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BETWEEN EXCLUSION AND INCLUSION IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION[1]

In the face of the post-modern crisis of values and beliefs and widespread phenomena identified with the processes of secularization of Western societies and in the face of the increasingly sharp discussion on the place and role of religious institutions in the public space in Poland, it seems necessary to rethink the challenges and tasks that the current situation poses to religious education of children and young people in general, regardless of the religion professed, related religious message and legal status. In a pluralistic socio-cultural reality, in which the category of truth is depreciated and relativized, should this education continue (or perhaps continue more intensely) to offer knowledge, skills and competences related to strengthening religious identity, acquiring apologetic tools and adopt an exclusive rather than inclusive thinking about one's own religious group? Or should it, in line with the "spirit of the times", educate inclusively, treating its own point of view of reality as one of a plethora of possible ones rather than the only true one, respecting difference and the rights of others to their worldview,

[1] Originally published: Monika Humeniuk-Walczak, "Między ekskluzją a inkluzją w edukacji religijnej", [in:] *Nauczyciel i jego rola w sytuacji zmian społecznych i edukacyjnych: współczesne wyzwania*, ed. U. Szuścik, E. Kochanowska, R. Majzner, Wydaw. Libron, Filip Lohner, Kraków 2014, p. 91–102.

creed and way of life, recognizing dialogue and non-confrontation as a basic means of communication with them?

Reflection on the specificity of a particular socio-cultural context and the shape and function of a particular religious education model requires, first of all, a comprehensive delineation of a map of meanings referring to this issue in relevant literature, stretched between two poles - exclusion and inclusion - of ways to understand the status and specificity of the religion itself, and secondly, to recall the corresponding selected concepts of the pedagogy of religion. Due to the comparative, and not systematic, character of these analyses, I will provide only a general description of the relevant concepts and leave out the details of their origins or evolution. In addition, I would like to point out that the general reflection on the cultural and theoretical context of the education models discussed in this article is based on my assumption that religion and religiosity (religious element, religious experience) constitute the undisputed "pre-existing social and cultural phenomenon"[2], which despite operating in extremely divergent semantic contexts can be grasped as experienced in one way or another by all participants in social life.

THE EXCLUSIVE PERSPECTIVE

The category of exclusivity in the presented approach is connected with the way of defining the boundaries between the internal and the external in such a way that the principles guiding the religious community lead to intentional limitation of the possibilities of participation of those who are not identified as *ours*. This situation is well illustrated by Ryszard Szarfenberg's m o n o p o l y p a r a d i g m[3]. This paradigm implies the existence and operation of a specific group monopoly which is supported by internal status groups that share a common culture and identity, have a strong sense of distinctiveness, follow their own

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[2] B. Milerski, "Współczesne koncepcje pedagogiki religijnej", [in:] *Elementy pedagogiki religijnej*, ed. B. Milerski, Warszawa 1998, p. 144.

[3] See R. Szarfenberg, *Marginalizacja i wykluczenie społeczne. Wykłady*, Warszawa 2006, p. 44–46, http://www.owes.info.pl/biblioteka/wyklad_wykluczenie_spoleczne.pdf, (available: 30.10.2019).

patterns of world perception, consumption and lifestyle, and are reluctant to share privileges with those who come from outside their circles. Attitudes and actions aimed at limiting the inclusion of Others into one's own inner circle become a condition of internal integration (*we integrate with a community that is separate from the others*) and leave no illusions about the possibility of permanent changes of the boundaries (expansion) of one's own group.

The logic of such an exclusionary strategy is connected with a clearly defined, traditional and uniquely modern concept of reality, with an evident pursuit of historical continuity. Here, the "religious modus operandi of belief refers to a past and contains a perspective of the future"[4]. In this perspective, religion appears as a peculiar anchor of stability in a universe dominated by the imperative of change. Religion becomes synonymous with traditionalism, understood after Max Weber as a tendency to accept everyday life and to believe that it is the standard of action[5]. Tradition understood in this way contains a set of images, theoretical and practical knowledge, patterns of behaviour, attitudes, etc., which society adopts in the name of the indispensable continuity between the past and the present[6].

Exclusive definitions of religion combine two basic features: references to supernatural forces on the one hand and the ability to inspire and legitimise intentions and actions aimed at the transformation of society on the other[7]. Peter L. Berger, too, treats religion as a symbolic universe of meaning, which reaches out towards transcendence and encompasses all that influences and sanctions every possible aspect of social life and thus prevents social anomy and chaos[8]. Religion, then, is seen as exclusive through the transcendent comprehensive meta-formula, a trigger of broad social changes and a marker of the line between participation and exclusion.

