

Zbigniew Marek

Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow

Janusz Mólka

Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow

Maria Szymańska

Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow

Moral Upbringing in the Process of Religious Education

Abstract: The article is aimed at showing the meaning of moral education in the processes of religious education. The authors pay attention to the meaning of moral values influencing man's behaviour, and attitudes towards the Self, other people, the world, and God. Experience obtained in the relationship with the Self, others and God has a significant role in the trajectory of educational processes, particularly the process of the moral upbringing of a person. Attention paid to natural cognition and cognition rooted in God can help to underline the sense of religious education, as well as the religious education of a child. Moral imagination producing moral images becomes the subject for analysis in terms of a teacher's responsibility concerning the selection of literature items, or methods of their analysis. A moral upbringing that is tightly connected with religious education elicits the meaning of work upon one's own character and catechesis as a tool enhancing its quality. The research question of this article can be posed as follows: how does moral upbringing participate in the processes of religious education?

Keywords: moral upbringing, moral imagination, religious education, work, catechesis

In the contemporary world where we meet the promotion of diverse ideas on upbringing (Śliwerski 2015), what results is the possibility of varied perceptions of moral upbringing processes. In this article we focus on the reflection upon the specificity of morality promoted by religious education emerging from Christianity. The key point in this analysis indicates the corporeal-spiritual nature of a man who goes as a 'pilgrim' to a new quality of life that has been offered to him by God. This quality is defined as eternal life.

In the analysis provided below, one can pay attention to the following aspects: religious education, the formation of the mature man, and religious education in the processes of a moral upbringing. These aspects can make those who deal with moral and religious education in particular more conscious about the meaning of moral upbringing in the processes of religious education and its significant role in a person's integral development.

1. Religious education

Educational processes have a significant impact on the shape of upbringing processes and a person's approaches to life. Their leading aim is to form the conscience and culture of a man living in different life spaces. In a wider meaning, education is aligned with the whole scope of activities supporting man in his social functioning. Mainly, we mean the social processes that allow the person both to use pre-existing culture and to create new culture as well. In this way, education helps the person to develop her/his abilities and enables her/him to function in varied areas of life such as intellectual, emotional, interpersonal, motivational, physical and so forth (Rubacha 2005: 25–26). We do not identify education with activity that features a technological-adaptive dimension. We do not identify it with information transfer, either; we see it as a specific dialogue in which achieved experiences can be exchanged (Milerski 1998: 123–124). Such a dialogue, which Kujawiński calls the talk of free and equal partners, aims, first of all, at the joint cognition of something new and unknown, to

explain something incomprehensible, to check something that is uncertain, to assess something that causes doubts, to discover something in the whole that is hidden, and to create something new and useful at the same time. However, the atmosphere of the mutual kindness, respect, and love of all its participants is needed to perform the functions of educational dialogue. It should lead to understanding each other better, a closeness of points of views, and to further the teacher's cooperation with students and that of the students with each other, when such a possibility occurs (Kujawiński 2010: 68). In this way, it fosters learning through experience (Kolb 1984), which can be exceptionally fruitful for both sides participating in this human activity.

One should notice that many of the gathered experiences and questions connected with them cannot be explained reasonably and empirically. We mean here the existential questions concerning the origins and predestination of man and the world: the existence of evil, injustice, death and suchlike. The impossibility to give them appropriate answers makes a person seek them out in different sources.

