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## **TRANSGRESSIONS IN THE PEDAGOGY OF RELIGION – BETWEEN INSTRUMENTALIZA- TION AND EMANCIPATION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION<sup>1</sup>**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The progressive secularization of modern Western societies usually entails the erosion of the influence of traditional religions in public life, the privatisation of faith, or social shifts of the sacred into spheres previously outside the experiences defined as religious, such as sport or politics. Opinions on the cultural relativity of the secularization process and its dependence on specific historical and social conditions are becoming more and more popular, which additionally means that transformations of this type can take on a wide variety of scopes and forms<sup>2</sup>. Interestingly, analysis of the state of research into the whole spectrum of these processes and phenomena does not provide a clear basis for talking about the complete disappearance of religion in Western societies. Therefore, it is difficult to assume that

<sup>1</sup> Originally published: Monika Humeniuk-Walczak, “Transgresje w pedagogice religii – między instrumentalizacją a emancypacją edukacji religijnej”, [in:] *Transgresje w edukacji*, vol. 2, ed. I. Paszenda, R. Włodarczyk, Impuls, Kraków 2014, p. 97-110.

<sup>2</sup> K. Dobbelaere, *Secularisation. An Analysis at Three Levels*, Brussels 2004.

the secularizing socio-cultural space would completely wipe out the individual and collective experience of religion, and thus also religious education understood as broadly as possible. What remains problematic, however, is the question of its available formulas, the adopted axiological foundations or the goals that it sets itself. It seems that its adaptability to contemporary realities and social expectations largely depends on the specificity of self-cognition within the adopted formula and the potential of transgressiveness, defined as the ability to constantly transcend the boundaries of this self-cognition.

For a better systematization of the challenges that the present day in its Western version poses to religious education, it is worth recalling the concept of the post-secular society as proposed by Jürgen Habermas. The philosopher draws attention to three conditions for the constructive representation of monotheistic religions in the social world.

First of all, the religious conscience must handle the encounter with other confessions and other religions cognitively. Second, it must accede to the authority of science, which holds a social monopoly on knowledge. Finally, it must participate in the premises of a constitutional state, which is based on a non-sacred concept of morality. Without this reflective ‘thrust,’ monotheisms within ruthlessly modernizing societies develop a destructive potential<sup>3</sup>.

This statement seems to accurately define the main problems of contemporary religious education. Each of the three indicated premises reveals a significant source of controversy that accompanies the disputes over the place of religion in the public sphere. Religious education is accused, on the one hand, of using political tools and moral coercion of conscience and belief, which are unacceptable in the era of pluralism. On the other hand, it is blamed for reproducing and transmitting an unscientific version of reality and for ignoring or depreciating the idea of a secular state, as one which is guided by insufficiently high moral standards.

In the reflection on selected models of religious education which I will present in the further part of the article, J. Habermas’ theory of cognitive interests and the corresponding types of rationality may prove useful. This theory, as Lech Witkowski emphasizes, makes it possible to achieve “significant differentiation within the types of competence

<sup>3</sup> J. Habermas, “Faith and Knowledge”, <https://www.friedenspreis-des-deutschen-buchhandels.de/sixcms/media.php/1290/2001%20Acceptance%20Speech%20Juergen%20Habermas.pdf> (access: 12.11.2018).

with which one would like to ‘enlighten’ the individual”<sup>4</sup>. The categories of interest – technical (instrumental), practical (communicative) and emancipatory, as well as related, corresponding types of rationalities are interesting theoretical tests that enable reconstruction of the main types of religious education and models formulated and/or practiced in Europe and the United States during the 20th and 21st centuries. Their evocation and brief analysis will not only help to reconstruct the internal specificity and formulas of self-cognition within each of the invoked types of religious education, but also to determine their internal potential for transgression, important in view of the challenges that contemporary religious education must constantly face. In addition, it will make it possible to show a certain repertoire of practical solutions, concentrating the discourse of religious education not so much around the question of the legitimacy of religious education in a pluralistic society, but around its socially most advantageous version.