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[4] I. Borowik, "Religia jako forma pamięci, czyli Danièle Hervieu-Léger nowe oblicze religii w nowoczesności", [in:] D. Hervieu-Léger, *Religia jako pamięć*, Kraków 2007, p. 14.

[5] See D. Hervieu-Léger, *Religion as a Chain of Memory*, New Brunswick, New Jersey 2000, p. 86.

[6] See Ibidem, p. 87.

[7] See Ibidem, p. 36.

[8] See I. Borowik, "Socjologia religii Petera L. Bergera", [in:] P. L. Berger, *Święty baldachim. Elementy socjologicznej teorii religii*, Kraków 2005, p. 15.

Strategies which justify the monopoly of the privileged can be called, following Kazimierz W. Frieske, e m a n c i p a t o r y   u s u r p a t i o n on the one hand and m a r g i n a l i s i n g   e x c l u s i o n on the other[9]. Access to community goods (e.g. to a proper understanding of truth, clearly defined criteria for valorisation of reality or loyalty and group solidarity) is closely guarded by the definition and enforcement of exclusion criteria (e.g. a group "aspiring" from the outside is identified with features that are negative relative to privileged communities, e.g. has an inadequate vision of reality and improper beliefs, undesirable attitudes or actions which, as a consequence, prevent it to meet the criteria for admission to the privileged circle).

A d a p t a t i v e   r a t i o n a l i t y [10] usually proves desirable in the exclusive approach to religion and religious communities in relation to the way of thinking, valuation and action. It develops in relation to absolutist and universalist *truth*, is not fond of doubt and eliminates what is uncertain, unstable and relative[11]. Adaptative rationality legitimises action meant to produce planned, specific and predictable effects. Reality is seen here as a universe of objects to be subjugated or led to a state when they prove useful and will serve pre-established purposes. The objectives of the action are formulated and understood in technical or strategic terms as a specific state of affairs to be achieved or extended so that these "subjects" behave in accordance with socially acceptable expectations[12]. This type of rationality along with the corresponding order of values, promotes attitudes and adaptive actions in relation to the conditions that are given. As such, it enables efficient functioning in existing circumstances, ensures compliance with its principles, brings a sense of stability, belonging and security, because it is based on a foundation that is a verifiable, repeatable, apparently permanent, objective, timeless, universal, and unchangeable interpretation of cultural and social reality[13].

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[9] See R. Szarfenberg, *Marginalizacja i wykluczenie społeczne*, op. cit., p. 45.

[10] See R. Kwaśnica, *Dwie racjonalności. Od filozofii sensu ku pedagogice ogólnej*, Wrocław 2007, p. 33.

[11] See Z. Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics*, Oxford 1993, p. 21–22.

[12] See R. Kwaśnica, *Dwie racjonalności*, op. cit., p. 52.

[13] See M. Humeniuk-Walczak, "Pedagogiczne modele działalności misyjnej w dobie nowoczesności", [in:] *Ewangelikalizm polski wobec wyzwań współczesności*, ed. S. Smolarz, S. Torbus, W. Kowalewski, Wrocław, Katowice 2013, p. 259–260.

The adoption of a specific perspective of reflection on the issues of religion, related to exclusion or inclusion, implies a different kind of thinking on the formula of religious education that would be adequate to the chosen perspective. In this context, Bogusław Milerski proposes to replace the term *religious education* with the category of p e d a g o g y o f r e l i g i o n, understood as a discipline dealing with the educational potential of various forms of religion and the formulation of the theory of religious education and socialization in the Church, family, school, and society[14]. Under this approach, pedagogy of religion would integrate pedagogical and theological normativity and focus to an equal extent on pedagogical reflection and practical theology[15].

It seems that the formula of an exclusive approach to issues related to religion is linked to the validation of such models and concepts of religion pedagogy that would include the process of religious education in terms of confessional obligations and apologetic tasks rather than pedagogical responsibility constructed on the basis of the current anthropological-social context[16]. The monopoly paradigm linked with the exclusive perspective discussed above assumes the existence and protection of clear-cut and tight boundaries between so-called participants and the excluded. In the context of confessional reflection this is a rift between the members of a given community (Church, religion or other religious group) and persons outside it (dissenters, religious critics and rebels, renegades, and non-believers). Taking as non-relative and universal theological and dogmatic basis of its own creed, it constructs a restrictive system of admission criteria which envisage the necessity of accepting all conditions and full identification with the message and principles professed by the community. Additionally, there is also a system of rituals of passage and access (e.g. baptism in the Roman Catholic or Protestant Churches, confirmation and a church wedding in Roman Catholicism or circumcision in Judaism and Islam).