One of these sources is religion. In this case, man's reasoning is not as productive as God (goodness) simply replying to such questions. He reasons with the use of religion (Korherr 2008: 118–119; Bagrowicz 2004: 316–322). Explanations that we align with reality that are obtained in this way are what is named 'religious cognition'. This cognition is different, but not opposite, to the natural one (empirical-intellectual). The difference between these forms of cognition is in the fact that, in natural cognition, man uses reason to supply him with knowledge, while in religious cognition he uses the 'knowledge' delivered by religion.¹ This method of cognition is characterized by the deferral of one's own experience and insight into reality in favour of the acquisition of particular content, behind which is God's authority and His evidence. One should remember that religious cognition explicates only the reality that is accessible for human cognition. It explicates how God sees man and the world in which he lives. This

¹ In the Christian understanding, such knowledge is transmitted by God through His revelation.

certainly does not mean that religious cognition provides man with complete and satisfying answers to his questions. Nevertheless, it gives him the opportunity to broaden his knowledge of the Self and the world in the light of the content and explanations of concrete religion (Marek 2017: 90–94). That is why, when the dissonance between reason and faith takes place, what happens is that the search for the truth stops being a prior value for man, and it is reduced to the cognitive abilities of reason itself.

Educational processes that comprise not only natural cognition but religious cognition as well are defined as ‘religious education’. In this notion, two elements are joined together: a human being’s experience and God’s revelation. This alignment not only has a theoretical meaning, but it also delivers real pedagogical-religious support. It depends on a theocentric understanding of humanistic education (Rogowski 2007: 140–141; Milerski 1998: 127). Following this path, religious education enables:

1. A more complete cognition of material, social, and mainly spiritual reality, which is possible thanks to disclosed relationships joining man with God. Here, first of all, being of the belief that God – according to the content transmitted in the Bible – bestows man with only one feeling, which is love, appears crucial;
2. Bringing a person into the world of religious and moral values through obtaining the ability to acquire and acknowledge religious values and treat them as one’s own, as well as the hierarchy existing among them;
3. Finding models that show and form man’s attitudes and behaviour owing to the obligatory principles and norms of religious life. This function has the task of directing a person towards their own internality, which certainly does not exclude an openness to life and culture. On this path, a person obtains the experience of their own internality, which means a particular wander towards one’s own interior makes the person the subject that experiences the result of their own acts, which include the decisive ones connected with choices of good and evil, beauty and ugliness, justice and injustice (Nowak 2012: 117);

4. Giving a person help and support during the self-formation of their own personality (de Tchorzewski 2014: 9–10). Thanks to religious education, a person's relationships with themselves and the environment become broadened by their relationship with transcendence – God. On this path, man gets acquainted not only with the principles and norms of a harmonious social life, but discovers the obligatory, objective norms which are given by God.

This broadened shape of education enables one to claim that, thanks to religion, education strengthens the person in forming their own identity, and, owing to their openness to transcendence, God facilitates her/him to overcome her/his own limits, which supports her/his integral development (Rynio 2016: 449–450).

These explanations lead one to pose questions about the core of the integral development of the person. This term should be understood as changes taking place in man's biological, psychological, and spiritual spheres. Such changes should take place in all aspects of a human being's life and, therefore, in the dimensions of their physical, intellectual, emotional, personal, social, cultural, and religious life as well. Their function is to give help to the person in achieving a higher 'quality' of her/his own life: a larger maturity expressed in her/his attitudes to the Self, the world, people, and God (Rynio 2016: 449–450). Thus, it is about man being able to act morally, which means that he should have perpetuated habits to respect the norms that bring harmony to social life (Pieter 2005: 62).

In reflecting upon the integral development of man, one cannot forget that we have to deal with something dynamic, with a process, not an existing and unchangeable reality. This fact demands us not to treat the developing student as a miniature adult, as such thinking excludes his development. Hence, one should show an appreciation for the upbringing processes, in which moral principles are already brought closer together and inculcated to perform a significant role. Then, we can talk about a moral upbringing, the sense of which means man's development as understood not in terms of his development as a species, but in terms of perfecting him in all areas of his life and activity (Majka 1982: 41).

The trajectory of these processes is influenced by, on the one hand, the ideology promoted by man's environment and, on the other, by the ways of understanding man's nature. We can notice here that religious education promoted in the area of Western culture refers to Christianity and the personalistic point of view built by it, because it defines and explains the already promoted moral norms of man's living standards that come from the Gospels.

