

## The Educator as a Subject of the Spiritual Development of Student Youth

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### Abstract

The article explores how spirituality determines the scientific outlook on human existence and value orientations. This is why one of the important tasks of the educator's activity is the development of a high level of spirituality among students. To investigate this issue, the hermeneutic context, which has traditionally gained popularity in the analysis of the problems of psychological and pedagogical science and the humanities, has been chosen. The authors specified the essence of the concept of 'spirituality', described the principle of an individual's inherent desire for spiritual growth, and determined the importance and function of culture and real freedom in the young person's spiritual growth. The aspects of creativity, along with the close relationship of the subjects of the educational process during the formation of spirituality, have been subjected to scientific analysis, and the meanings of the individual's (non)spiritual activity and behaviour have been determined.

**Keywords:** (non) spirituality, development of spirituality, hermeneutic approach, educator, art, culture

*If a man is to live, he must be all alive, body, soul, mind, heart, and spirit.*  
– Thomas Merton, 1956

*Spirituality constitutes the meta-message of teaching...*  
– Laura Jones, 2005

### Introduction

The relevance of the problem has been determined by the demand on the educational and public discourse on the formation of the individual's spiritual culture, drawing the world community's attention to the phenomena of (non)spirituality. In recent decades, the number of armed conflicts and wars in the world has increased significantly, which is an indication of the modern struggle for worldviews, identities, religions, the right to freedom, and the recognition of spiritual

values and priorities.

The study of the phenomenon of spirituality has a long tradition. Spirituality functions as a universal factor of human experience. The essence of this experience, as well as spiritual belief or practice, differs in different cultures.<sup>1</sup> A phenomenologically based model of spiritual development and growth<sup>2</sup> presents spirituality as a synthesis of three components: the transcendent (beyond the ordinary), connection or relationship with the sacred, and the search for the final goal, i.e., in this case, spirituality determines spiritual meanings, the meaning of life, etc. This wholeness in the development of spirituality provides a sense of internal comfort and harmony, the authenticity of one's self, as well as other spiritual values,<sup>3</sup> such as compassion, gratitude, tolerance, empathy, etc. Initially, the investigation of spirituality was conducted within the realm of religion,<sup>4</sup> often examined within the framework of Christian values.<sup>5</sup> However, progressively, scholars in social and behavioural sciences are approaching this subject from a perspective that is not necessarily connected to religious beliefs. The exploration of the essence of human nature is significantly anchored in the methodology of spirituality. This is why contemporary scholars, including philosophers, theologians, psychologists, sociologists, and educators, are actively studying this issue – an aspect we view as a positive development. The trend of increasing relevance of the topic of spirituality, the experience of transcendence, is also evidenced by studies conducted using the method of longitudinal thematic modelling,<sup>6</sup> or by determining the level of religious/nonreligious/nonspiritual individuals.<sup>7</sup>

Genuine humanity has consistently shaped an individual's scientific worldview, establishing the traditional elements of spirituality in the axiological realm – Goodness, Truth, and Beauty. As a result, it contributes to the perception and awareness of the notion of preserving peace on our planet and enhancing the understanding of the human relationship system. In the book 'Present-Day Spiritualities: Contrasts and Overlaps',<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth Hense identifies six fields of recent research in spirituality, including spirituality in education. Nowadays, when irreversible processes of globalisation are taking place, educational paradigms are being constantly changed,<sup>9</sup> and the latest technologies of teaching and learning are being introduced. The significance of the humanities, as highlighted by Lech Witkowski,<sup>10</sup> is notably expanding, with pedagogy being a particularly crucial component in this growth. This phenomenon is driven not only by sociocultural, political, and economic factors but also by the pressing requirements for the development of students and future professionals across diverse facets of spirituality.

- 1 C. Peterson and M. E. P. Seligman, *Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification* (New York, Washington, DC: Oxford University Press, American Psychological Association, 2004).
- 2 O. Mayseless and P. Russo-Netzer, 'A vision for the farther reaches of spirituality: a phenomenologically based model of spiritual development and growth', *Spirituality in Clin. Pract.*, no. 4 (2017): 176–192, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/scp0000147>.
- 3 I. D. Bech, *Selected scientific works. Personality education* (Chernivtsi: Bukrek, 2015).
- 4 S. M. Schneiders, 'Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality', in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, ed. Arthur Holder (Malden, Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 15–32.
- 5 B. J. Zinnbauer, K. I. Pargament, B. Cole, et al., 'Religion and Spirituality: Unfuzzifying the Fuzzy', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36, no. 4 (1997): 549–564, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1387689>.
- 6 S. H. Kim, N. Lee, and P. E. King, 'Dimensions of Religion and Spirituality: A Longitudinal Topic Modeling Approach', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 59, no. 1 (2020): 62–83, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12639>.
- 7 R. T. Cragun, J. H. Hammer, and M. Nielsen, 'The nonreligious-nonspiritual scale (NRNSS): Measuring everyone from atheists to Zionists', *Science, Religion and Culture* 2, no. 3 (2015): 36–53.
- 8 E. Hense, 'Introduction', in *Present-Day Spiritualities: Contrasts and Overlaps*, eds. Elisabeth Hense, Frans Jespers and Peter Nissen (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2014).
- 9 Jo Fraser-Pearce, 'Spiritual education as a subspecies of relational education?', *British Journal of Religious Education* 44, no. 1 (2022): 112–121, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2021.1877613>.
- 10 Lech Witkowski, 'Transformations and their Dominants: between the Dynamic and Structure of Processuality', *Phainomena: Ljubljana* 30, no. 118/119 (2021): 69–91, <https://doi.org/10.32022/PHI30.2021.118-119.3>.