A model of pedagogy of religion that legitimises such an approach cannot, therefore, be linked to teaching about one's own religious

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[14] See B. Milerski, *Hermeneutyka pedagogiczna. Perspektywy pedagogiki religii*, Warszawa 2011, p. 138–139.
[15] See Ibidem, p. 140.
[16] See Ibidem.

group or group as a cultural, social and historical phenomenon. Such an approach could lead to the relativization of truths taken as revealed and universal, thus depriving the doctrine of the group of its assigned gravity and blurring the topography of the community. Instead, starting from the revealed universe, the pedagogy of religion – representing the actual custodians of *truth* – should in this case strengthen the doctrinal and cultural identity of the group by adopting a transmission rather than a communicative model of teaching and educating students. Such a perspective is close to the so-called k e r y g m a t i c p e d a g o g y, which in the Christian tradition (Roman Catholic and Protestant) is primarily meant to proclaim the Gospel and the kerygma of salvation. A lesson of religious education is seen here as an induction to "supernatural values", shown as the young members' own values and present exclusively within the privileged community[17]. Milerski indicates that the transcendence and supernaturality are additionally highlighted by a formula of a passive process of religious education in this approach: due to the specific content of such a supernatural message and the limited cognitive competence of students in its perception, the listening activity replaces teaching through dialogue[18]. In this sense, as the author notes, kerygmatic pedagogy is a form of anti-pedagogical thinking, narrowing the educational reflection to the area of the Church and the kerygma proclaimed by it, negating all other forms of religious education as forms of existential falsehood. The essence of the educational problem here is reduced to the *life of faith* through the encounter with the kerygma and describes the existential transformation of man, which becomes no less and no more than education in the faith[19].

Such pedagogy, usually based on different *catechisms* seen broadly as sources of revealed or legitimate truths, fosters a narrative that counters postmodern ambivalence and social construct of reality, contributes to the preservation of the historical identity of the community and its internal integrity, as well as to the maintenance and surveillance of its borders. This model reinforces a clear exclusivity towards those who are outside the community and, in addition, appears to be less and

[17] See C. Rogowski, *Pedagogika religii. Podręcznik akademicki*, Toruń 2011, p. 66.
[18] See B. Milerski, *Hermeneutyka pedagogiczna*, op. cit., p. 148.
[19] See Ibidem, p. 149.

less suited to the reality of the socio-cultural world, which is getting increasingly secularised [20].

THE INCLUSIVE PERSPECTIVE

The category of inclusion is inscribed in the context of considerations related to secularization processes. Interesting for the reflection undertaken here may be the relations between social secularization and individual secularization. The former, according to Peter L. Berger, is a process in which the dominant role of religious institutions and symbols disappears, the separation of the Church and the State takes place and religious content disappears from art, philosophy, literature. Most importantly, however, this is manifested in the development of science as an autonomous, completely secular vision of the world [21]. Karel Dobbelaere adds after Mark Chaves that "Secularization at the societal level may be understood as the declining capacity of religious elites to exercise authority over the other institutional spheres" [22]. One of the consequences of this phenomenon is the individualization of religion, also referred to as *individual secularization*. In practice, it means the loss of credibility of traditional, religious definitions of reality. The official model of the previously binding religion ceases to be the source of subjective sense which is binding for man; it loses its principal role as a determinant in shaping individual religiousness, becoming one of the possible options rather than the dominant one [23]. This shifts the perspective from exclusivity towards inclusion. The dispersion of the religious element stimulates the construction of individual sub-worlds of meanings connected with the new version of the sacred. On the other hand, it becomes the essence

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[20] I elaborated on this in my article "Pedagogiczne modele działalności misyjnej w dobie nowoczesności" (op. cit., p. 257–268).

[21] See P. L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, New York 1990, p. 107.

[22] M. Chaves, "Secularization as Declining Religious Authority", *Social Forces* 1994, No. 72(3), p. 575, after: K. Dobbelaere, *Secularization. An Analysis at Three Levels*, Bruxelles 2004, p. 189.