2. Religious education supports the formation of a mature man

What purpose does religious education serve? How does it make man richer? What competences does it develop in him? How should religious education work in the individual and social life of contemporary man? Providing an explicit answer to these and similar questions seems to be impossible because of the fact that, owing to religious education, we are touching upon a non-material reality that we are not able to measure with empirical methods. Here, the issue is first of all about discovering connections between man and God. One should remember that the reality of faith included in religious education, although it is the subject of man's searches and efforts, is a gift from God, which man is not able to obtain himself with his own powers. In this understanding one should say that religious education, in opening man up to overcoming his own limitations, also opens him up to the truth, the source of which is God.

Religious education shows the person a new quality of possessed dignity, which comes from religious cognition. The importance of this effort is appreciated by, among others, Katarzyna Olbrycht, who writes that it is not possible either to bring up a man to complete his personal development, or to build communities that guarantee the help and protection of this development to their members without stressing the importance of dignity in education and upbringing. Only then – when pupils in the process of upbringing understand what it means to behave 'worthily' and 'unworthily'; why one cannot humble either oneself or others; why man should always be respected and treated as a subject; why

success does not determine his dignity – can we expect that he could have an effect upon his own development, an effect including his servitude to others (Olbrycht 2007: 109). Hence, one can talk about the fact that, thanks to religious education, it is easier in one's social life to find common directions of activity so that the expectations of particular persons do not collide with each other. What is more, religious education depicting ideals going beyond man's natural capacities can cause collaborative, social initiatives to be undertaken in order to achieve them (e.g. charitable activity in the name of fellow human beings). Similarly, one can talk about the meaning of religious education in the development of the person. Thanks to educational processes, man learns how to recognize the existence of objective norms of proceedings and how to make personal choices connected with their discovery, including the choices of faith and non-faith. With their help he can develop such competences as religious sensitivity, the skill of religious language expression, religious communication, and the ability to live a concrete style of life (Boschki 2017: 92–93). Owing to these kinds of competences gained thanks to religious education, it is possible to achieve a more complete maturity.

Maturity is an ambiguous term. In the educational dimension, it is tied with obtaining the ability to be responsible in life. Describing the symptoms of the achievement of maturity, we can say, following Parmanda Divarkar SJ, that it reflects the intangible reality that we experience and describe, but which is difficult to define. We express this reality in varied ways. Most often, we join it with social life abilities, in which there is responsibility and selflessness in varied aspects of a human being's life, comprising, first of all, the cognitive (intellectual), emotional, and moral (volitional) ones (Divarkar 2002: 153; Cichoń 1996: 163-169; Wojtyła 1969: 190). The measure of such achieved maturity is an acceptance of moral values. It demands an understanding of the nature of culture as expressed in a sense of responsibility for one's own and others' lives. It is based on the freedom which emerges from the spiritual development of the person. It is noticed in the processes of making values absolute, in their selection, and in personal choice (Murawski 2002: 121).

The relationships established with God owing to religious education also support a person's processes of achieving maturity. Thanks to this education, she/he is able to see and accept the fact that maturity can be worked out, and it becomes a gift obtained from God as well. This gift allows one to notice that such significant values for man as good, happiness, truth, and beauty exist beyond him. Discovering this fact can elicit new energies for activities oriented towards their achievement. As a result, one starts engaging someone else (God) in these matters (Podrez 1994: 189). In this case, it is about performing His will of salvation – gifting people with happiness, goodness, life, and love for the whole of eternity. Such visible maturity is based on the openness to entrusting oneself completely to God and one's readiness to perform His will (Pasierbek 2004: 72). This willingness is defined as religious maturity. Thanks to this, man is able to apply not only mental motifs but religious ones as well in his activity.

