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BETWEEN SECULARIZATION AND POST-SECULARISM – ON DISENCHANTMENT OF THE WORLD FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION¹

INTRODUCTION

Reflection on the source and dynamics of changes taking place in the area of religion and religiosity of modern societies has been present in humanities and social sciences at least since the Enlightenment. For such contemporary disciplines of knowledge as sociology, theology, philosophy, and religious studies, these issues gained particular significance in the first half of the last century. In the wake of totalitarianisms, the 1960s brought the idea of God's death (taken over from Friedrich Nietzsche), also known as radical theology, according to which with the death of the Christian God on the cross was the end of transcendental and eschatological thinking, the end of religion and

¹ Originally published: Monika Humeniuk, "Między sekularyzacją a postsekularyzmem – o odczarowywaniu świata z perspektywy socjologii religii", [in:] *Fromm – aplikacje*, ed. P. Jabłoński, R. Włodarczyk, Chiasm, Wrocław 2016, p. 113-135, <https://repozytorium.uni.wroc.pl/dlibra/publication/81807/edition/78880/miedzy-sekularyzacja-a-postsekularyzmem-o-odczarowywaniu-swiate-z-perspektywy-socjologii-religii-humeniuk-monika?language=pl> (available: 1.06.2020).

religiousness. Theologians and philosophers representing such a way of thinking (e.g. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Thomas J. J. Altizer) advocated the idea of a “mature” world, grown up and “disenchanted” from religion, affirming the existence of the individual fundamentally left to his own devices. From now on, the place of transcendence was to be taken by the here and now and ethics of secular life.

The demands of radical theology quickly penetrated Western sociology and began to accompany researchers in their reflections on the state and role of religion and religious institutions in the contemporary world. The transformations of the second half of the 20th century in the field of modernisation progress, gradual separation of social institutions from religious ones, the processes of pluralisation and domination of secular values over religious values were perceived as manifestations of the “disenchantment” of the world with the sacred. The secularization approach long dominated the interdisciplinary perspective of research and thinking about the place, role and nature of religion in the contemporary world. Subsequent criticism of individual concepts and theories in this field was connected with questioning the legitimacy of their methodological foundations. The problem concerned mainly so-called *confessional* sociology of religion, and the main accusation levelled at it was excessive concentration on the condition of religion almost exclusively in Christian Western societies which grew on the basis of the Protestant tradition. Nevertheless, the empirical context of many studies in the field of the sociology of religion of the 20th century indicates unquestionable changes in the social status of religion and a clear decrease in the traditionally understood religious involvement in these societies.

Therefore, are the transformations of the socio-cultural world of late modernity, corresponding to the theologians’ vision of God’s death, the actual end of the spirituality and religiousness of the West, the weariness of the civilisation with the myth of transcendence and the outdated model of thinking about the needs of contemporary man? What conclusions can be drawn from the research on the sociology of religion that deals with diagnosing, analysing and forecasting the present and future of religion in this respect? What knowledge concerning the sources and consequences of these transformations is provided by the research on secularization, carried out continuously

since at least the 1950s? The article reviews the most representative findings for the sociology of religion from the above area, which may serve as an important context for the theory of religion developed at the same time by Erich Fromm. The text moreover refers the conclusions of the review to the question of the legitimacy of diagnosis of the disenchanted world.

SOURCES AND IMPLICATIONS OF SECULARISATION PROCESSES

According to one of the leading sociologists interested in the questions addressed here, Peter L. Berger, the sources and potential of secularisation can be sought in the uniqueness of the Judeo-Christian tradition, connected with the polarisation of the elements of the sacred and the profane, the principal division between the creator and creation². God is situated here outside cosmos, outside his own creation; he is transcendent, impossible to identify with any natural or human phenomenon. At the same time, the essence of man as an element of creation is his fundamental difference and distinctness not only from God, but also from the rest of his creation. The God of Israel is the God “from outside”. This transcendence of God has initiated a history of divine and human actions, different in their deepest essence, largely independent of each other and separate. This idea, which, as Berger emphasizes, was the foreshadowing of secularization, over the centuries underwent many modifications, mainly due to the Catholic version of Christianity, which, initially introducing the idea of incarnation, and with time also the concept of the Holy Trinity, hosts of angels and saints, and Marian devotion, led to the disruption of this original polarization of worlds: heavens came into contact with the earth, and man in various mediations came close to transcendence. Protestant Reformation, through the reduction of sacraments, elimination of holy intermediaries, symbolism and aesthetic expression, again simplified the violated dichotomy of the sacred and the profane. As Berger has it,

² See P.L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, New York 1990, p. 113–125.

The Protestant believer no longer lives in a world ongoingly penetrated by sacred beings and forces. Reality [again – M. H.] is polarized between a radically transcendent divinity and a radically “fallen” humanity that, *ipso facto*, is devoid of sacred qualities. [...] In other words, the radical transcendence of God confronts a universe of radical immanence, of “closedness” to the sacred³.

Protestantism limited the point of contact between the profane and the sacred to an extremely narrow channel of mediation expressed in the concept of God’s undeserved grace towards man (*sola gratia*). The possible interruption of this rather fragile channel was to mark the beginning of the process of separating transcendence from mortality, and thus – the beginning of secularization. As Berger expresses it: “A sky empty of angels becomes instead open to the intervention of the astronomer and eventually the astronaut”⁴. This dichotomous way of religious thinking clearly distinguishes Judeo-Christian tradition from others, for example from archaic traditions (the cosmologies of Mesopotamia and Old Egypt) or Buddhism, making it potentially susceptible to the processes of disenchantment and rationalization of the world. Hence, as the sociologist proves, the processes of secularization concern first of all the societies growing on its grounds.

Another issue common to many secularization theories is religious difference and pluralism⁵. It seems that a reference here to the anthropologic interpretation of the function of religion put forth by Berger⁶, one that is classical for the sociology of religion, will help map out the consequences of pluralisation for monotheistic religions.

