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Editorial

Ladies and Gentlemen,

An outstanding philologist, Slavist, a historian of Polish literature and culture Aleksander Brückner, in *The Etymological Dictionary of the Polish Language* (1926-27) wrote that conscience means „to think this way or that”. This definition itself leads to a serious reverie, since we actually do not know what conscience is, though we have a hint – in conscience man ponders, belabours, judges.

In ancient Greece conscience used to have a cognitive tinge and meant the ability to have relations with oneself, especially with reference to one’s past. Since it was not only about retrospection, as a result such relation demanded judging the good and the bad things from the past, and this way the concept of conscience was conceived. Later Stoics broadened this concept discerning in this retrospection the voice of God, who was supposed to be help for man in a harmonious life with nature and in appropriate moral conduct. Therefore, in conscience man has some infallible, critical indicator for his moral conduct, but not only referring to the past, but also to the future. In conscience man has some indispensable help in appropriate judgement of his conduct.

In our times attempts have been made to limit the concept of conscience to religious fields rather: theology, ethics, Christian morality and philosophy. However, it appears that it has been insistently eliminated from man’s constitution through atheism and practical materialism extending their influence, greater and greater impact of psychology and psychoanalysis, and finally agnosticism. This concept has been replaced with other notions: „awareness”, „identity”, „subjective I”, „superego” etc., and it was

even deleted from lexis, which is clearly seen in the whole history of education in the „eastern bloc” countries, for instance. In schools and educational systems shaping, forming pupil’s conscience was not discussed, but attitudes and behaviour were shaped.

Contemporary languages exhibit various meanings of the concept of „conscience”. However, refraining from detailed analyses, what they all have in common is that conscience is a practical judgement on the basis of which man states that this thing was, or is, or will be good or bad.

Meanwhile, a great fruit of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) is the discovery of man’s dignity and his conscience anew. The same Council states that „man has in his heart a law written by God; to obey it is the very dignity of man; according to it he will be judged. Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a man. There is he alone with God, Whose voice echoes in his depths”. Somewhere else, it states that „in the depths of his conscience, man detects a law which he does not impose upon himself, but which holds him to obedience. (...) The voice of conscience when necessary speaks to his heart: do this, shun that” (Pastoral Constitution „Gaudium et spes” 16).

The following issue of „The Horizons of Education” raises the subject connected with conscience. However, we did not want to analyse all the possible semantic variants of this concept, but only focus on its more etymological – philosophical – legal – educational nature.

Firstly, Jan Miodek introduces us into the richness of the Polish language and explains that the word „sumienie” (*Eng.* conscience), contrary to appearances because of a disparate sound, closely, both formally and semantically, corresponds with a Latin word „conscientia”, which means „being, communing with the knowledge about oneself, self-awareness”. It distinctly confirms semantic – etymological history of this concept also in the Polish language.

However only etymologically it appears that „conscience” has precisely determined conceptual frames, since Tomasz Homa points to the semantic diversity and the dangers of reducing its contents. Therefore, he reveals the necessity to recognize

a spiritual scope for conscience's activity, and what should be taken into consideration there is moral awareness and the ability to make specific judgements, which should constitute an indivisible whole in man.

Friedrich J. Ricken clarifies the difference and relationship between man's practical mind and his conscience, and he explains these concepts. He draws on Immanuel Kant, who believes that practical mind forestalls conscience's judgement and decisions, as if it suggested *modus procedendi*, hence conscience is a tribunal of second instance, but doing a particular thing is up to the conscience.

The need to be guided by righteous conscience clearly becomes apparent in legislation, which in its regulations should completely harmonize with social morality, which is, to avoid abuse, to a certain extent controlled. However, according to Andrzej Baładynowicz, in Poland we take note of much „turbulence” as far as „conscientious law” and a more humanized criminal responsibility system are concerned. The author proves that on the example of deficiencies of binding legal solutions within the scope of social service activity and criminal responsibility system functioning. Finally, he advances a few theses about healing adverse psychosocial changes, which impose strain on prisoners in the process of elongated isolation.

Appropriate moral condition of the society depends on the quality of consciences of its members. This is a thesis advanced by Zbigniew Marek in his dissertation. And what he rightly observes, concern for appropriate and righteous formation of young generation's consciences does not depend on the parents or educators only. It is a very comprehensive process. Adults' responsibility should be focused more on showing the right world of values, in which young people shape their consciences.

Holland is a leading country in Europe as far as tolerance in morality, political liberalism is concerned; introducing numerous ethical „innovations”. The Dutch themselves regard their country as the most secularized. Leo van der Tuin – a Dutchman ponders over how in such social reality we can talk about the formation of conscience and whether we can talk about it at all. Are these supposed to be pedagogical efforts, or maybe some form of

„negotiation”? According to him, in the whole process of the formation of young person’s conscience, youth should be accompanied, instead of instructed or controlled.

Shaping the righteous conscience also depends on the established proper psychology. Helmut Hanisch makes an effort to meet pedagogical expectations through the analysis of three different psychological concepts: Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalysis, Carl Gustav Jung’s neopschoanalysis and Philip Lersch’s personality psychology. Exploring them, he attempts to select these aspects, which might be useful in the formation of conscience.

„Every cloud has a silver lining” – says a folk word of wisdom. And it is confirmed in the last article about conscience by Katarzyna Wrońska. The author emphasizes constitutive significance of conscience in the process of man’s development. And even if it happens that man goes astray from time to time, chooses the wrong, moral awareness, and above all conscience, as this „internal voice”, will help him out and lead him onto a proper path if it is listened to.

If indeed in conscience „we think this way or that”, judgement as to what is good or wrong takes place and the decisions on what to choose are made, then nobody has to be made aware of the great responsibility man bears in shaping his own conscience, as a free subject of his decisions, as well as those who help or disturb him in that. However, it is faithfulness to one’s own conscience that conclusively determines man’s dignity and his greatness.

Wishing you interest in the issues connected with conscience and always good „thinking”

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