3. Religious education in processes of moral upbringing

Man expresses his own maturity in his everyday behaviours and attitudes. Their shape is affected by his processes of upbringing, in which religion can perform a significant role. Thus, looking for a possibility to include religion in the processes of forming the mature personality of a man appears to be crucial. These expectations seem to be possible, as they cover such dimensions of a human being's life as are connected with explicating his existence directed towards transcendence – God. Here, we intend to deal with signalling possibilities to support processes of moral growth through religious education. For example, we will present the possibilities of religious education to form the moral imagination with the use of children's literature. Furthermore, we are going to depict how religious education can broaden the moral understanding of man's work, and, finally, how the Catholic Church's catechesis refers to matters of the formation of moral attitudes.

3.1. The maturation of a child's moral imagination through literature for children

When bringing up a child, one is faced by many challenges, among which moral development seems very crucial, particularly for her/his integral development, and moral values perform a significant role in it, since they:

- form the basis for inner judgment for the person;
- are norms of behaviour guided by social, moral, spiritual and aesthetic criteria to select the desirable;
- are ideals in various fields of behaviour: the right way to think, to behave and to do things;
- are important for character formation and personality;
- enable an emotional evaluation of actions, thoughts or behaviour;
- enable the resolution of everyday problems in a positive and ethical way;
- enable the development of self-confidence, self-esteem and self-respect;
- enable socialization and sharing;
- are the building blocks of a clean, fair and just society (ICAC 2006, p. 9);²
- foster spiritual or religious development.

Taking into consideration the aspects mentioned earlier, it seems necessary to indicate that biological, psychological, social, cultural, and spiritual development, understood in terms of developmental evolution, can be "influenced by early experience: Security, Engagement, and Imagination" (Narvaez and Lapsley 2009: 262). In this context, one should

² The realization of this handbook, entitled *Promoting moral development through play during early childhood*, is the outcome of a fruitful collaboration between the Independent Commission Against Corruption and different professionals in the pre-school sector; available at: www.doiserbia.nb.rs/img/doi/0579-6431/2006/0579-64310602401P.pdf (accessed December 20, 2017).

emphasize the meaning of moral imagination that “performs a special role in building moral character” (Szymańska 2017: 153). Furthermore, Guroian writes: “The moral imagination is the distinctively human power to conceive of men and women as moral beings, i.e., as persons, not things or animals whose value to us is their usefulness. It is the process by which the self makes metaphors out of images recorded by the senses and stored in memory, which then are employed to find and suppose moral correspondences in experience” (Guroian 2005). In this light we can pose the thesis that moral imagination bears and nourishes moral images. They are reflected in visual pictures built in particular with sounds and words interfusing the process of thinking and emotions influencing the area of experience. They also seem to be recognized and judged from the perspective of values. Hence, moral images have a lot to do with moral values that undergo the process of interoception (Kunowski 2003: 103–135; Chałas 2016: 461; Szymańska 2017a: 51–63), tightly aligned with the process of transaction (Rosenblatt 2007: 1–20) taking place between the message and the reader. Having considered that images help us build the language of narration, use it for expression, in descriptions of our experience, and, above all, to understand other people and to be understood by others (Sztuka 2010: 82), the following conclusion emerges: moral images foster widely understood communication on an interpersonal and intrapersonal level. Such a point of view must necessarily be considered, especially in the field of child education and, to be more precise, in the field of children’s moral upbringing. How the moral imagination is built in a child’s moral development and what functions it performs cannot be neglected by teachers and caregivers either. One should notice that the images of the different items of the world appearing in children’s minds have a lot in common with working memory, which “can be described as a system to remember the items of information such as words, pictures, special locations etc. and to manipulate these or other items at the same time” (Oberauer and Kliegl 2006: 601–602). This working memory ‘awakens’ in concrete situations when man has to make a choice, take a decision. Hence, it is not indifferent to the development of the moral imagination taking place through a moral upbringing. One of the devices

stimulating the maturation of a child's moral imagination is literature for children. The way it can be implemented in the area of moral development depends mostly on those who work with children and those who take care of them. An adult's moral consciousness in this respect appears to be very important. The choice of literature items, the way of conveying the stories, and the analyses and interpretations in the domain of moral values – considering their functions and roles mentioned above – belong to factors influencing the upbringing process of the moral imagination. Guroian provides the following example of the application of literature in developing moral imagination:

After a child has read Hans Christian Andersen's *The Snow Queen* or Madeleine L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time*, her moral imagination is sure to have been stimulated and sharpened. The powerful images of good and evil in these stories show a child how to love through the examples of the characters she herself has come to love and admire. Such memories become the analogues that the moral imagination uses to make real-life decisions, and these memories become constitutive elements of her self-identity and character. (Guroian 2005).

Therefore, working with literature for children brings with it some implications. First of all, it requires a mature approach to moral education rooted in moral values; second, it requires an understanding of the meaning of the necessity to build the moral imagination and moral images through appropriate stories for children; and third, teacher formation conducted in terms of the enriched moral imagination should be the subject of special workshops. These implications can be reinforced by the same author's words: "Our society is failing to cultivate the moral imagination in part at least because very often the stories we live by—the stories we read ourselves or read to our children, the stories we watch on television or at the movies—are not stories that grow the moral imagination, but stories that crowd it out" (Guroian 2005). They ought to be treated as a warning directed to those who deal with children's education in particular.

Finally, the maturation of a child's moral imagination appears to be crucial nowadays in the 'melting pot' of many different ideas on morality. For while this appears to be crucial for morality, it also appears to be crucial for religious education as well. Experience and emotions relived during the child's interaction and transaction with literature draw out concrete associations which have an impact on forming a valuable moral imagination linked with a religious imagination. The images bred in the child's mind can foster a deepening contact with the Self, other people, the world, and God. Therefore, literature for children has to be well-selected and interpreted according to the symbols and messages hidden in it. In taking care of the integral development of the child, teachers have to remember that how they are going to work with this sort of literature will affect the child's moral and religious imagination.

3.2. Moral upbringing through work

Man's work has the characteristics of an educational upbringing. The multi-dimensional aspects of the relationships between man and work build the conditions for the development of the person through triggering in her/him different sorts of creative initiatives that foster the achievement of a mature morality. This process goes through discovering such virtues (man's skills) as, for example, dutifulness, honesty, responsibility, conscientiousness, persistence, a positive attitude to work and its performance, a readiness to perform tasks and duties, and cooperation with others (Mółka 2016: 7-10). The problem lies in the fact that work should be discovered by a person as a factor fostering her/his development (Baraniak 2015: 142-144).

In pedagogical reflections upon the signalled issue, one should pay attention to the fact that work is an indispensable element of the correct integral development of man, because it influences his physical, intellectual, spiritual, cultural, and moral potential in a meaningful way. We underline that its perception and performance forms a man's character, will, and interests, and that it affects his state of being, both in terms of physical and mental health. Thanks to its performance, a person can realize herself/himself. It teaches collaboration, builds interpersonal relationships,

and creates an appropriate system of values (Piekarski 2015: 163). Obtaining appropriate qualifications is connected with these acts of doing. Pedagogical sciences have worked out the theory of qualifications for work and the methodology for how to gain them. From Tadeusz Nowacki's point of view, qualifications are shown in one's attitudes and skills and, moreover, one should see the ethical dimension in them (2005: 308).