³ Ibidem, p. 112.

⁴ Ibidem, p. 113.

⁵ See Ibidem, p. 135–153; B. R. Wilson, “Conclusion”, [in:] *Religion in Secular Society*, London 1966, p. 221–233; R. Stark, W. S. Bainbridge, *A Theory of Religion*, New York 1987, p. 289–293; J. Beckford, *Social Theory and Religion*, Cambridge 2003, p. 73–102; J. T. Richardson, “Prawo. Kontrola społeczna a nowe religie”, [in:] *Socjologia religii. Antologia tekstów*, ed. W. Piwowski, Kraków 2012, p. 294–298; K. Zielińska, *Spory wokół teorii sekularyzacji*, Kraków 2009, p. 113–115.

⁶ See P. L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, op. cit., p. 3–51. I discuss this concept in more detail in the article: M. Humeniuk-Walczak, “On the Validity of Religious Education in the Age of Secularization. Reflections from the Border of Religious Sociology and Religious Pedagogy”, [in:] *Atomization or Integration?: Transborder Aspects of Multipedagogy*, ed. J. Pilarska, A. Szerląg, A. Urbanek, Cambridge 2016, p. 253–270.

In this perspective, the functioning of an individual in society is connected with the necessity of equipping him/her with mechanisms of defence against what different authors define as “phantoms of the world of anomy”, the source of which are to be the inevitable borderline experiences. Anomy understood in this way must be kept within the safe limits of the established, external, objective order of internalized meanings, called *nomos*. This socially objective “knowledge”, which serves to explain, maintain and justify the social order, is defined by these authors as a process of legitimacy. However, in borderline situations, such as severe illness or death, it is not enough for an individual to refer to a familiar *nomos* rooted in everyday life, as old and familiar ways of imparting meaning and interpretation fail. This reveals the need for new, special legitimizing mechanisms – institutions, language, a set of validations, judgments, values, and principles – that would enable these “different kinds of realities” to be integrated with the known realities of everyday life, assigning them only a higher cognitive status and placing these human events in the cosmic system of reference that the authors call *cosmos*. It is at this point that religions and religious legitimacy “begin”. They are

purports to relate the humanly defined reality to ultimate, universal and sacred reality. The inherently precarious and transitory constructions of human activity are thus given the semblance of ultimate security and permanence. [...] the humanly constructed *nomoi* are given a cosmic status⁷.

This “methodology” helps the individual experiencing borderline situations

to continue to exist in the world of his society—not “as if nothing had happened”, which is psychologically difficult in the more extreme marginal situations, but in the “knowledge” that even these events or experiences have a place within a universe that makes sense⁸.

⁷ P. L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, op. cit., p. 35.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 43.

The role of religious legitimacy is therefore to perpetuate credibility structures for situations and experiences that do not fit into the everyday *nomos*, so that the individual can avoid anomy, despair and chaos. Pluralisation processes turned out to be a serious challenge for the concepts of *nomos* and *cosmos* understood in this way. The Reformation, as sociologists of religion often emphasize, by breaking the unity of Christianity and initiating the process of further religious conquests and divisions, in fact initiated the process of de-monopolisation of dominant religious traditions – belief systems, values and religious institutions, so to speak – local religious legitimizing systems, thus leading to a situation of religious diversity and pluralism. In this way, as shown by James A. Beckford, religion in industrially developed, pluralist modern societies loses or abandons its former function of providing ultimate values and legitimizing the entire social system, as well as integrating individuals into society⁹. These changes brought autonomy to various spheres of social life, which for religious individuals and institutions has both “economic” and “metaphysical” significance.

In the first case, it can be said that the “market” situation thus created¹⁰ has legitimised the status of many different religious organisations and groups, enabling them to function on the basis of similar principles¹¹. This situation has become important both for the institutions maintaining the legitimacy systems and for the content of these systems, as Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann illustratively explain:

it is one thing to rule as a brahmin over the metaphysical problems of a closed and relatively homogenous rural community, which has no choice in this matter, and another to try to sell the legitimacy system to wealthy and intellectually sophisticated clientele from suburban residential districts, to housewives from the Midwest, to city secretaries, etc. [The situation of pluralism - M. H.] introduces new forms of temporal

⁹ See J. Beckford, *Social Theory and Religion*, op. cit., p. 46.

¹⁰ Thomas Luckmann, recapitulating the origin of the term, points to its earlier usage than Berger's: Karl Mannheim originally used it to analyze world views and then Reinhold Niebuhr in his reflections on the sociology of religion (See H. Konblach, “»Niewidzialna religia« Thomasa Luckmanna, czyli o przemianie religii w religijność”, [in:] T. Luckmann, *Niewidzialna religia. Problem religii w nowoczesnym społeczeństwie*, Kraków 2011, p. 55).

¹¹ After K. Zielińska, *Spory wokół teorii sekularyzacji*, op. cit., p. 86.

influence, probably more capable of modifying religious content than older forms [...]; religion can no longer be imposed, but must be sold. [...] It is almost a priori impossible to sell a commodity to a population of non-coercive consumers without taking into account their wishes concerning a commodity¹².

Pluralism is also important for the individual who gains consumer status in this situation and for the freedom to choose between different legitimacy systems. This situation has an impact on the personality structure of the individual¹³. The demands are clearly growing on both sides: religious institutions must seek new strategies to attract “consumers”, shape “messages” accordingly, employ appropriate “personnel”, and uniquely “administer” and “manage” their “goal-oriented” activities from now on¹⁴; in turn, individuals may make autonomous choices and they will have no one else but themselves to blame for them.