## **INTEREST AND RATIONALITY VS. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION – THE THEORETICAL CONTEXT OF REFLECTION ON SELECTED MODELS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

Habermas’ theory of cognitive interests assumes the existence of a specific set of interests and rationalities which determine and structure the manner of perceiving reality and knowledge about it. It is based on the conviction that knowledge is rooted in social and historical processes, while human cognitive activity is driven by interests corresponding to the problems and needs experienced by individuals. The author points to three types of interests: technical interest, practical interest and emancipatory interest. Each of them is a kind of permanent signpost, enabling the organization of everyday experience and of processing one’s accumulated knowledge about reality. Each of them corresponds to an analogous type of rationality, which, as Henry A. Giroux notes, is

a specific set of social assumptions and social practices that mediate how an individual or group relates to a wider society. [...] The knowledge, beliefs,

<sup>4</sup> L. Witkowski, “Edukacja przez pryzmat teorii społecznej J. Habermasa”, *Socjologia Wychowania* 1984, No. V, p. 33.

expectations, and biases that define a given rationality both condition and are conditioned by the experiences into which we enter<sup>5</sup>.

Technical interest involves the extension of technical control over objectivised processes and an ability to manipulate the environment<sup>6</sup>. Within its framework, cognitive competence is constructed, and is understood as the ability to describe the framework and conditions of effectiveness and technical efficiency in action. Education is perceived here in a utilitarian way as a means of achieving the expected objectives, but it is assumed that “[...] the actor is supposed to choose and calculate means and ends from the standpoint of maximizing utility or expectations of utility”<sup>7</sup>. Technical interest, then, triggers action which aims at the acquisition or transfer of skills enabling the manufacture of a specific, desired product, including know-how and the ability to apply it effectively to achieve its intended purpose<sup>8</sup>. Interests of this type are, therefore, closely linked to instrumental action, underpinning rationality (technical) instrumental<sup>9</sup>, or adaptive<sup>10</sup>. This rationality, originating in the life sciences, is predicated on the existence of so-called objective knowledge, situated “above and beyond social realities and relationships of the people who produce and define it”<sup>11</sup>. This is *reification* of knowledge<sup>12</sup>, perceived as constant, invariable, objective, neutral, and arbitrarily legitimised. It is understood linearly as a predictable, verifiable, cause-and-effect logic-driven construction of so-called pure facts.

Religious education oriented on technical interest, constructed on the basis of a rationality of the discussed type is education aiming at the acquisition of knowledge and modification of behaviour, education emphasizing a careful selection of the learning content, strict control – didactic

<sup>5</sup> H. A. Giroux, *Theory and Resistance in Education. A Pedagogy of the Opposition*, Massachusetts 1983, p. 171.

<sup>6</sup> J. Habermas, “Knowledge and Human Interest. A General Perspective”, [in:] J. Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interest*, Boston 1972, p. 308.

<sup>7</sup> J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 1, *Reason and the Rationalization Society*, Boston 1984, p. 85.

<sup>8</sup> A. Dziemianowicz-Bąk, “Interesy konstytuujące nauczanie”, [in:] *Komercjalizacja edukacji. Konsekwencje i nowe zagrożenia*, ed. M. Syska, Wrocław-Warszawa 2010, p. 12.

<sup>9</sup> L. Witkowski, *Edukacja przez pryzmat teorii społecznej J. Habermasa*, op. cit., p. 32-33.

<sup>10</sup> R. Kwaśnica, *Dwie racjonalności. Od filozofii sensu ku pedagogice ogólnej*, Wrocław 2007, p. 33.

<sup>11</sup> H. A. Giroux, *Theory and Resistance in Education*, op. cit., p. 178.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 179.

and educational – in the process of curriculum implementation, as well as the strengthening of conservative and conformist attitudes, which guarantee preservation of the contents of the messages and values conveyed. In such a model, one not so much facilitates learning as teaches and controls development rather than supports it.