In educational processes, work is seen as a method of upbringing (Piekarski 2015: 163). Zygmunt Wiatrowski considers these processes as an intended, goal-oriented, organized sort of upbringing activity, in which a particular feature is referred to the use of work in processes of upbringing, influences an individual and makes changes to her/his personality (2005: 154–155). In discussions on the goals, tools and accuracy of upbringing 'to' and 'through' work, one should pay attention to the many issues concerning an appropriate understanding of the process itself through work. It should be emphasized that it not only has a material and economic value, but also a spiritual-personal one, for it forms the right working attitudes in a person, contributes to creating new kinds of work, etc. Besides, through work man becomes "more of a human being", and acquires moral virtues (Przybycień 2008: 175). Czesław Bartnik states that man becomes moral, in the contemporary meaning, mainly through doing his occupational, social, ordinary, everyday, and extraordinary work, depending on one's age (2005: 49). As a result, one can say that, for man, work can have both an individual and a social value as well. Its appropriate performance becomes an ethical imperative for a person. As far as its social dimension is considered, it requires activities to be undertaken that are oriented towards the construction of a system of work which respects the dignity of a person and her/his subjectivity (Przybycień 2008: 175).

Perceptions of a human being's work, mentioned above, have been broadened in the course of religious education processes. In the Catholic Church's understanding, work is a value, and its performance is regarded as cooperation between God and man, who perfects visible creation (CCC 1994: no. 378).³ This results in significant consequences for its

³ Catechism of the Catholic Church – CCC will be used hereafter.

understanding: work exists for man, not man for work. Thanks to work, everyone should have an opportunity to obtain the means to live, support one's own relatives and help the human community (CCC 1994: no. 2428). These reasons indicate the fact that working can be considered as a duty for man (CCC 1994: no. 2427). In this way, its dignity and internal alignment with man is appreciated. Work makes him perfect and, as a result, makes him closer to God. Moreover, finding the meaning of human work in the course of educational processes shows that religious education broadens the possibility of seeing its maturational quality through a religious explication of its sense and meaning for man's development. We can assume that perceptions of work, made richer by religious education, can induce new motifs for its deeper understanding and performance, which results in achieving a higher, more mature level of moral life.

3.3. Moral upbringing in religious catechesis

The term 'catechesis' refers to the activity conducted by the Church which continues Jesus' mission through the preaching of the Gospel and teaching the faith, which makes it a place of redemptive dialogue between God and man (Marek 2000: 13). Catechesis is addressed to man who is offered salvation – life without end in happiness and love – by God through Jesus Christ. These explanations pay attention to the fact that catechesis is about man's goodness, the sense of which is explicated by God Himself. This fact results in further consequences that come from an acknowledgement of His authority in matters referring to the goal that appears before man. In discerning the processes based on the natural (mental) principles of a social-moral upbringing, in catechesis, the first step is to show the norms and principles of human beings' coexistence. First, efforts connected with forming a picture of God based on the Bible's message are made. The justification for undertaking such steps lies in the belief that it strongly influences the relationships between human beings and God. The christening dimension of catechesis is seen as important for these efforts. It is about showing God's irrevocably friendly approach to man, which is most completely expressed by the word 'love' (Marek 2007: 95). One should pay attention to and be inspired to recognize and

affirm God's love, and make an attempt to respond with love to this recognizable love of God. Such individual responses include prayer, acts of love, obedience to God's commandments, and – in one's social life – participation in the religious life of the congregation (liturgy), and in taking responsibility for one's social life.

Based on this scheme, the processes of moral upbringing conducted in the course of catechesis are featured in a person's pursuit of discovering Jesus' commandment of love as a summary of Christian morality. Certainly, this assumption does not depreciate the value of the Decalogue and other norms of morality. An example of such a conducted process of moral upbringing in catechesis is the handbook for the first grade of school education (for children aged 6-7) titled *Elementary handbook for God's child (Elementarz dziecka Bożego)*; edited by Z. Marek and A. Walulik, 2015). This handbook starts with a set of texts enabling children to understand what Jesus' love for people means. But we cannot only talk about the information concerning God's mystery. It is accompanied by activities enabling a child to get into a relationship with Jesus through meeting with Him in the word of God, listening to His words, and talking about Him. The core topic of a moral upbringing conveyed as such is to recall the event of the baptism, thanks to which we are friends of Jesus.