On the other hand, from this perspective, the coexistence and legitimization of various religious systems meant that from now on none of them could provide a universal model of sacred cosmos, nor could it be identified with the system of the entire community. As Grace Davie puts it,

If there is more than one sacred canopy present in society, or more than one claim to ultimate explanations of the human condition, they cannot both (or indeed all) be true. The next question is unavoidable: could it be that there is no ultimate truth at all? [...] [In this way – M. H.] pluralism erodes the plausibility structures generated by monopolistic religious institutions in so far as it offers alternatives¹⁵.

In addition, secularization has forced religious groups to compete in “defining the world” with various non-religious competitors who were backed by “legally tolerated and socially powerful”¹⁶.

¹² P. L. Berger, T. Luckmann, “Socjologia religii a socjologia wiedzy”, [in:] *Socjologia religii*, op. cit., p. 158. See P. L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, op. cit., p. 144–148.

¹³ See P. L. Berger, T. Luckmann, “Socjologia religii a socjologia wiedzy”, op. cit., p. 158.

¹⁴ Berger describes in detail the situation of religious institutions (See P. L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, op. cit., p. 127–153).

¹⁵ G. Davie, *The Sociology of Religion*, London 2007, p. 53.

¹⁶ P. L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, op. cit., p. 137.

Pluralism has deprived the human world of its former permanent frameworks and landmarks. Perhaps it did not so much abolish the borders between nomos and cosmos as made them more flexible, so that their situation could never take place “forever”. From now on, local systems legitimizing social imagination, not entitled to make universal and total claims, were to decide where and how to place them and how to delimit them, and how to define and mark the content of both these spaces of meanings. At the same time, the individual and the society have lost the “sacred canopy” but have also gained access to alternative systems of self-understanding and of defining and interpreting the external world, a capital of emancipation and secularization that cannot be overestimated.

Another topic pointed out in the sociology of religion when dealing with the issue of secularization are the processes of rationalisation, disenchanting the world, historically also associated with the Reformation¹⁷. Berger, as the continuator of Max Weber in this respect, indicates the ramifications of the earlier indicated separation of the profane and the sacred: “that Protestantism divested itself as much as possible from the three most ancient and most powerful concomitants of the sacred – mystery, miracle, and magic”¹⁸. Robert N. Bellah describes these phenomena in a similar vein: “A great deal of the cosmological baggage of medieval Christianity is dropped as superstition”¹⁹. The mental and doctrinal austerity of Protestantism, manifested itself in such trends as Calvinism or Methodism, was expressed in an unprecedented, extremely pragmatic and rational interpretation of Christian and non-Christian ideas. This clear change contributed to a specific infection of the social imagination with new rationality, introduced the logic of religious thinking on the verge of science. A gradual transformation of religious beliefs and institutions into non-religious ones was initiated by “disenchantment”

¹⁷ See *Ibidem*, p. 112–113; M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*, London, New York 2001, p. 123–125; G. Küenzlen, “Max Weber: religia jako odczarowanie świata”, [in:] *Filozofia religii. Od Schleiermachera do Eco*, ed. V. Drehsen, W. Gräb, B. Weyel, Kraków 2008, p. 23–24; S. N. Eisenstadt, “The Protestant Ethic Thesis in Analytical and Comparative Context”, *Diogenes* 1967, No. 59, p. 25–56; K. Zielińska, *Spory wokół sekularyzacji*, op. cit., p. 115–117.

¹⁸ P. L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, op. cit., p. 111.

¹⁹ R. N. Bellah, “Religious Evolution”, *American Sociological Review* 1964, No. 29, p. 369.

with specific knowledge and behaviours, the sources of which were previously seen in the divine power. The growing authority of rational scientific views on the world of nature, cosmogony, disease, education or work, as Beckford describes it, was to result in the marginalization or disappearance of the authority of institutional religions and the attendant way of thinking in these and many other fields of knowledge²⁰. Thanks to this, with time it was easier for the scientific explanations of the world to dominate over the religious ones. As a result, religion and religious thinking got to be anthropomorphized – and society could take over their functions – and desecularization: the world, man and nature were subject to free and rational interpretation. The society re-training its “relation” with the supernatural in a new, “disenchanted” way, gradually becomes more and more susceptible to situating itself in space and within the limits of understandable temporality. Religious interpretations are no longer useful; they are being replaced by non-religious interpretations which pave the way for the modern organization of social and institutional life. In this way it is possible to move from a “sacred” society to a “secular” society, a secular society in which all social decisions and actions are based on rational and utilitarian presuppositions²¹. In this way rationalization paves the way for secularization: the loss of legitimacy and meaning of the logic of metaphysical thinking triggers a similar loss by religious institutions, former depositaries and translators of this logic.

The processes of rationalisation as a topic are usually undertaken by sociologists dealing with secularisation along with the question of modernisation²². According to Davie, modernisation is a core of secularisation, which he calls after Bryan R. Wilson, a culture and collective *mentalite*²³ of a society subject to the changes discussed here. Two dimensions of this phenomenon seem to be of key importance:

²⁰ See J. Beckford, *Teoria społeczna a religia*, op. cit., p. 48.

²¹ See K. Zielińska, *Spory wokół sekularyzacji*, op. cit., p. 66.

²² See P. L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, op. cit., p. 105–171; J. Beckford, *Teoria społeczna a religia*, op. cit., p. 49–52; T. Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion. The Problem of Religion in Modern Society*, New York 1967, p. 28–40; K. Dobbelaere, *Secularization. An Analysis at Three Levels*, Bruxelles 2004, p. 29ff; K. Zielińska, *Spory wokół teorii sekularyzacji*, op. cit., p. 30–42, 120–125.