The article aims (1) to examine certain philosophical and pedagogical aspects of individual spirituality within the teacher's professional activities, and (2) to outline the key factors influencing the development of spirituality in student youth, considering aspects such as culture, education, freedom, creativity, and more.

## Spirituality and Education

To delve into the examination of the studied issue, we have opted for the methodology of hermeneutics, enabling us to comprehend the role and significance of its central category – ‘*consciousness*’ in the process of the development of the student youth's spirituality. In the process, we referred to Sandra M. Schneiders' study (2005),<sup>11</sup> which identified *three approaches to the study of Christian spirituality*: a) historical, b) theological, and c) anthropological/hermeneutical. The historical-critical approach is based on the analysis of the origins of spirituality ‘as long as it has happened from the beginning of the Judeo-Christian tradition, through the early origins of the Christian Church, the emergence of Christianity in the Roman Empire, the Age of the Ascetics, the Patristic Fathers, the Middle Ages, the Age of the Enlightenment, and postmodernity, Christian spirituality is influenced by time’. The theological approach involves the study of spirituality in the Christian religious tradition, which continues to be formulated and systematised in various streams of Christianity. The anthropological/hermeneutical approach to the study of Christian spirituality is based on the ability of humans to self-transcend in the broadest sense of the word.<sup>12</sup> The philosophical and pedagogical dimension of hermeneutics involves substantiating the concept of endlessness and continuity, manifested through the principle of the ‘hermeneutic circle’ (circle of understanding). Proposed by the German philosopher F. Schleiermacher, this principle designates the educator as the agent responsible for shaping students' spirituality, emphasising the need to immerse them in their inner world. Today in the scientific literature, there are different approaches to defining the concept of ‘spirituality’. Consequently, Ivan Bech defines spirituality as a mental-aesthetic and moral phenomenon<sup>13</sup>, while Hryhoriy Filipchuk underscores that the concept of spirituality encapsulates the essence of national values, identity, and the spiritual freedom of the individual.<sup>14</sup> Jo Fraser-Pearce (2022)<sup>15</sup> argues that in contemporary academia, the concept of ‘spiritual education’ is often associated with ‘religious education’, aligning with the perspective of David Hay (2007),<sup>16</sup> who employs the term ‘[...] spirituality [as] equivalent to relational consciousness.’ The scientist proves the necessity for the formation of spiritual consciousness at school to promote the development of students' morality and social cohesion. Sandra M. Schneiders<sup>17</sup> interprets spirituality by examining the comprehension and awareness of the connection between God and humans. This framework encompasses existential and religious dimensions, specifically delving into the Christian faith experience. For current social science and humanities, it makes sense to measure the rate at which people identify their religiosity and spirituality, as well as the connection of these categories with various demographic, religious, spiritual, and psychosocial variables.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, D. Hay and R. Nye are advocates of the theory of spirituality

11 S. M. Schneiders, ‘Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality’, 15–32.

12 Ibid.

13 Bech, *Selected scientific*, 39–40.

14 G. G. Filipchuk, *On the eve of “24”: perception of time* (Kyiv-Chernivtsi, 2022), 352.

15 Fraser-Pearce, ‘Spiritual education’, 112–121.

16 D. Hay, *Why Spirituality is Difficult for Westerners* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2007).

17 Schneiders, ‘Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality’.

18 Zinnbauer, et al., ‘Religion and Spirituality’, 549–564.

in education, which includes religion but is not limited to it.<sup>19</sup> Janusz Mariański states that ‘[...] while religion is related to spirituality, [...] not all spirituality has to be religious. More and more people fulfill their spiritual needs outside the sphere of religion, and sometimes even outside the sphere of the sacrum.’<sup>20</sup>