A significant dimension of upbringing in this part of the handbook is to discover the closeness of God, after He came to people in Jesus Christ, and to stand by Him. The next crucial element of the moral upbringing is tied to the idea of meeting with people: Jesus shares His gifts with people, and these people learn how to take them in and care for them. A child has to discover the world that she/he lives in as God's gift and learn to take responsibility for it. A further component of the moral upbringing is aligned with explications of Jesus' sense of life and formulating the motifs connected with one's desire and readiness to take this gift. In this part, attention is paid to the value of a human being's freedom. This has become a foundation for subsequent topics supporting a moral upbringing. God's offer of salvation has been presented as Jesus' invitation to vigil – an appropriate way of functioning. The motifs of staying with Jesus are also developed. Among them, one indicates His disinterested love for

people, shown on Calvary. This thought is expanded upon in the next chapter, where children come to know the truth about his victory, rising from death – about Jesus leading people to happiness. On this stage, for a moral upbringing, the truth that Jesus, who has risen from death, does not leave man, but rather strengthens him in faithfulness with the Holy Spirit, seems to be significant.

Summary

Reflections upon the meaning of religious education for a moral upbringing shows that it is a form that enriches and broadens the human perception and understanding of the world in which we live. Assuming that the educational task includes religious education, it should support man in understanding the world, in finding his own place in it, and in taking responsibility; we can also claim that religious education enlightens, from a religious perspective, the matters of man's existence, and in different ways enables him to achieve his own development and teaches him how to carry out tasks of responsibility. This dimension of human life in particular is seen in the aspect of moral upbringing, as religious education puts man closer to the objective norms regulating the harmonious coexistence of people with each other. It also provides new, religious motifs for taking the effort to care about others' goodness. All these things are aimed to refer to religious contents in order to form social-moral attitudes and the human conscience.

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Information about the Authors:

Zbigniew Marek is a Professor in the Department of Andragogy and Pedagogical Axiology at the Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow, and conducts research on the possibilities for religious participation in processes of upbringing. Among his many publications, such items as *Pedagogika towarzyszenia. Perspektywa tradycji ignacjańskiej* (Krakow: AIK, 2017), *Religia pomoc czy zagrożenie dla edukacji* (Krakow: Wyd. WAM, 2014), and *Podstawy wychowania moralnego* (Krakow: Wyd. WAM, 2005) are of relevance to the above-mentioned research perspectives.

Zbigniew Marek SJ

ul. Zaskale 1, 30-250 Kraków, Poland

Tel. 12 428 78 83

E-mail: zmarek@ignatianum.edu.pl

Rev. Janusz Mólka, a Jesuit and holder of a PhD in pedagogy, works in the Department of General Pedagogy and Upbringing Theory in the Institute of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Pedagogy, at the Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow. His research areas cover: didactic-upbringing systems, the theory and philosophy of upbringing, problems of pathology from a social dimension, and the analysis of the meaning of the relations between work experience and personal development.

E-mail: janusz.molka@ignatianum.edu.pl

Dr Maria Szymańska holds a doctorate in pedagogy and works in the Department of Andragogy and Pedagogical Axiology in the Institute of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Pedagogy, at the Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow. She deals with research on teacher formation and portfolio application in the didactic and methodological areas. She has published works including *Transformative creativity in teacher formation. A pedagogical approach* (Krakow: Wyd. WAM and Akademia Ignatianum w Krakowie, 2017) and "Rola i znaczenie portfolio w kształceniu pedagogów. Własna koncepcja" in *Kształcenie pedagogów w szkole wyższej. Teoria i praktyka*, edited by R. Stępień (Pułtusk: Akademia Humanistyczna im. A. Gieysztor, 2015).

E-mail: maria.szymanska@ignatianum.edu.pl