An example of religious education that well expresses technical interest and the corresponding instrumental (adaptative, technical) rationality is so-called kerygmatic pedagogy, a current of exclusive ecclesiastical pedagogy, which sees its basic goal not in teaching about the Christian religion as a cultural, social and historical phenomenon, but in proclaiming the kerygma of salvation. The creator of the ideological foundations of the formula understood in this way, especially in its Protestant version, was Karl Barth, whose legacy and influence on the kerygmatic education is recapitulated by Bogusław Milerski in the following way:

The essence of Barth's views was, on the one hand, to emphasize the qualitative difference between man and God, and on the other hand, to stress the fundamental role of revelation transmitted in the form of God's Word. Since the supernatural is beyond the cognitive ken and didactic competences of man, it is not possible to teach about it. The essence of the Church's activity is therefore not teaching, but listening [...] and, above all, proclaiming and transmitting the Word of God as the basic form of revelation. From this perspective, Barth conducted a radical criticism of culture, religion and the limitations of humanistic education, emphasizing the importance of an individual existential decision to adopt the Christian faith<sup>13</sup>.

The logic of such an educational formula already at the very beginning introduces fundamental limitations in the scope of critical interpretation and analysis of the content, forms and methods of education. It moreover orientates educational activities towards achieving the effect of the final "product", i.e. a suitably "profiled" and "shaped" individual who makes "the right and proper" existential decisions. It should be stressed that the technical interest is fostered by a clear, codified framework of recommendations from the authorities and bodies representing this interest. A case in point is catechesis, well rooted in Polish conditions, deriving its self-cognition from Catholic theology. As a field of confessional pastoral theology, it is regulated by binding catechetical documents, which currently include above all John Paul II's exhortation

<sup>13</sup> B. Milerski, *Hermeneutyka pedagogiczna. Perspektywy pedagogiki religii*, Warszawa 2011, p. 148.

*Catechesi tradendae*, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and *General Directory for Catechesis*<sup>14</sup>. Its core is fundamental catechism, dealing with the study of the purpose, nature, place and role of theology of catechesis in the salvific activity of the Church, where catechism is defined as one of the forms of proclaiming the Christian faith of the Roman denomination<sup>15</sup>. In the face of the challenges of social and cultural pluralism, European catechetics of the 20th and 21st century developed such directions of catechesis as didactic, pedagogical, kerygmatic, anthropological, biblical and hermeneutical, political, existential and interpretative, therapeutic, correlational, and integral<sup>16</sup>. Each of them, differing in methodology, didactics, psychological and pedagogical assumptions, remains fundamentally faithful to the contents of Catholic theology and the teaching of the Church, recognizing as key issues e.g. the biblical history of salvation, the development of knowledge of faith, liturgical education, moral formation, the teaching of prayer, education to community life, and introduction to the mission of the Church<sup>17</sup>. Religious education adopts this formula and treats pedagogy as its auxiliary science, providing the “tools” for the effective implementation of the pre-established goals, derived from the local version of theology<sup>18</sup>. Both models of religious education, i.e. kerygmatic pedagogy and catechism, are mainly subordinated to theological normativity, whose “only right” interpretation is entrusted to its depositary (Church). The formula of their self-cognition, with strict and tight conceptual, structural and functional boundaries, is expressed here in the adopted goals of religious education, aimed primarily at the development of the community of the faithful, the apologetics of religion and faith and the exclusive maintenance of the religious identity of own religious group. It is difficult to talk here about a serious potential of transgression in the epistemological dimension; after all, the foundations of the discussed paradigm of religious education are connected with the objectivity of the process of cognition and axiological absolutism, as well as functional absolutism. The process of crossing recognized boundaries in terms

<sup>14</sup> P. Tomasik, “Katechetyka fundamentalna”, [in:] *Historia katechezy i katechetyka fundamentalna*, Tarnów 2003, p. 215.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 101.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 113.

<sup>17</sup> J. Szpet, *Dydaktyka katechezy*, Poznań 1999, p. 24-27.

<sup>18</sup> D. Stępkowski, *Pedagogika ogólna i religia. (Re)konstrukcja zapomnianego wątku na podstawie teorii Johanna F. Herbarta i Friedricha D. E. Schleiermachers*, Warszawa 2010, p. 15-16.

of content, language, forms and methods of the discussed educational formula would require more inclusive strategies of dealing with the differences in people and their visions of reality, worldviews or lifestyles. In the case of kerygmatic pedagogy and catechism, it is therefore difficult to speak of an education which transcends the limits of what is given, certain and sanctioned.