In our context, the idea of ‘an integral connection between character strengths and spirituality’ is impressive (it is about the search for meaning and purpose for self-improvement). After all, as Ryan M. Niemiec, Pninit Russo-Netzer, and Kenneth I. Pargament note,<sup>21</sup> spirituality is vital to the development of human character strengths (e.g., love, forgiveness), while they [character strengths] can enhance and deepen their spiritual practices, rituals, and experiences. Therefore, spirituality is defined in different contexts – as a feature of religion, as autonomy, and as a quality of personality or extra-human quality. ‘[...] the term ‘spiritual’ for the relationship with the transcendent would enable teachers and pupils to make the kinds of distinctions which are important in both spiritual education and the wider relational education,’<sup>22</sup> which in a certain way justifies the use of the concepts of ‘spiritual education,’ ‘spiritual development,’ ‘spiritual formation’ of a young person in state educational institutions.<sup>23</sup> Laura Jones notes: ‘[...] spirituality is not religion, a public institution that facilitates access to a power greater than ourselves, nor is it ethics, the study of rightness and wrongness in human conduct.’<sup>24</sup> The researcher relies on the authoritative scientists’ reflections, such as Robert Nash’s, who describes that ‘Religion is the institution; spirituality is personal. Religion is what we do with others; spirituality is what we do within ourselves. Public vs. private faith. Religion is head; spirituality is heart.’<sup>25</sup>

Joseph Dunne notes that spirituality is also not a character trait, after all, ‘everyone, inescapably, is spiritual, in the sense that there is some overall orientation to their lives, some assumption of what most matters.’<sup>26</sup> This is about the relativity of different people’s understanding of spirituality and the desire to improve in this sense. In the educational context, we consider the category of spirituality in the dimensions of ethics as a desire for moral improvement, value growth, and understanding of spiritual and moral cultural values. Undoubtedly, each of the aforementioned definitions has its valid place, but in our opinion, spirituality is a basic category reflecting every self-aware person’s desire to determine the value principles of humanity, humanness, awareness of the essence and purpose, the meaning of their life and others.<sup>27</sup>

Laura Jones<sup>28</sup> in the article ‘What Does Spirituality in Education Mean?’ considers this category in the following aspects: spirituality as transcendence, spirituality as connection, spirituality as wholeness, and spirituality as compassion. After all, in the educational process, there is transcendence in new knowledge gaining as a value, enriching one’s spiritual ‘me’ with it: pedagogical interaction to stimulate awareness, creativity, searching for connections between objects and phenomena of the surrounding world based on tolerance, humanism, and love. An educational

19 D. Hay and R. Nye, *The Spirit of the Child* (London: HarperCollins, 2006).

20 Janusz, Mariański, *Secularization, Desecularization, New Spirituality: A Sociological Study* (Kraków: Nomos, 2013), 154.

21 M. Ryan, Pninit Niemiec, Kenneth Russo-Netzer, and I. Pargament, ‘The Decoding of the Human Spirit: A Synergy of Spirituality and Character Strengths Toward Wholeness,’ *Frontiers in Psychology*, no. 11 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.02040>.

22 Fraser-Pearce, ‘Spiritual education’.

23 C. Beck, ‘Education for spirituality,’ *Interchange*, no. 17 (1986): 148–156, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01807476>.

24 Laura Jones, ‘What Does Spirituality in Education Mean?’, *Journal of College and Character* 6, no. 7 (2005), 3, <https://doi.org/10.2202/1940-1639.1485>.

25 Robert Nash, *Spirituality, ethics, religions, and teaching: A professor’s journey* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2002), 166.

26 Joseph Dunne, ‘After philosophy and religion: Spirituality and its counterfeits,’ in *Spirituality, philosophy, and education*, eds. D. Carr, and J. Haldane, 97–111 (London: RoutledgeFalmer, 2003), 99.

27 H. Vasianovych and V. Onyshchenko, *Noology of Personality* (Lviv: Spolom, 2012), 13.

28 Jones, ‘What Does Spirituality?’

institution should serve as a place not only for intellectual growth, but also for a student's mental well-being, a place where they can receive appropriate psychological, pedagogical, and information support.

A person's mental and spiritual world is a boundless world of a wide variety of feelings, emotions and moods, thoughts and ideas, concepts and images, ideals and fantasies, values and aspirations, etc. To a significant extent, an individual's spiritual world is determined by his imagination, intuition, intellect, as well as faith, conscience, will, love, joy, and hope, as the Ukrainian philosopher Hryhoriy Skovoroda emphasised more than once. The philosopher and educator figuratively wrote:

The spiritual person is free. He/she flies infinitely high, deep, and wide. Neither mountains, nor rivers, nor seas, nor deserts hinder him/her [...]. A spiritual person has the eyes of a dove, the wings of an eagle, the speed of a deer, the courage of a lion, the loyalty of a pigeon, the gratitude of a lark, the humility of a lamb, the speed of a falcon, the cheerfulness of a crane... A person's spiritual weapon is stronger than the physical one.<sup>29</sup>

Life experience attests that a spiritually inclined individual exhibits virtues such as integrity, conscientiousness, and fairness, refraining from demeaning the honour and dignity of others. Spirituality requires conscientious work, reason and will, self-knowledge, and constructing a spiritual temple in the depths of one's heart. Spirituality is one of the most important components of national revival in culture, it is a new human quality. Therefore, we can say that spirituality as an individual manifestation in the system of personal motives reflects the existence of two fundamental needs: the individual need for knowledge and the social need to live and act 'for others'. Let us consider some of the main factors of the formation of spirituality among student youth.