[23] See K. Zielińska, *Spory wokół teorii sekularyzacji*, Kraków 2009, p. 126.

of *invisible* religion[24] which calls for no intermediary in the form of religious or public institution. As Danièle Hervieu-Léger claims:

> It gives free play to a combination of the themes inherited from traditional religions and the modern themes of free expression, self-realization and mobility which correspond with the advent of individualism. [...] a shift operates [...] from the greater transcendencies associated with the vision of another world to medium transcendencies (of a political nature), and, more particularly, to micro-transcendencies directed towards the individual and investing the modern culture of selfhood with a sacred character[25].

The monopoly paradigm ceases to obtain. Pluralisation of the sacred loosens the borders between *participants* and *the excluded*; its emergence and expansion disseminates cultural symbols to all interested individuals. From now on, freely and directly they can on their own make use of a repository of values and senses, constructing private "religions" to help them cope with the disappointments, uncertainties and hardships of everyday life. Such a shift towards inclusion also affects the way in which religious authorities are perceived. The role of "priests" is changing and their prestige and authority is being dispersed. From the position of exclusive depositaries of the "only truths" they are seen as entitled to contact with the sacred on an equal footing with others. They become partners, delegated at most to effectively manage the local sense of community[26].

The logic of inclusion seems to be based on e m a n c i p a t o r y r a t i o n a l i t y, assuming the uniqueness of situations and motivations of individuals, each of whom has their own unique sense of the normal and of the world order[27]. Within the framework of activities related to the pedagogy of religion corresponding to the perspective of emancipatory rationality, it must be borne in mind that it is never fully possible to read, on the basis of one's own subjective knowledge, the

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[24] See D. Hervieu-Léger, *Religion as a Chain of Memory*, op. cit., p. 34.
[25] Ibidem.
[26] See K. Dobbelaere, *Secularization*, op. cit., p. 128–130.
[27] See R. Kwaśnica, *Dwie racjonalności*, op. cit., p. 105.

senses, motivations and intentions of other people[28]. At the same time, emancipatory rationality reveals extremely important dimensions of the social world: its community and communication aspects. They are connected with the conviction that the community establishes meanings in the course of collective action. Robert Kwaśnica accounts for this as follows:

> What I experience includes a meaning which is important not only for me, but also for others. [...] The world of objects, the world of inner experience or the world of cultural standards are called to existence as a meaningful world thanks to communication; in the course of communication the shared understanding of the worlds is established; my participation in these worlds depends on the degree of my participation in establishing their shared understanding[29].

Such a perspective sensitizes one to others' experiences and perceptions of reality; their presence and participation in the community are necessary to broaden one's own understanding of the world and to see "the clash of two different mental perspectives as something that could not be perceived in any other way", without at the same time depriving interaction partners of their subjectivity[30]. Critical reflection is of key importance in the process of learning the world of culture and values; it enables and encourages the transcendence of one's own horizons of cognition and experience:

> In this perspective, man is aware of his own spiritual freedom. He understands it not as independence from the conditions that determine the life of the community to which he belongs, but as the possibility of seeking and formulating in one's own way the available choices, the possibility of reflecting on their meaning, discussing them, and only then – the possibility of choosing[31].

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[28] See Ibidem, p. 104.
[29] Ibidem, p. 100.
[30] See M. Humeniuk-Walczak, "Pedagogiczne modele działalności misyjnej w dobie nowoczesności", op. cit., p. 264.
[31] R. Kwaśnica, *Dwie racjonalności*, op. cit., p. 102.

thanks to the right and possibility of using one's mind and exercising one's will, in line with one's conscience. The inclusivity of such a perspective is connected, on the one hand, with the individual's right to freedom of choice and the possibility of freely creating his own (inner) world of values and senses, and on the other hand, with the unregulated right of access to the resources of other "sacred repositories".

The individualization and privatization of religion provides a new context for religious education in a secularized society. The inclusive perspective of thinking about the postmodern formula of religion, taking the form of a dispersed sacred, guided by the logic of emancipatory rationality, requires a new model of religion pedagogy. In relation to this, Milerski points to two models that correspond to the specificity of the new cultural context: hermeneutic and critical pedagogy of religion.

Hermeneutic pedagogy of religion in its Christian perspective is more moderate and emphasises the cultural aspect of the religious message. Its aim is not so much to convey faith or religious knowledge as to shape the ability to understand religious content in a wider context, i.e. to understand culture and oneself. Education of this type does not focus on adaptation and reconstruction of the revealed content, but rather on the implementation of hermeneutical tasks, relating to the development of students' self-esteem in the process of understanding existential cultural texts, and as such becomes a peculiar apology of subjective individual existence[32]. It does not treat human development in terms of radical negation of and emancipation from cultural tradition, but in terms of its continuous reinterpretation. In addition to the Bible, religious education is based on other texts, both religious and secular. In this way,

> by interpreting the text we can gain not only an understanding of the fundamental possibilities of existence, but also a more detailed orientation in the surrounding social, cultural and political reality. This is because encrypted in texts is the truth about multiple specific dilemmas, values and possible aspects of existence[33].