²³ See G. Davie, *The Sociology of Religion*, op. cit., p. 54–55.

on the one hand, diversification of social roles and changes in the network of social institutions, and on the other hand, increasing organisation and rationalisation of the latter. An obvious aspect of these processes is the separation of ecclesiastical institutions from other social institutions, which is sometimes referred to as functional differentiation²⁴. As a result of the process of social differentiation, religion loses its dominant position and its functions are taken over by other social institutions. Thus, as a result of such processes of social differentiation, the logic of “sacred cosmos” ceases to be an element giving meaning and importance to institutions and organizations of society. Berger describes this mechanism as follows:

Any particular religious world will present itself to consciousness as reality only to the extent that its appropriate plausibility structure is kept in existence. If the plausibility structure is massive and durable, the religious world maintained thereby will be massively and durably real in consciousness. [...] However, as the plausibility structure is weakened, so will the subjective reality of the religious world in question²⁵.

On the institutional level, the elimination of God from the world of human activities caused the taking over of earlier functions of religious institutions by secular institutions. This process is evident in the area of education. Church education was gradually replaced by non-religious education, while the content of religious-moral nature – by problems of instrumental-technical nature²⁶. The above processes influenced the change of order in the previous world of social phenomena and experiences. Karel Dobbelaere describes this state of affairs as follows:

²⁴ See A. Kasperek, “Teoria sekularyzacji i jej wrogowie. Próba apologii niepopularnej teorii”, *Prace Naukowe Akademii im. Jana Długosza w Częstochowie* 2009, Issue XVIII, Series: Pedagogika, p. 29; J. Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, Chicago 1994, p. 43–51; K. Dobbelaere, *Secularization*, op. cit., p. 26, 88–93; K. Zielińska, *Spory wokół teorii sekularyzacji*, op. cit., p. 36–39, 82–86.

²⁵ P. L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, op. cit., p. 150.

²⁶ See K. Dobbelaere, *Secularization*, op. cit., p. 19–21.

magical and religious *versus* rational and empirical orientations; an overarching sacred cosmos *versus* institutionally specialized ideologies; incalculable magical powers and forces *versus* calculable and controllable actions and situations; traditional values *versus* secular law; moral habits *versus* legal routines; a religious ethic *versus* instrumental technical control; [...] total personal relationships *versus* specialized anonymous roles; face-to-face relationships with known people *versus* social interaction between unknown role players; affective *versus* contractual, formal, and utilitarian relationships; horizontal and vertical bonds *versus* anomie and social class; small workshops and offices *versus* large factories and bureaucracies; the church as a total and official organization *versus* churches as voluntary associations²⁷.

Thus, secularization fundamentally changes the social order, leads to the reduction and elimination of religious foundations of the functioning and organization of society, which has an impact on the sphere of individual value systems. Usually, as Katarzyna Zielińska notes, the separation of individual social institutions is accompanied by the formation of new, differentiated social roles, which are a response to the new social situation. This in turn entails changes in the axiological sphere in the direction of increasing the functionality of a given role within the institution in which it is realized²⁸. The old systems of religious references lose their ability to legitimise many norms and values. The individual no longer experiences them as determining the meaning and the way of giving meaning to his own existence. At best, they can be a partial horizon of reference for the individual, but most often they are replaced by new ones, better suited to the current social context. At this point, one might say, the reflection on the transformation of the world of social experiences of individuals, groups and religious institutions through secularization processes begins.

Relevant empirical studies indicate the phenomenon of individualisation of religion²⁹, its split into the public and private spheres

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 35.

²⁸ See K. Zielińska, *Spory wokół sekularyzacji*, op. cit., p. 122–123.

²⁹ See P. L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, op. cit., p. 133ff; K. Dobbelaere, *Secularization*, op. cit., p. 137–155; J. Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, op. cit., p. 40–55; P. Beyer, *Religion and Globalization*, London and New Delhi 1994, p. 70–96.

as one of the principal consequences of secularisation itself. The loss by a traditional religion of the function of legitimizing the existing reality entails changes not only in the functioning of the entire social system. Importantly, it changes the real significance of religion itself for man and his world of life. As one of the aspects of this phenomenon is described by Bellah in the context of American society,

In fact, for many churchgoers the obligation of doctrinal orthodoxy sits lightly indeed, and the idea that all creedal statements must receive a personal reinterpretation is widely accepted. [...] but just as surely many [people – M.H.] have developed elaborate and often pseudoscientific rationalizations to bring their faith in its experienced validity into some kind of cognitive harmony with the 20th century world³⁰.

In practice, this is connected with the growing recognition that although religious institutions may continue to develop the locally valid metaphysical imagination as a horizon of individual references for their members and sympathizers, and may create favourable conditions for their identification with these institutions, the individual must nevertheless come to these “final” solutions independently, assuming full responsibility for himself, his own choices and their consequences. In this context, there is a clear separation between the voice of a religious institution and the individual voices of its followers. Official doctrine can satisfy the need for formal integration of the community, but at the individual level it is treated as a commodity; everyone draws from it as much as it responds to their immediate needs, selectively and for a time only.

The impact of secularization processes and of the attendant processes of rationalization and modernization, causes not only a gradual departure of the individual from the previously binding religious organizations, but also a diminishing share of the supernatural element in its individual universe of meanings. In this context, one hears of the process of secularization of consciousness, the source of which is the discrepancy between social and ecclesiastical (related to the institutional religion) value patterns, and the result is an increasingly

³⁰ R. N. Bellah, “Religious Evolution”, op. cit., p. 372.

powerful and compelling experience of the cognitive tension of the individual. As Niklas Luhmann puts it, “religions starts to deal with problems arising from functional differences, which can no longer boil down to transcendental reasons, but themselves reflexively regulate the problem of mastering contingency in the society”³¹.

Individualisation of religion triggers its privatisation, as seen by José Casanova: “marginalization of religion to a privatized sphere”³². Religion becomes a matter of individual choice or preference and thus loses its universal and binding character; it becomes subjective. Analysing the sociological phenomenon of “religion of choice” as a universally observable phenomenon that is a symptom of the processes of privatization of religion, Paul M. Zuelhner draws attention to the characteristic mechanism of transforming the content of subjective religiousness from a general system of interpretation of the world and ways of life into an interpretation and assistance matrix limited to individual and family aspects of life, helping the individual to overcome crises in life, bringing comfort, hope, self-confidence and thus stabilizing the world of life³³. This private religion, says Berger, “true” for the individual that accepts it, cannot in the long haul fulfil the “classic” task of religion, i.e. the construction of a shared world where all aspects of social life would have their ultimate meaning, binding for all believers³⁴. Now, a religious stance permeates only selected, unique enclaves of social life, clearly separable from secularised sectors of modern society. The values and content of private religiosity do not in principle include the non-private institutional context³⁵.