## Spirituality as a Personal Inner Need

In our opinion, need, as a driving force of life, an inner factor in the system of forming an individual's spirituality, is one of the leading ones. An important feature of needs is that they are passive-active. On one hand, they are impacted by a person's conditions of biosocial existence and are associated with deficits in normal life activity – social or biological. On the other hand, there needs to be determined the activity aimed at eliminating this deficit. Therefore, in the educational process, it is important to take into account subjective and objective aspects, in other words, autonomy and heteronomy. This was thoroughly explored in a research paper by the Japanese scholar Seongill Kang, who analysed 'both the substitutability and complementarity of autonomous and heteronomous motives using an overlapping-generations framework'<sup>30</sup>

It should be noted that in the process of characterising the system of human needs, some scientists sometimes 'neglect' or pay insufficient attention to spiritual needs, and they are the main ones for the individual, as they combine an endless connection of imaginations, desires, aspirations, demands, especially in their moral and aesthetic meaning harmoniously, which can be both deeply conscious and unconscious. In the process of study, a student is constantly being enriched with new knowledge, and the surrounding world, thereby striving to perceive his inner world

29 H. S. Skovoroda, *A full academic collection of works; under the editorship of Professor Leonid Ushkalov*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Kharkiv: Publisher Savchuk O. O., 2016), 791.

30 S. Kang, 'The interactive dynamics of autonomous and heteronomous motives', *Mathematical Social Sciences*, no 115 (2022): 11–26, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mathsocsci.2021.10.005>.

spiritually, becoming aware of inner 'sense'. The significance of the teacher in this endeavour is immeasurable. Employing diverse forms, methods, and contemporary pedagogical technologies, the teacher creatively assists the student in comprehending their inner world in a gradual and unintrusive manner. The goal is to encourage the students to 'explore' themselves and actualise their inner potential fully. As you know, irrational philosophical and psychological thought (F. Nietzsche, S. Freud, etc.) proves that human needs exist spontaneously and the determining ones are not spiritual, but physiological (sexual). They completely subjugate human intelligence and consciousness. We do not quite agree with this approach; instead, we adhere to the opinion that a teacher engaged in the development of students' spirituality should be especially careful and sensitive to this issue, considering students' young age, their sexual and spiritual growth, etc. Fulfilling everyday, conscientious work, the teacher should form students' optimistic perception of the world, and the desire to bring positive, joyful, good, and truly human things into this world. Nevertheless, we acknowledge that the efforts of educators to cultivate a heightened level of students' spirituality can face substantial obstacles if an adequate cultural and educational environment is not established. Here we distinguish at least two aspects: (1) cultural and educational, created for the teacher; (2) the similar environment that the teaching staff and the university administration create for their students. Both of them are important and should contribute to the development of the spiritual world of student youth as much as possible. In such circumstances, the establishment of human spiritually influenced subject-subject relations becomes feasible. This implies that sentiments of mutual connection, trust, understanding, mutual respect, and assistance take precedence in the dynamics of the 'teacher-student'/'student-teacher' relationship. These feelings are transformed into a deep belief that even in the most difficult living conditions there is a choice and a way out, there are opportunities for self-realisation and self-affirmation. The best examples of national and world culture, value orientation dominants, morality, ethics, art, religion, and traditions of educational philosophy serve as means of spiritual and moral development.

Therefore, the educator must be motivated to perform not only purely functional duties, but also be ready to go beyond these duties, to give his activity a spiritual, aesthetic, and creative meaning. It largely depends on the level of his culture.

### The Cultural Influence of Educators on the Development of Student Spirituality

The teacher's professional activity is extremely multifaceted and complex, which reflects the contradictions in social life. The Ukrainian academician Ivan Zyazyun characterised it as a *meta-activity*. He examined it with the understanding that during the activation process there exists a reciprocal interaction between subjects that facilitates the spiritual development of the student's personality. The scientist wrote: 'The main thing in a person is his/her spirituality based on the foundations of national culture [...]. After all, every person has cultural values polished over the ages, achievements that form the uniqueness, originality, and greatness of a person's national spirit.'<sup>31</sup>

Concluding, the fact becomes obvious: the teacher's activity can be productive only if he has a high cultural potential. If the educator lacks culture, then he will be unable to ensure the spiritual development of student youth. The concept of culture has been discussed in many different ways across various disciplines. In our text we would like to operate with an established definition, as

31 Ivan Zyazyun, *Pedagogy of goodness: ideals and realities* (Kyiv: MAUP, 2000), 304.

portrayed in the 'Encyclopedia of Education': 'Culture is a system of outlines of human activity, behavior and human communication for the change and improvement of social life in all its main manifestations'.<sup>32</sup> We hold the perspective that culture, in its inherent significance, constitutes a distinct entity within both individuals and society. It serves as the cornerstone for the evolution of spirituality, emphasising the objectification of human nature. Culture forms the groundwork for constructive interactions among individuals, social strata, nations, and ethnic groups, grounded in mutual tolerance and understanding. This is probably the reason for the outstanding German teacher A. Diesterweg formulating the principle of cultural conformity, emphasising that culture creates the necessary conditions for the formation of individual spiritual development.

