415–427. <https://doi.org/10.34291/bv2019/04/vodicar>
- . 2017. Komparativna teologija kot temelj šolske vzgoje za medverski dialog [Comparative Theology as a Basis of School Education for Interfaith Dialogue]. *Bogoslovni vestnik* 77, no. 2:345–355.
- Wątroba, Wiesław.** 2009. *Spółczesność konsumpcyjna [A Consumer Society]*. Wrocław: UE.
- Wojtyła, Karol.** 2020. *Osoba i czyn [Person and Act and Related Essays]*. Washington: The Catholic University of America Press.