The exploitation of space and functions previously reserved by religion by secular institutions triggers a peculiar “liberation” of societies from religion, depriving it of its real influence; the spiritual dimension of existence is separated from the political sphere³⁶. At the same time, the previously dominating interpretation of the world is changing. The

³¹ N. Luhmann, *Funkcja religii*, Kraków 2007, p. 223.

³² J. Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, op. cit., p. 211.

³³ See P. M. Zulehner, “Religia z wyboru jako dominująca forma społeczna”, [in:] *Sociologia religii*, op. cit., p. 453.

³⁴ See P. L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, op. cit., p. 134.

³⁵ See *Ibidem*.

³⁶ See C. Taylor, *Varieties of Religion Today. William James Revisited*, Cambridge and London 2002, p. 78.

importance of religious interpretations is diminishing and the supernatural is being replaced by the temporal, on which social attention begins to focus. Émile Durkheim, one of the classics and protagonists of the theory of secularization, wrote about it very eloquently:

God, who was at first present in all human relations, progressively withdraws from them; he abandons the world to men and their disputes. At least, if he continued to dominate it, it is from on high and at a distance, and the force which he exercises, becoming more general and more indeterminate, leaves more place to the free play of human forces. The individual really feels himself less *acted upon*; he becomes more a source of spontaneous activity. In short, not only does not the domain of religion grow at the same time and in the same measure as temporal life, but it contracts more and more³⁷.

Thomas Luckmann sees things from the same angle and indicates the process of a gradual loss of the “interpretation monopoly” by the Church, which

becomes one of the multiple institutions, and its interpretation of reality is not privileged. Earthly systems of the interpretation of meaning, of political, economic or “scientific” provenance, increasingly take over its place. [...] Under these circumstances no binding vision of the world can be transmitted³⁸.

As a result, the individual gains a sense of a greater freedom in the reading of the world and awareness of own life, which can be interpreted outside the religious topic and methodology. The new perspectives of self-understanding and understanding the world are characterized by a narrower scope and a low or completely negligible level of “transcendence”. The ability of religions to build the world comes down to constructing sub-worlds, fragments of the universe of meanings, whose meaning can be divided in a very narrow circle, for example, only by members of one family. Religion based on this type

³⁷ E. Durkheim, *On the Division of Labour in Society*, Illinois 1960, p. 169.

³⁸ H. Konblach, “»Niewidzialna religia« Thomasa Luckmanna, czyli o przemianie religii w religijność”, op. cit., p. 52.

of credibility structure is, according to the above author, by necessity, a rickety structure³⁹.

Many theoreticians of secularisation indicate moreover ecumenism as a kind of strategic response to the marginalisation of the role of religion in social life⁴⁰. As has been said earlier, in a situation of equalisation of all religious institutions, none of them has any real advantage over others. Faced with such “egalitarianism” of depreciated statuses, religious institutions face a common need to attract the faithful. This situation, as I mentioned before, is dominated by the logic of market economy – the factor determining the activities of the organization in this area is the orientation “on the result”, on acquiring the faithful – consumers. Such orientation rationalizes social and religious structures, recognizes as a common goal the utilisation of previously unused, those who, as never before, have the possibility of free choice. Berger describes this process as the creation of a kind of bureaucracy, a platform for action with a common denominator, a network of bureaucratic structures involved in rational trade relations, both with society in general and between individual institutions. According to the author, the pluralistic situation “tends toward cartelization, tends, toward »ecumenicity« in its social, political and economic dynamics”⁴¹. The competition of various religious offers is replaced by the collaboration of religions. The potential *faithful-as-consumer* becomes a desirable *client*, and his or her acquisition in such a situation may be tied with the necessity to abandon earlier support of particular tenets of a specific religious tradition and doctrine. We could say that religious *small companies* are replaced by religious *corporations*, ready to modify religious tenets, enter into all kinds of agreements and unions, and even to shift focus from the supernatural towards moral and therapeutic elements to make sure that the client would make a choice beneficial from their point of view.

³⁹ See P. L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, op. cit., p. 134.

⁴⁰ See Ibidem, p. 137–153; H. Desroche, “Religia i rozwój społeczny”, [in:] *Socjologia religii*, op. cit., p. 338–340.

⁴¹ P. L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, op. cit., p. 144.

TOWARDS POST-SECULARISM – NEW FORMULAS OF RELIGION AND RELIGIOSITY

The sources, consequences and contexts of secularization mentioned above are well represented by classical sociologists of religion, who in their works undertake secularization theories, a formula for describing the transformations of the social world and the condition of institutional religions of the second half of the 20th century, inscribed in the spirit of the idea of “God’s death”. However, in the works of contemporary sociologists there are also those who show a different dynamic of the process of change in this area than in the discussed theories of secularization. Research by Grace Davie, José Casanova, Danièle Hervieu-Léger, Rodney Stark and William S. Bainbridge, Peter Beyer, Steve Bruce, Gilles Keppel and Eillen Barker⁴² provide ample evidence that the processes of modernisation, rationalisation and pluralism, although they may undoubtedly influence the change of the function and status of institutional religion, do not justify the thesis of the ultimate irreligiousness of societies, nor do they bring sufficient evidence for the elimination of the spiritual element from the space of individual and social experience. The clear testimonies of these secularization ambiguities include, among others, the phenomena of large-scale conversions leading to the emergence of new religious movements, mass shifts in the presence of Christianity from the northern hemisphere to the southern hemisphere, the emergence of Islam as an important socio-cultural factor or the development of religious fundamentalism in all monotheistic religions.