The modern Ukrainian researcher Olesia Smolinska applies a hermeneutic approach to the term 'cultural appropriateness', and at the same time singles out three distinct meanings: firstly, it is the correspondence to the culture – the primary and direct meaning, which involves the process of long-term comparison with a static, well-studied sample in the culture; secondly, cultural conformity is also a step-by-step operational comparison of the values of the cultural and educational space with the general cultural paradigm; thirdly, cultural conformity can also contain the meaning of conformity to visual culture, that is, it is not a specific manifestation of it, but projects that involve dynamic co-creation – coexistence (organisation) 'in the image and likeness' of culture, where, hermeneutically, education as a process is very close creation of certain images of culture (prefigurative outline of culture).<sup>33</sup>

The principle of cultural conformity is so important for the development of student youth's spirituality, dialectically connected with the principle of cultural genesis. Following this principle, the continuous and boundless process of the emergence and shaping of diverse cultural forms persists indefinitely. Therefore, the real influence of culture on the formation of an individual's spirituality is endless. In this context, we consider the formation of students' spirituality in three main areas: language, art, and media.

One of the main components of culture is the teacher's speech potential. Language is people's most valuable treasure, it is the basis of spirituality, the force of culture of every conscious individual. Every educator, irrespective of their particular profession, should possess a thorough command of the official language of instruction at the educational institution and actively engage in its use. A teacher's lecture should be a model of fluency, where it will create a harmony of feelings among students, and allow for achieving mutual understanding. This is the moment of truth during which students' seeds of spirituality sprout. Of course, the teacher's speech potential must be constantly enriched and improved. It should be devoid of clericalism and formalism, and be characterised by content and creativity, capturing students' minds and souls.

1. The educator, as the subject of the formation of spirituality among student youth, must consistently and competently use various types and genres of art: theatre, cinema, poetry, painting, etc. Figuratively, art is the key to all doors that open the treasures of something beautiful and the sublime and, therefore, spiritual. Art comes to the rescue when there is a need to transform the negative, which a person often encounters, into a positive: to harden the strength of character with pains of the soul, and at the same time heal wounds with the balm of primordial wisdom and spirituality. It gives spiritual values, which a person must hold on to in this worldly whirlpool of mass spiritlessness, and thus develop internally and achieve significant results in

32 *Encyclopedia of Education*. Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine, ed. Kremen (Kyiv: Yurinkom Inter, 2008), 439.

33 Olesia Smolinska, *Theoretical and methodological foundations of the organization of the cultural and educational space of pedagogical universities of Ukraine* (Sumy: University book, 2014), 187–188.

revealing his abilities and capabilities. It is the art that reveals the fabulousness of the world to a young person and demonstrates its infinite palette, shades of charm, and beauty.

2. In contemporary education, both teachers and students actively engage as consumers of media products such as television, radio, and electronic publications on the Internet. These media sources shape specific worldviews and attitudes toward various issues. Consequently, media, encompassing channels and tools for accessing, storing, and transmitting information or data, have become integral aspects of life, including professional and educational spheres. The media play a key role in exploring the world, ensuring dynamic communication and maintaining social balance, but at the same time they are destructive and can sometimes become a tool for manipulating the consciousness. The psyche of a young person is susceptible to media influence, which is why there is often a feeling of fear and danger after watching images of violence (war) or even cases of cyberbullying in the online environment.<sup>34</sup> Thus, what is known as the 'passive' intellectual, moral, or emotional development of a student may transpire, as information is delivered in a pre-digested form, often escaping critical analysis. Consequently, media education is now a pivotal element in ensuring a student's information security.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, the level of a student's media culture and media literacy emerges as a significant factor in shaping their spirituality.<sup>36</sup> Hence, leveraging the wealth of media content, employing cutting-edge technologies in the realm of educational digitisation,<sup>37</sup> along with traditional forms and methods in the teacher's instructional approach, should function as an effective means for fostering spirituality within the educational institution. Of course, all of this can be done effectively under the conditions of teachers' real freedom.

### Freedom is the Basis of a Person's Spirituality

Since the first days of their conscious existence, human beings have been fighting for the most valuable thing – real freedom. This is a direct confirmation of the statements mentioned above. The individual's self-awareness of their freedom leads to the solution of a whole series of vital questions, in particular: freedom and necessity, individual and social freedom, essence and possibilities of manifestation of positive and negative freedom, interdependence of freedom of activity and freedom of creativity, etc. Comenius was convinced that universal freedom of humanity is manifested in the equality and triumph of the spirit based on humanism. Considering the human being as God's best creation, the thinker noted that the human essence was lost; people were condemned to severe sins before God, themselves, and other people:

Instead of mutual love and purity, hatred, enmity, war, and murder reign. Instead of justice, we find unfairness, roguery, oppression, theft, and rapine; instead of purity, uncleanness, and audacity of thought, word, and deed; instead of simplicity and truth, lying, deception, and knavery. Instead of modesty, pride, and haughtiness between people.<sup>38</sup>

34 P. K. Smith, J. Mahdavi, M. Carvalho, et al., 'Cyberbullying: its nature and impact in secondary school pupils', *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 49, no. 4 (2008): 376–385, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.2007.01846.x>.