The second type of cognitive interests as proposed by Habermas is a practical interest, involving the “preservation and expansion of the intersubjectivity of possible action-orienting mutual understanding”<sup>19</sup>. Implemented via language through interaction, it is linked to communicative (hermeneutic) rationality, which is not interested in generating “monological” knowledge<sup>20</sup>, but rather knowledge derived from the understanding of symbolic acts of interaction that contribute to individual and intersubjective significance. As defined by H.J. Giroux, “Rather than focusing on [...] the *a priori* forms of knowledge, its constitutive interest lies in understanding how the forms, categories, and assumptions beneath the texture of everyday life contribute to our understanding of each other and the world around us”<sup>21</sup>. Meaning here is a category constructed by all participants of the interaction, via constant negotiations and renegotiations, while the key concepts for thinking about education in general are intentionality and intersubjectivity. In order to understand human behaviour and activity, it is necessary to search for references to factors that constitute the context for understanding and interpreting the meanings generated in social interactions. Recapitulating the philosophical basis of pedagogical hermeneutics, Bogusław Milerski points to four such factors: the first of them is subjective pre-cognition, arising from a specific, original manner of *being in the world*, another one is colloquiality, a specific form of consciousness, the third one – superstitions rooted in particular traditions and cultures, and the fourth one, ideologies, are forms of social consciousness that prefer a particular social order by imposing particular senses<sup>22</sup>. Each of the above factors should, as far as possible, become a deliberate part of the process of communication in social interaction. The practical interest and the activities related to it are oriented towards reaching an agreement. They

<sup>19</sup> J. Habermas, “Knowledge and Human Interest”, op. cit., p. 310.

<sup>20</sup> H. A. Giroux, *Theory and Resistance in Education*, op. cit., p. 184.

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>22</sup> B. Milerski, *Hermeneutyka pedagogiczna*, op. cit., p. 215.

refer to members of the social group who, as Jürgen Habermas emphasizes, in their activities are guided by common values stemming from the social contract and in accordance with the expectations that all participants in the interaction will be able to expect from each other to act in accordance with these norms<sup>23</sup>. The education that represents this perspective is, in Andrea Folkierska's opinion, not a simple transmission of information between the one who teaches and the one who is taught (between the one who *knows* and the one who *does not know*), but rather "teaching to listen to a word that is worth listening to, i.e. one that really teaches. It involves teaching to discover the real truth, i.e. one that requires disobedience to what is presented as necessary and only real"<sup>24</sup>.

Therefore, motivated by hermeneutical rationality, religious education is an education that recognizes the diversity and conflict of interpretations, as well as the inability to establish a single interpretation. "Preference for an objective perspective may lead to indoctrination of understanding and absolutization of certain senses [...]", observes Bogusław Milerski, pointing at the same time to the necessity of constant verification and authentication of each interpretation through criticism of the text (exegesis), critical judgement and discursive negotiation<sup>25</sup>. As it is emphasized in the position of the German Evangelical Church synod cited by the author, education within the framework of this model of education cannot be limited to the transfer of knowledge, shaping competences and focusing on the effective achievement of pre-established goals. Its essence is determined by a unique ontology of education defined in terms of an "empowered and liberating development of human life", where "empowerment and freedom have both an existential and spiritual character"<sup>26</sup> and where opposition to an authoritative transmission of teaching content is crucial. This is an opposition "[...] to indoctrination, enslavement and disempowerment of the *humanum* and to the technical approach to education"<sup>27</sup>. Here, as the author indicates, religious education is seen on the one hand as a process of inner, autonomous and reflective transformation of the person's life, where adoption of imposed or borrowed patterns of understanding

<sup>23</sup> See J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 1, op. cit., p. 85.

<sup>24</sup> A. Folkierska, "Wychowanie w perspektywie hermeneutycznej", [in:] *Ku pedagogii pogranicza*, ed. Z. Kwieciński, L. Witkowski, Toruń 1990, p. 111.