[32] See B. Milerski, *Religia a szkoła. Status edukacji religijnej w szkole w ujęciu ewangelickim*, Warszawa 1998, p. 182.

[33] Ibidem, p. 184.

Hermeneutic pedagogy of religion, by invoking understandable foundations of religious education, privileges *understanding* as the key didactic category. It makes this education a space of inspiration for authentic development, stimulating thinking and constant self-reflection. In this way, it provides an opportunity to break the model of exclusive education, which transmits only and eliminates criticism with respect to broadly understood sacred.

Critical pedagogy of religion is a proposal that goes much further in breaking the hurdles of exclusivity in religious education than hermeneutical pedagogy of religion. In its most far-reaching proposals, this concept recognises religion as a product of the social construction of reality and therefore aims to teach not so much historical religion itself, but the phenomenon that describes various forms of constituting existential senses and the interpretation of social life[34]. Its main objective is to strive for the emancipation and empowerment of man, his personal and religious maturity. This is possible via developing the internal potential of individuals, including the achievement of internal freedom and the ability to exercise it responsibly, and via social participation[35]. Achieving individual autonomy in the process of maturity should lead to a high level of self-knowledge, adequate understanding of one's own biography and history as well as criticism and courage conducive to social involvement.

> Educational upbringing can never be critical enough. First of all, in the face of great words, praised values or ideologies, critical decisions become a necessity. Religious education and, with it, religious lessons are intended to make young people immune to the dominant forces and ideologies[36].

As Gert Otto observed in his manifesto:

The second commandment of the Decalogue "You shall not make for yourself a carved image or any likeness" is a critical principle against all tendencies of absolutization and divinisation. Christian faith has not always been

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[34] See Ibidem, p. 164.
[35] See B. Milerski, *Hermeneutyka pedagogiczna*, op. cit., p. 162–163.
[36] Ibidem, p. 162.

faithful to this and has itself turned into an ideology. Instead of taking the side of the oppressed, it has often sided with the oppressors. This makes it all the more necessary to reactivate the critical potential of the religious tradition. Critical religious instruction can contribute to the essential sobriety, offer an insight into the real situation, guarantee critical analysis and, to the same extent, lead to commitment to human relations in our society [37].

Therefore, the model strongly emphasizes the need to develop ideological and critical competence in the analysis of social structures and the need for competent involvement in critical communication in connection with the axiological system underlying social life. One of the first and fundamental tools of social participation are emancipatory communication competences, seen as prerequisites for achieving freedom and justice. They involve training in negotiating and reaching consensus without the need to dominate and limit the autonomy of other participants in interaction. In this way, they enable the deconstruction of religious traditions from the perspective of emancipatory interest and help to transcend ideological limitations.

CONCLUSION

The different formulas of religious education presented in this article, located on the continuum between exclusion and inclusion, presented in specific socio-cultural contexts together with different strategies of access and exclusion, constitute alternative spaces of socialization to dealing with the sacred and the profane. These formulas, emerging on the basis of different rationalities, trigger the need to develop a set of social competences in children and young people and contribute to the construction of different communication models.

Exclusive models transmit rather than communicate, their role being mainly providing information on religious obligations and apologetic tasks. Thus, they more efficiently protect the borders of the

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[37] G. Otto, "Was heiss Religionspädagogik", *Praktische Theologie* 1974, Vol. 9, Issue 3, p. 166–170, after: B. Milerski, *Hermeneutyka pedagogiczna*, op. cit., p. 162.

community of faith. Inclusive models, on the other hand, communicate rather than transmit, oppose the ideologization of the sacred and any domination and oppression. They stress self-knowledge, critical reflection, emancipatory competence and social responsibility, indicating complete egalitarianism in relation to the sacred.

The socio-cultural legitimacy of making use of sets of values, meanings and senses of each of the presented models in specific educational contexts remains to be reflected on.

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Abstract:

The models of religious education presented in the article are alternative spaces of socialization to cope with the sacred and the profane. These formulas are situated on a continuum between exclusion and inclusion and necessitate the development of different social skills in children and adolescents and different communication models.

Keywords:

religious education, religion, secularism, exclusion, inclusion, adaptive rationality, rationality emancipatory