In the opinion of many researchers, the claim that modernisation and rationalization are closely related to the weakening religiousness of the technologically advanced western world is unfounded. A case in point is the longevity of Protestant evangelical communities in the

⁴² See G. Davie, *The Sociology of Religion*, op. cit.; J. Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, op. cit.; D. Hervieu-Léger, *Religion as a Chain of Memory*, New Brunswick, New Jersey 2000; R. Stark, W. S. Bainbridge, *A Theory of Religion*, op. cit.; P. Beyer, *Religion and Globalization*, op. cit.; S. Bruce, *Fundamentalism*, Cambridge 2000; G. Keppel, *The Revange of God. The Resurgence of Islam, Christianity and Judaism in the Modern World*, Cambridge 1994; E. Barker, *New Religious Movements. A Practical Introduction*, London 1989.

highly advanced United States. The tendency to jump to conclusions from the secularization theory, to turn local regularities into formulas accounting for the entire social world and the transformations taking place in all corners of the globe are also considered illegitimate. Numerous studies prove that Europe should not be treated as a global prototype of such changes⁴³, because different societies are developing in different directions, even when they are affected by the same forces of economic development. According to Davie, there are two problems here. On the one hand, the process of developing a society from industrial to post-industrial is associated with some typical cultural changes, but on the other hand, the systems emerging at every stage of this evolution are conditioned by the specificity of the local past, they have their roots in Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, or Confucian religions, each of which has its own, characteristic value system⁴⁴. The resulting differences, shaped to a large extent by cultural heritage (or more precisely religious heritage), are visible even after the impact of economic development has been limited. Thus, although economic development may push societies in a similar direction, they are not so much similar to each other as they move long separate, parallel trajectories shaped by their cultural heritage. It is precisely the identification of historical secularization processes with their supposed, predicted consequences for the fate of religions which is, according to Casanova “The main fallacy in the theory of secularization, a fallacy reproduced by apologists and critics [...]”⁴⁵. To illustrate his claim, the author uses the cases of Spain and Poland, in which “public” religion played a special social and political role in certain historical circumstances, in a way contrary to the logic of secularization⁴⁶. The doubts that the forces of modernisation would lead to a homogenous, de-sacralised and a-religious world culture in the foreseeable future can therefore be regarded as quite legitimate⁴⁷.

⁴³ See G. Davie, *The Sociology of Religion*, op. cit., p. 109.

⁴⁴ See *Ibidem*, p. 106.

⁴⁵ J. Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, op. cit., p. 19.

⁴⁶ See *Ibidem*, p. 75-113.

⁴⁷ See G. Davie, *The Sociology of Religion*, op. cit., p. 106.

In addition, the classic secularisation approach rarely draws attention to the fact that the aforementioned changes in the level of religious involvement may be part of a trend typical of the second half of the 20th century, which involves basically all voluntary organisations, not only traditional religious communities but also political parties or trade unions, to weaken the social involvement of individuals and groups. Late modernity, which does not use holistic ideas, permeates not only religious but also secular thought. This shift from “grand meta-narratives” to “medium-range transcendence” (e.g. political) and, above all, towards an individual-oriented “mini-transcendence”⁴⁸, undoubtedly impacts the shift in the position of religion in the structure of cultural significations and functions, but surely does not give ground for its invalidation. Therefore, as Davie observes,

No longer is it assumed that a secular discourse will gradually overcome a recognizable and unified religious alternative. Instead both secular and religious thinking will evolve as multiple groups of people look for new ways forward, and new creeds (both secular and religious) to live by in the early years of the twenty-first century⁴⁹.

Recent research in the sociology of religion speaks of a process of continuous constitution and reconstitution of cultural programs that take into account the changing meaning of religious experiences. Just as cultural expressions of late modernity can be diverse and heterogeneous, so can the forms of religion:

the essential core of [late – M. H.] modernity resides in its potential for self-correction [...]. Thus religion [...] becomes one resource among many in the process of continual self-appraisal. [...] [Late – M. H.] “modernity is not simply rejected or readopted but critically and creatively reappropriated” by new religious practices in non-Western contexts⁵⁰.

⁴⁸ See D. Hervieu-Léger, *Religion as a Chain of Memory*, op. cit., p. 34.

⁴⁹ G. Davie, *The Sociology of Religion*, op. cit., p. 95.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 108.

In this way the category of de-secularisation into the sociology of religion⁵¹; it can be seen as both the state of rejuvenation of traditional religious faith and practice as well as an emergence of new forms of religiosity outside the Church, individualised, and new aspects of spirituality, independent of institutionalised religions. It is in order to briefly mention a few relevant examples⁵², of formulas earlier unknown or of limited appeal, without references to the relevant controversy, doubt and debate among the sociologists of religion.

The first such formula is the aforementioned faith without membership, a result of the processes of privatisation of religion⁵³. It concerns changes in the area of religious involvement and the individual's relationship with the life of a religious institution and its religious doctrine. In traditional, orthodox forms of religious affiliation, these elements performed control functions, which enabled the beliefs and conduct of the faithful to be strengthened and reproduced. At present, there is talk of voluntary membership on the basis of principles recognised by the individual as one's own. Such membership no longer requires a membership card or proof of identity by practicing exactly the same local doctrine.

The second formula is that of substitute religion⁵⁴. It is expressed in the recognition of religious institutions as an important element of their own cultural and national identity, treating them as representing the national community towards the outside world. These "nominal" faithful recognize the duty to pay taxes to them, to bear the costs of maintaining religious infrastructure, to remunerate religious "professionals", while remaining outside the community, even assuming the status of non-believers and nonpractitioners. In this case, religious institutions enjoy a special treatment of the state and citizens not as a place of fulfilment of the spiritual needs of individuals, but as needs for identification and identity, despite the lack of religious commitment of the faithful at other than the indicated levels. Such a formula is present in the experiences of Scandinavian countries, such as Sweden and Norway.