<sup>25</sup> B. Milerski, *Hermeneutyka pedagogiczna*, op. cit., p. 215.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 218.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 217.



reality and action in the world gives way to an understanding of discovery and internalisation. On the other hand, religious education is a set of interactions supporting this process, taking place in a normative space of values, senses, contents and events connected with tradition and contemporary pedagogy of a given religion. Such support should consist primarily in the development of mental competences such as the ability to understand and think critically about human existence with its socio-cultural context and the ability to reflect, not only in terms of internal reflection, but also in terms of the ability to articulate one's own beliefs. Education understood in this way is to support the life skills of individuals, making them emotionally, cognitively and socially mature, consciously realizing themselves, capable of reflexive affirmation and constructive criticism<sup>28</sup>. "The basis and at the same time the pedagogical limit of religious education is the event of an encounter with Transcendence, which every monotheistic religion presupposes"<sup>29</sup>.

Religious education constructed in the perspective of communicative rationality is e.g. hermeneutic pedagogy of religion, a concept put forth on the basis of textual hermeneutics and history studies developed in the spirit of Wilhelm Dilthey with the hermeneutics of Martin Heidegger and the de-mythologizing concept of Rudolf Bultmann. As Bogusław Milerski observes, from this point of view, the educational process is to be connected with the idea of "renewal of the mind", and its creators point to the truth encrypted in the texts (including the texts of sacred books) about the ways of human understanding and existence, to which access is gained through existential interpretation of the text. Such an interpretation would be aimed at acquiring new ways of understanding one's own existence, and not at recreating its origins - the history of creation, motivation of the author, etc.<sup>30</sup> It is important to take care of the relationship between religious education and social reality. The key issue should be the identification and description of basic human experiences and then the treatment of these experiences as a starting point for the process of religious education, as a result of which the individual will have a chance to gain new ways of understanding reality.<sup>31</sup> In practice,

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem, p. 230-231.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem, p. 231.

<sup>30</sup> Ibidem, p. 153.

<sup>31</sup> Ibidem, p. 156.

hermeneutic religious pedagogy is to signify a departure from the adaptive and reconstructive functions of education and the dogmatic and authoritative nature of didactic activity. Knowledge is not a ready-made conglomerate of information and qualifications of a given individual to assimilate. Knowledge appears as problematic, heterogeneous and subjectively experienced. Education consists in constant reconstruction of senses and revision of self-cognition. In relation to the model of religious education constructed from the perspective of technical rationality, it is a significant, epistemological change, a transgression of the logic of thinking about the nature of truth and knowledge, and thus education in general, with all the consequences for educational practice. However, as pointed out by Jürgen Habermas, the practical interest and the communicative rationality connected with it, and secondarily – also education offered in this perspective, due to the subjectivism of understanding and self-cognition, is exposed to the danger of legitimizing such an interpretation of reality that would be based on incomplete and distorted knowledge. Henry A. Giroux defines this problem as follows:

such a posture tends to overlook how ideological and structural constraints in the larger society are reproduced [...] so as to mediate against the possibility of critical thinking and constructive dialogue. Thus, by reducing power and democratic action to the level of an epistemology that supports a form of subjective idealism, the reflective inquiry approach emerges as a one-sided theory of education [...] which has “miraculously” abstracted its social epistemology from such troublesome concepts as ideology, power, struggle, and oppression. As a result, the basic natures of existing social arrangements in the wider society go unquestioned or are questioned in relatively narrow terms<sup>32</sup>.

Educational activities connected with practical interest may therefore prove insufficient in exposing and transforming those elements of reality which limit the autonomy of individuals and social groups by treating them as objects. In the reflection on the model of religious education, what seems inevitable is transgression as understood by Michel Foucault, i.e. a constant contravention of established norms of truth in the process of critical thinking, and thus as a transition from interpretation and understanding towards criticism and emancipatory competence, towards the ability to negate the existing operating conditions, “including the ideologically frozen relations of subjection”<sup>33</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> H. A. Giroux, *Theory and Resistance in Education*, op. cit., p. 186-187.

<sup>33</sup> L. Witkowski, *Edukacja przez pryzmat teorii społecznej J. Habermasa*, op. cit., p. 33.

This competence corresponds to the third interest as indicated by Jürgen Habermas, i.e. the emancipatory interest.