35 M. Bulger and P. Davison, 'The Promises, Challenges and Futures of Media Literacy', *Journal of Media Literacy Education* 10, no. 1 (2018): 1–21.

36 R. Hobbs, *Digital and media literacy: A plan of action* (Washington DC: The Aspen Institute Communications and Society Program, 2010), [https://www.aspeninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Digital\\_and\\_Media\\_Literacy.pdf](https://www.aspeninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Digital_and_Media_Literacy.pdf).

37 Igor Tsenda and Olena Budnyk, 'Editorial. Mission and strategy of a modern university development in the conditions of digitalization', *Amazonia Investiga* 10, no. 41 (2021): 6–9. <https://doi.org/10.34069/AI/2021.41.05.0>.

38 J. A. Comenius, *The great didactic* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1896), 165.



Therefore, mankind ought to attain freedom through the prism of science, education, and culture. Consequently, Comenius aptly refers to schools as a ‘workshop of humanity’. It is worth mentioning that this name has a variety of meanings. First of all, it means education which results in developing a person’s best qualities. In another sense, this concept provides for the humane relationship between teachers and students in an educational process. In the case of consistent adherence to these requirements, a school will become a true paradise and pleasure, not a place of abuse and indifference.<sup>39</sup>

Today, the idea of the personality’s creative, spiritual development of both the educator and the student is particularly significant. It is probably no coincidence that nowadays the concept of ‘freedom’ is defined by the majority of scientists as the universality of culture and spirituality of the subjective range, which captures the possibility of activity and behaviour without external goal-setting. The valuable aspect of freedom has been extremely clearly formulated by H. Skovoroda: life without freedom loses its meaning.<sup>40</sup> The following aphorisms of the philosopher and teacher became popular: ‘Freedom is life in related work’, ‘True human freedom is dignity’, and ‘Only in freedom you will not be a slave to yourself! You will work with pleasure for others’, and others. The sense of freedom prompts the teacher to realise, first of all, a deep understanding of the goal of human life, which comprises ‘raising’ and nurturing another person, a spiritually filled patriot and a citizen of their country, and in a broader sense a citizen of the world. Under the conditions of freedom, life values change, and the choice of spiritual space is formed.<sup>41</sup>

The educator’s life in a state of freedom and self-awareness is extrapolated to their students. A teacher has to determine such individual forms and methods of students’ activity that would help them to raise spiritually and to build their spiritual centre of being. Lack of freedom paralyses an individual’s creative forces, suppresses his psyche, leads to apathy, and weakens the motivation for positive action. However, it is worth noting that both the teacher and the student are not always in a situation of freedom. A teacher is often heavily burdened with formal duties that do not allow him to make a free choice in the process of self-realisation and creative activity. The student’s lack of freedom also has various negative manifestations: from sometimes the impossibility of independent time planning in the system of individual education to the deprivation of free choice in mastering certain educational subjects. On this basis, the subjects of the educational process may experience a ‘revolt of feelings’ and certain conflicts may arise, which can be too difficult to resolve, and under such conditions it is impossible to form students’ spirituality effectively. Long-term social instability also greatly hinders the development of student youth’s spirituality, as it leads to the negation of human personality. As real-life fades away, so do spiritual orientations and values, inevitably transforming life into a semblance of virtuality. In this process, creativity can serve as a genuine salvation.

## Creativity in the System of the Personality’s Spiritual Development

Due to creativity, a person realises not only world wisdom but also their self-knowledge. Realising their creative freedom, a person strives for spirituality and lives spiritually, he constantly moves

39 H. Vasianovych and O. Budnyk, ‘The Category of freedom in the written heritage of John Amos Comenius and Hryhoriy Skovoroda’, *Advanced Education*, no. 7 (2017): 88. <https://doi.org/10.20535/2410-8286.93517>.

40 H. S. Skovoroda, *Poems, songs, fables, dialogues, treatises, parables, prose translations, letters* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1983), 68.

41 Olena Budnyk and Piotr Mazur, ‘The Hierarchy of Values Among Young People from Schools in the Mountainous Regions (Comparative study on the example of Poland and Ukraine)’, *The New Educational Review* 47, no. 1 (2017): 53–65, <https://doi.org/10.15804/tner.2017.47.1.04>.

from a passive to an active state, and self-development. Creativity reveals the human being's divinity.

Today, it is difficult to find a teacher who does not have creative skills. Without this, he turns into an ordinary functionary, a routinier who is not able to form students' spirituality. The teacher's creative act resides in being, it is a self-disclosure of the forces of being. The basis of the creative act is in the individual's self-awareness, the goal of the creative impulse is to achieve a new life, and this new life is the moment of truth, the spiritual fulfilment of a person, and his development. A creative teacher mobilises the spiritual and mental potential of student youth for self-affirmation and self-realisation, helping them be free from purely material needs and acquire cultural heights. This is how the values of an individual's life change, and a positive life experience is formed.