⁵¹ See J. Mariański, "Religie na wolnym rynku", *Znak* 2012, No. 681.

⁵² See M. Humeniuk-Walczak, "On Validity of Religious Education in the Age of Secularization", *op. cit.*

⁵³ See G. Davie, *The Sociology of Religion*, *op. cit.*, p. 137-138.

⁵⁴ See *Ibidem*, p. 140-141.

Another idea described by sociologists is the trend called “from obligation to consumption”⁵⁵, where religious institutions operate according to market mechanisms, and respond with the supply of religious services to the social demand for diverse needs. This formula encompasses both local phenomena of adjusting old doctrines, rituals and practise to social needs, as well as the development of new religious movements, such as New Age. A particular example of this formula of religious involvement are religious fundamentalisms, very complex and widely described in sociology of religion phenomena, here only signalled. In view of progressive secularization, the diminishing interest in traditional spirituality and religiousness, the cultural questioning of great ideas, as well as in relation to the relativization of norms and values, the so-called “universalisation of heresy”⁵⁶, emerging on the market of religious “services” is the demand for a return to a world of simplicity and unambiguity, clear visions and old certainties⁵⁷. Fundamentalism, expressive of social fears of the world without fixed reference points seems an efficient escape from the “heresy imperative” of the present day and, as Dominika Motak observes in her text on this question, becomes as widespread as modernisation itself⁵⁸. Kepel accounts for its as follows:

A new religious discourse was born that no longer called for the need to adapt to secular values, but for the need to extract the sacred foundations of the organization of society, and even, if necessary, for its transformation. In this approach, it was recommended in various ways to go beyond the fallen modernity, to which all failures were attributed as well as entering the cul-de-sac of distancing oneself from God. We no longer talked about the *aggiornamento* but about a “re-evangelisation of Europe”, not about the modernization of Islam, but the “Islamization of reality”⁵⁹.

⁵⁵ See *Ibidem*, p. 143–148.

⁵⁶ See P.L. Berger, “Modernity as the Universalization of Heresy”, [in:] P.L. Berger, *The Heretical Imperative. Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation*, Garden City, New York 1979.

⁵⁷ See D. Motak, *Nowoczesność i fundamentalizm. Ruchy antymodernistyczne w chrześcijaństwie*, Kraków 2002, p. 45.

⁵⁸ See *Ibidem*, p. 34.

⁵⁹ G. Kepel, *The Revenge of God*, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

Contemporary fundamentalism seems to be gaining recognition on a ground similar to that of modern utopias; it is driven by ideas and aspirations for a world filled with meaning, happy and perfect. Such “mechanics” fits well with Weber’s type of religious behaviour of “asceticism within the world”⁶⁰. Here the world, spoiled and abandoned by God, is treated as a duty, a task of an ascetic within the world, God’s fighter. It is he who is responsible for the mission of transforming the world in accordance with the principles of asceticism and ethical and doctrinal purity. The contemporary ascetic within the world, a fundamentalist, has modernised methods at his disposal: it can use democratic procedures, create political and economic pressure groups, conduct electoral struggle or organize its own education system. He is always against the hated, relativized world of postmodern “anti-values”, and in defence of those goals and values which are considered absolute and universal.

POST-SECULARISM AND DE-PRIVATISATION – CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The reflections show the enormous complexity of the socio-cultural world of the turn of the 21st century. It seems that regardless of institutional transformations in the discussed area, the need to reach for transcendence, experience the sacred, express one’s faith and religiousness or its various transformations can still be seen as characteristic of a certain part of secularizing societies. This diagnosis corresponds to Jürgen Habermas’s concept of the post-secular society, where the philosopher deems as unjustified or even socially harmful the treatment of secularisation processes as a

zero-sum game between the capitalistically unbridled productivity of science and technology on the one hand, and the conservative forces of religion and the church on the other hand. Gains on one side can only be achieved at the expense of the other side. [...] This image – convinces the

⁶⁰ See M. Weber, “Religious Groups (The Sociology of Religion)”, [in:] M. Weber, *Economy and Society. An Outline of Interpretative Sociology*, ed. G. Roth, C. Wittich, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1978, p. 479, 542–543.

philosopher – is inconsistent with a postsecular society which adapts to the fact that religious communities continue to exist in a context of on-going secularization⁶¹.

Instead, he calls for the recognition of the idea of so-called common sense⁶², a third way between science and religion, symmetrically open to both of them and equally evading the absolutist claims of either.

Habermas considers the temptations of the scientific logic of secularization, speaking about the absolute necessity of translating religious arguments into the “rational” language of the “disenchanted” public sphere, to be illegitimate and dangerous. This practice is intended to lead to the exclusion and discrimination of this symbolic universe, which is represented by the believing part of society. The philosopher postulates a fundamental symmetry of publicly permitted expressions, both non-religious and religious. Believers are members of the law-making process and participants in political processes just like non-believers. In addition, as he emphasizes,

Religious traditions have a special power to articulate moral intuitions, especially with regard to vulnerable forms of communal life. In the event of the corresponding political debates, this potential makes religious speech a serious candidate to transporting possible truth contents, which can then be translated from the vocabulary of a particular religious community into a generally accessible language. [...] The truth content of religious contributions can only enter into their institutionalized practice of deliberation and decision-making if the necessary translation already occurs in the pre-parliamentarian domain, i.e., in the political public sphere itself. This requirement of translation must be conceived as a cooperative task in which the non-religious citizens must likewise participate, if their religious fellow citizens are not to be encumbered with an asymmetrical burden⁶³.

⁶¹ J. Habermas, “Faith and Knowledge”, [in:] *The Frankfurt School on Religion. Key Writings and Major Thinkers*, ed. E. Mendieta, New York and London 2005, p. 329.