Emancipatory interest with its attendant emancipatory rationality, while not rejecting the primacy of intentionality and meaning, considers as indispensable and incorporates the mechanisms of *criticism* and *action*. As part of such an interest-driven activity, criticism is made of what is limiting and dissuasive for individuals and groups, while at the same time supporting activities conducive to freedom and individuality. Criticised is moreover all that enables the creation of conditions for opposition and change of oppressive, enslaving, unfair elements of the social world, posing a threat to the individual and the group through institutionalisation of the consequences of such a social condition. The perspective of emancipation is therefore connected with the version of education which is

a practical application of systematically discovered mechanisms of governing, freeing the subject from the limitations encountered in particular contexts and fostering attainment of new rights and areas of freedom, in line with the individuals' available potential. It is an integration of thinking and action aimed at creating conditions for consciously and independently reaching maturity in particular spheres of individual and collective development. This involves discovering the role that education can play in the project of emancipation of the subject and realization of central values: freedom, independence, responsibility<sup>34</sup>.

The aim of such education, defined in terms of process, is to constantly *emancipate* oneself. It becomes the autotelic value of education and the object of all educational efforts and is expressed in the development of such dispositions as courage, openness, assertiveness, tolerance and responsibility. As Maria Czerepaniak-Walczak additionally emphasizes,

projects of education for *emancipation* focus on the competences of the subject, especially those which are expressed in the reactions of resistance and transgression in situations of conflict, oppression and limitation. These competences, which enable defence against colonization of the world of life and its lasting effects, are referred to as emancipatory competences. [...] They are the result of learning in the process of action, in interaction with individual (especially oppressive) elements of social and material reality. Education is manifested in organizing educational situations that are a source of emancipatory competences<sup>35</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> M. Czerepaniak-Walczak, *Pedagogika emancypacyjna*, Gdańsk 2006, p. 64.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 67-68.

The perspective of emancipatory interest does not always appear obvious in the reflection on religious education, which is often accused of an arbitrarily defined and universalized vision of reality, a non-discursive interpretation of the texts of sacred books, a rigidly interpreted tradition and exclusive practices regulating internal and external relations within religious groups. The experience of some European countries, however, shows that religion, together with its own education, can support emancipation processes. As Bogusław Milerski notes, religion, as a socio-cultural phenomenon implicitly conveying certain ideological interests, generates a new type of task for the theory of Religious Education, which is precisely the analysis and deconstruction of religious traditions from the perspective of emancipatory interest<sup>36</sup>. According to the underlying assumptions of so-called critical pedagogy of religion, emerging in Germany in the 1970s, underpinned by the concept of Marxist critique of ideology, liberation theology and the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, the desire to

to pass on to young people, even if only partially, the illusion of the holy world, would mean agreeing to an unreliable preparation for life [...] Therefore, education [including religious education] can never be critical enough. Above all, critical decisions become necessary in the face of great words, praised values or ideologies. Religious upbringing, and with it the lessons of Religious Education, are intended to make young people resistant to the dominant forces and ideologies. The second commandment of Decalogue [...] is a critical principle opposed to all tendencies of absolutization and deification. Christian faith has not always remained faithful to this and has transformed itself into an ideology. [...] It is all the more necessary to reactivate the critical potential of religious tradition. Critical religious teaching can contribute to the necessary sobering-up, can provide an insight into the real situation, foster critical analysis and, equally, the commitment to the creation of human relationships in our society<sup>37</sup>.

The aims of creators and propagators of critical religious pedagogy were related to education for critical self-awareness of individuals and their emancipatory competences, including the ability to unmask forms of symbolic violence present in interpretations of texts and religious practices, as well as education for constructive social engagement. One of the principles determining the shape of this kind of education was to recognize religion as a product of socially constructed reality, and its analysis was to take into account the social

<sup>36</sup> See B. Milerski, *Hermeneutyka pedagogiczna*, op. cit., p. 163.