Freedom creates conditions for creativity in professional activity, revealing the fullness of the individual. Only in free activity are the person's creative world and the world of being realised. It is not by chance that pedagogy today faces, as Marek Rembierz notes, the expansion of individual and social freedom:

[...] with the freedom and pluralism of pedagogical thought, with new areas of freedom and pluralism in the sphere of education (in the education system), with freedom and pluralism shaped by reflective pedagogical thought and thanks to a reliable education. To create various states of freedom, moral, intellectual, and practical skills are necessary, and if they are not formed, the dreamed-of freedom can take the degenerate form of 'an unfortunate gift of freedom', when one is unable to live within the freedom measures.<sup>42</sup>

Spiritual freedom prompts us to realise the goal of being, to understand the old, and to search for new ideals. For a teacher, it is manifested, among other things, in the improvement of professional skills, the search for innovative teaching strategies, the best educational practices, and the constant search for an educational ideal in professional activity.<sup>43</sup>

Spirituality in education refers to no more – and no less – than a deep connection between student, teacher, and subject – a connection so honest, vital, and vibrant that it cannot help but be intensely relevant. Nourishment of this spark in the classroom allows it to flourish in the world, in the areas of politics, medicine, engineering – wherever our students go after graduation.<sup>44</sup>

It is also important in this sense that a person with a high level of spirituality does not allow others to manipulate their consciousness and the results of creativity cannot depend on pure conformity or adaptation; he always has his own opinion and finds appropriate means to protect it.

In this context, we can speak of teacher burnout. It is a very serious issue and some scientists show that such burnout is characteristic for those teachers who do not have a sufficient degree of creativity. Studies prove that teachers who are characterised by low self-efficacy and high job demands have a higher level of professional burnout.<sup>45</sup> Their work is usually unrelated and,

42 Marek Rembierz, 'The Dispute about the Concept of Society and the Value of the Individual as a Context and a Challenge for Polish Pedagogical Thought', *Polska Myśl Pedagogiczna*, no. 4 (2018): 63, <https://doi.org/10.4467/24504564PMP.18.003.8642>.

43 Vasianovych, Budnyk, 'The Category of freedom', 89.

44 Jones, 'What Does Spirituality?'

45 I. Arvidsson, U. Leo, A. Larsson, et al., 'Burnout among school teachers: quantitative and qualitative results from a follow-up study in southern Sweden', *BMC Public Health*, no. 19 (2018): 655. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-019-6972-1>.

therefore, joyless, which does not bring spiritual and mental satisfaction. A creative teacher is a subject of being, and he can form student youth spirituality through their creative work effectively. A creative educator is open to the world, he is always in dialogue with students, and actually with themselves (self-reflection). In this sense, it is important how exactly teachers renew their activity spiritually, and how they find the most effective methods and motivations for students. Such a renewal is manifested in the teacher's actions; in the process of acting, new individually significant and socially useful values are created.

### (Non) Spirituality as a Denial of Spirituality

A practice nowadays shows that nonspirituality, which is increasing in many spheres of human life, such as education, is the antipode of spirituality. The spiritual vacuum has become a feature of our lives. The sacredness of human existence has largely been lost and inner emptiness and apathy manifest people's lack of spirituality. Spirituality leads to the 'dying of fundamental hopes and despair about leading values, the phenomena of immorality, cynicism, a departure from God, [...] the collapse of worldview and ideals (especially dogmatized ones); feeling of "falling into an abyss", disorientation, confusion; indifference to life'.<sup>46</sup>

American scholars,<sup>47</sup> referring to the recommendations of Lee,<sup>48</sup> point to the lack of personal religiosity and spirituality, and accordingly use the terms 'nonreligiosity' and 'nonspirituality'. According to them, individuals can self-identify as religious and spiritual, nonreligious and spiritual, or nonreligious and nonspiritual. Researchers have developed a so-called indicator of personal spirituality (or lack of it, i.e., nonspirituality). It is this concept [nonspirituality] that we use in our study.<sup>49</sup>

An individual's (non) spirituality is their ontological nonexistence, loss of human essence, and disorder of spiritual life. Spirituality opposes the spirituality of humankind and society at the level of cruelty, aggression, and unkindness. An illustration of the tragedy of human existence is always armed conflicts and wars, which lead to frustration, stress, despair, disbelief, and sometimes loss of spirituality. This is also typical of the modern world, where we often encounter humiliation and misunderstandings, for example, due to the non-acceptance of differences or certain spiritual values. In a narrow sense, non-spirituality blocks interaction with other people, it neglects real human values. Usually, the lack of educators' spirituality is embodied in the humiliation of the student's dignity, and the desire to show their 'superiority' and power over the student. It may manifest in not only overt but also concealed form. Then, how can the educator's inner 'I' hide egocentrism, feigned kindness, and – at the same time – intolerance, and repressive consciousness? Since today apathy is noticeably gaining more and more speed, and its most powerful relay is the mass media, the question of the development of spirituality is urgent. For this purpose, so-called 'spiritual exercises' are practised in the educational process, one of which is the Socratic dialogue as the 'art of spiritual, intellectual and moral formation' of the student,<sup>50</sup> the experience

46 I. K. Moiseev, 'Spirituality', in *Encyclopedia of Modern Ukraine*, eds. I. M. Dzyuba, A. I. Zhukovsky, M. G. Zheleznyak et al. (Kyiv: Institute of Encyclopedic Research of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, 2003), <https://esu.com.ua/article-41507>.