⁶² See *Ibidem*.

⁶³ J. Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere”, *European Journal of Philosophy* 2006, Vol. 14, Issue 1.

At the same time, as he stresses, believers should attempt three acts of reflection, which are essential in this context: to recognise realities other than their own visions (“They succeed to the degree that they self-reflectively relate their religious beliefs to the statements of competing doctrines of salvation in such a way that they do not endanger their own exclusive claim to truth”⁶⁴), adjust to the authority of the social sciences (“They can only succeed if from their religious viewpoint they conceive the relationship of dogmatic and secular beliefs in such a way that the autonomous progress in secular knowledge cannot come to contradict their faith”⁶⁵) and recognise the premises of the constitutional state, based on secular morality (“This can succeed only to the extent that they convincingly connect the egalitarian individualism and universalism of modern law and morality with the premises of their comprehensive doctrines”⁶⁶).

Consequently, as Habermas proves in his concept of the post-secular society, only when all citizens, both believers and non-believers, have equal chances to articulate their beliefs, to hold a dispute, even if only at the expense of acute cognitive dissonance, and to experience all the consequences of worldview pluralism in this way, is it possible to have a genuine training in democracy. Its participants

learn to deal with this fact of pluralism in a nonviolent way, that is, without disrupting the social cohesion of a political community, they realize what the secular grounds for the separation of religion from politics in a postsecular society actually mean. The neutral state, confronted with competing claims of knowledge and faith, abstains from prejudging political decisions in favor of one side or the other. The pluralized reason of the public of citizens follows a dynamic of secularization only insofar as the latter urges equal distance to be kept, in the outcome, from any strong traditions and comprehensive worldviews. In its willingness to learn, however, democratic common sense remains osmotically open to both sides, science and religion, without relinquishing its independence⁶⁷.

⁶⁴ Ibidem, p. 14.

⁶⁵ Ibidem.

⁶⁶ Ibidem.

⁶⁷ J. Habermas, “Faith and Knowledge”, op. cit., p. 330.

Corresponding to the theory of the post-secular society is Casanova's concept of de-privatisation, which provides alternative visions and explanations of the process of the religious transformations of the present day⁶⁸. The sociologist sees this notion as a process of a return of religion to the public scene of societies. Invoking Habermas's model of the public sphere, with its tripartite division into the state, political society and civil society⁶⁹, he proposes a similar typology of public religions and

the conceptualization of a modern form of public religion characterized by the public intervention of religion in the undifferentiated public sphere of civil society. The result [would be – M. H.] a conception of modern public religion which is compatible with liberal freedoms and with modern structural and cultural differentiation⁷⁰.

Using the Catholic Church as an example, he argues that religious institutions can gain legitimacy to re-enter the public sphere if they redirect their aspirations and actions from the state to society. When accepting the principles of religious freedom as a universal human right, they will defend the institutionalisation of modern universal laws, the creation of a modern public sphere and the establishment of democratic systems⁷¹. The sociologist points to examples of such processes, e.g. the active role of the Catholic Church in the democratization processes in Spain, Poland and Brazil in the 20th century.

However, he emphasizes that these signs of modern de-privatisation cannot be absolutized.

Privatization and deprivatization are, therefore, historical options for religions in the modern world. Some religions will be induced by tradition, principle, and historical circumstances to remain basically private religions of individual salvation. Certain cultural traditions, religious doctrinal

⁶⁸ See J. Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, op. cit., p. 211–234.

⁶⁹ See *Ibidem*, p. 217. See also: J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, Cambridge 1991.

⁷⁰ J. Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, op. cit., p. 217.

⁷¹ See *Ibidem*, p. 220.

principles, and historical circumstances, by contrast, will induce other religions to enter, at least occasionally, the public sphere⁷².

Such a dynamic of processes of making religion present – in both the public sphere and in the private sphere – becomes a guarantee of the vitality of religion as such. On the one hand, religious institutions, in order to maintain their effectiveness in the public sphere, should communicate in a way that is devoid of partiality, “non-denominational” and in a universalistic language⁷³, on the other hand, to guarantee their recreation as “private religion of individual salvation” should, “counting on a large reservoir of traditional cultural allegiance among large sectors of the faithful”, focus their pastoral tasks and develop “some form of voluntary, denominational, revivalist expression”⁷⁴.

In the above aspects, the concept of deprivatisation seems to correspond to Habermas’s position. Casanova, as a sociologist of religion, focuses more on specific conditions of retaining the “vitality” of religious institutions by referring to examples of de-privatisation of specific religions in their concrete, historical and cultural context. Taking into account both concepts, as well as the alternative formulas discussed earlier, expressing the religious involvement of individuals and entire societies in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it is difficult to insist on the classical theory of secularization, which speaks of the inevitable disappearance of religion and religiousness as a result of the processes of modernization. Furthermore, the claims of radical disenchantment of the world seem to be somewhat premature and not fully legitimate. Perhaps God is not dead after all, but only observes from a distance and with considerable curiosity the countless creative discoveries of various human variations on himself...?

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⁷² Ibidem, p. 221.

⁷³ See Ibidem, p. 223.

⁷⁴ Ibidem, p. 222–223.

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Abstract:

Since the 1960s, many theories, concepts and approaches have emerged in the sociology of religion, dealing with the subject of the transformations of the place and role of religion in modern Western society. The classic theories of secularization, which initially persisted, linking the processes of rationalization and modernization with the inevitable decline of religion as such, began to be thematised over time, revealing the complexity and opacity of many phenomena and tendencies within the social forms of manifestation of religion and religious involvement. This article reviews the most representative, relevant findings for the sociology of religion, which may serve as a valid context for the theory of religion developed at the same time by Erich Fromm. The conclusions arising from the review are then applied to the question of the validity of the diagnosis of the disenchanted world.

Keywords:

secularization, post-secularism, sociology of religion