<sup>37</sup> S. Vierzig, *Ideologiekritik und Religionsunterricht*, quoted after: B. Milerski, *Hermeneutyka pedagogiczna*, op. cit., p. 162.

functions it performed. Moreover, the critical and emancipatory perspective was to abolish the practice of identifying religion with the Christian tradition. "The subject of teaching religion at school should be religion in a broad sense, not only in the form of Christianity or other historical religions, but also as a phenomenon describing various forms of constitution of existential senses and interpretation of social life"<sup>38</sup>.

At present, traces of critical religious pedagogy can be found in the interest of religious education in minority ideologies or social movements. An example can be the more and more dynamically developing trend of *feminist theology*, present in Christianity as well as Judaism and Islam. Although it does not enter the mainstream in any of the above religions, it begins to play an increasingly important role in the discourse of knowledge, faith and social involvement, inevitably moving on to the discussion about the specificity, content and form of religious education. Unfortunately, feminist pedagogy of religion as a sub-discipline<sup>39</sup> continues to play a marginal role. The same applies to those currents within European and American Protestantism that are critically reflecting on the theological justifications for the exclusion of non-heteronormative people from the community of believers. The above examples continue to be poorly represented in local versions of the pedagogy of religion, especially in Poland. Nevertheless, it seems that cultural and social transformations of Western societies, including the process of their secularization, as well as the intercultural challenges of the era of globalization, will contribute to an increasingly courageous use of the last of the mentioned models of religious education, as the most compatible with the world experienced by contemporary individuals, as proved by attempts to construct the foundations of so-called *interreligious education*<sup>40</sup>, *pedagogy of ecumenism*<sup>41</sup> or the concept of broadly understood "mature Catholicism", discussed at length e.g. by Stanisław Obirek.

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem, p. 164.

<sup>39</sup> See M. Blasberg-Kuhnke, "Feministyczna pedagogika religii", [in:] *Leksykon pedagogiki religii. Podstawy – koncepcje – perspektywy*, ed. C. Rogowski, Warszawa 2007, p. 192-196.

<sup>40</sup> See C. Rogowski, *Pedagogika religii podręcznik akademicki*, Toruń 2011, p. 372.

<sup>41</sup> See M. Patalon, *Pedagogika ekumenizmu. Procesualność jako paradygmat interkonfesyjnej i interreligijnej hermeneutyki w ujęciu J. B. Cobba*, Gdańsk 2007.

## CONCLUSION

The above reconstructed paradigms and models of religious education, presented on the basis of the concept of cognitive interests and corresponding types of rationality of Jürgen Habermas, indicate the divergent approaches to self-cognition by epistemology and educational pedagogy. Kerygmatic pedagogy and catechetics are formulas predicated on the objectivism of the cognition process and on axiological absolutism, with a poor potential of transgressiveness as to the educational practice they adopt. With respect to them, hermeneutical pedagogy of religion, based on the assumption of socially constructed sources of knowledge, shows a much greater ability to negotiate *praxis*, but remains helpless in the face of ideological reproductions and structural social constraints. Critical pedagogy of religion seems to be much better prepared for such challenges. It believes that the main goal of religious education is to instil emancipatory competence to expose and actively oppose any oppression and enslavement resulting from the ideologization of religion. In this case one can talk about the transgressive potential, on both the epistemological and functional level. I leave open the question of which of the presented formulas appears to be the most beneficial in the context of socio-cultural pluralism and transformations resulting from the secularization of Western societies.

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### **Abstract:**

On the basis of the human interests concept and relevant types of rationality by Jürgen Habermas I reconstructed three models of religious education: confessional, hermeneutic and critical approach. The first of them, confessional approach, grows from the cognition objectivism and the axiological absolutism. The second one, connected with the hermeneutics in a religious education, understands knowledge as a social construct and refers to communication skills in the negotiation meanings. The last one, critical approach, makes emancipation skills, in the areas of debunking and active opposition to an oppression and enslavement coming from ideologisation of religion, the major aim of a religious education. Each one of those models has a different potential of transgression understood as a flexibility towards boundaries of self-understanding. Each of them differently addresses the context of progressive secularisation and socio-cultural pluralism.

### **Keywords:**

Jürgen Habermas, knowledge and human interest, instrumental rationality, communicative rationality, emancipation, religious education, the confessional approach to religious education, hermeneutics in religious education, critical religious education

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See also:

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