47 Cragun, Hammer, and Nielsen, 'The nonreligious-nonspiritual scale'.

48 L. Lee, 'Talking about a revolution: Terminology for the new field of nonreligion studies', *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 27, no. 1 (2012): 129–139, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13537903.2012.642742>.

49 Cragun, Hammer, Nielsen, 'The nonreligious-nonspiritual scale'.

50 Marek Rembierz, 'Intercultural education as a spiritual exercise. Pedagogical dimensions of the formation of spiritual culture and understanding of transcultural values in the context of religious diversity and worldview pluralism', *Edukacja międzykulturowa* 2, no. 9 (2018): 98, <https://doi.org/10.15804/em.2018.02.05>.

of knowing oneself and others, asking questions, accepting differences, various states of mind, etc. M. Rembierz argues:

Thanks to spiritual exercises, the person who undertakes them, to some extent, exceeds himself/herself and the boundary set by his/her life events, separating from the axiologically understood 'Whole'. A person enters the universe of values that has been obscured for her/him so far, and she/he gains it anew.<sup>51</sup>

In our opinion, information and communication technologies can also serve as an antidote to (non) spirituality. They must be developed at a high professional level, specially organised, properly tested, and controlled in the process of joint creativity, personally meaningful in the 'teacher-student' interaction, which aims not just to gain a certain amount of knowledge, but to understand it, to gain spiritual experience, moral culture. The spiritual and moral sense of the use of digital technologies makes it possible to solve such problems as the active involvement of students in spiritual and moral values, awakening and development of moral feelings, formation and development of moral will, and encouragement to spiritual and moral behaviour and spiritual self-improvement.

Several studies have testified to the negative impact of technology, in particular artificial intelligence, on a person's moral choice. Thus, Danish and German scientists emphasise the need to take into account ChatGPT's answers regarding their moral judgments,<sup>52</sup> which sometimes leads to irreversible consequences, even suicide.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, considering the huge potential of chatbots to influence the spiritual and moral sphere of the user, scientists prove the need for investment in research that will help in interaction with ChatGPT to avoid questions of spiritual content and moral principles related to human behaviour. It should be noted that possibilities of using ICT in the context of resistance to the manifestation of apathy, instead of the consistent formation of spirituality, largely depends not so much on the technical side of the matter, but on the extent to which the teacher possesses psychological-pedagogical, ethical, and cultural knowledge, abilities and skills. Practice proves that a teacher with a high level of professional skill has a good understanding of students' inner worlds, and can most effectively develop spiritual and mental qualities in them: ideals, feelings, will, readiness for moral actions, etc.

## Conclusions

Spirituality serves as a qualitative characteristic of consciousness, which determines human behaviour, life goals, and subjectivity. In our opinion spirituality is one of the highest values of a person who not only seeks to acquire valuable life goals but also perceives and confirms them through their conscious activity and deeds. A teacher, as a subject of the development of student youth spirituality, must personally certify its high level, as well as possess pedagogical skills. In this meaning spirituality in a certain way determines the subject's attitude to activity, which means to the teaching profession, scientific activity, students, and themselves. Spirituality is the antithesis of nonspirituality – a person's loss of subjectivity, that is why a teacher needs to strive for the use of

51 Ibid., 100.

52 'ChatGPT może wpływać na ludzkie reakcje dotyczące dylematów moralnych', PAP, 2023, last modified 8<sup>th</sup> April 2023. <https://www.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news%2C1558263%2Cchatgpt-moze-wplywac-na-ludzkie-reakcje-dotyczace-dylematow-moralnych.html>.

53 Prisha. 'Killed by AI? A Belgian man commits suicide after talking with chatbot', Wion, updated 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023. <https://www.wionews.com/technology/killed-by-ai-belgian-man-commits-suicide-after-talking-with-chatbot-578025>.

the most effective educational strategies, and innovative technologies in the educational process of an educational institution. Based on the outlined scientific directions, it is worth highlighting the conditions for the effective formation and development of the student's spiritual and moral values: the humanistic direction of the educational process, establishing a cultural and developmental atmosphere in the educational institution, the embodiment of a spiritual ideal (inclusive of the teacher's personality), and the implementation of innovative spiritual practices (exercises), among other factors. In future investigations, delving into the theoretical concepts of spirituality and (non) spirituality of contemporary youth could be valuable. This exploration should consider national, cultural, religious, and demographic characteristics, as well as the levels of physical, social, and mental well-being in detail.

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