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Contemporary transitions of Polish religiosity – from institutional to private dimension

Abstrakt

Niniejszy artykuł o charakterze teoretyczno-empirycznym stanowić będzie próbę opisu i wyjaśnienia zachodzących w Polsce procesów wpływających w sposób pośredni i bezpośredni na kształt współczesnej religii. Synteza polskiej religijności, zawarta w pracy, z założenia ma być syntezą wieloaspektową. Dlatego zaakcentowane zostaną widoczne elementy niewidzialnej religii oraz to, co pozostało z polskiej religijności tradycyjnej. Odpowiedzi na pytania o formę i miejsce religii w życiu Polaków udzielone zostaną w oparciu o bogaty dorobek badań empirycznych prowadzonych w Polsce (ukazane zostaną wyniki badań własnych), jak również w oparciu o najnowsza literaturę z zakresu socjologii religii. Artykuł składać się będzie z dwóch części. Pierwsza z nich to teoretyczne podstawy pracy, w szczególności zdefiniowanie głównych pojęć i procesów ważnych dla socjologa religii, jak również zaznaczenie dyskursu, jaki toczy się w socjologii religii. W drugiej, zasadniczej, części poruszona będzie kwestia powolnego przechodzenia religii od jej instytucjonalnej do prywatnej formy na gruncie polskim. Współczesne przemiany polskiej religijności ukazane zostaną na podstawie wyników badań empirycznych prowadzonych w ciągu kilkudziesięciu ostatnich lat w naszym kraju.

„ Is faith everything for a religious person, or is it just something? If it in deed is everything, then it seems completely disagreeable with the vision of contemporary world. Gradually I realized that the answer to this question is not the same as it used to be. Religion itself modified its function.

When I realized that I had to revise my previous view of it. Religion is much more elastic than I have thought. It constantly changes its image and swaps position. It is not bound

by simple acceptation of a given reality, defined as sacral; moreover it is not a clearly subjective state of consciousness”

Louis Dupre¹

The discussion on the changes in contemporary religion is begun by the words of famous philosopher of religion – Louis Dupre, not without a cause. Cited quotation distinctly indicates the processes taking part among religion that cause its slow transition. But is Dupre right if we take into consideration the religiosity of Polish society? Are the statements such as: that the function of contemporary religion has changed, that religion is more elastic than it used to be, that it is not a simple acceptance of reality – are those statements truth on Polish ground? Perhaps the truth is that the vision of religion outlined by Dupre in *Different dimension* is more appropriate for secularized western countries and Poland is still a mainstay of Catholicism in Europe²?

This article has both empirical and theoretical character. It is an attempt to describe and explain the processes, which take part in Poland and influence directly as well as indirectly the shape of contemporary religion. The synthesis of Polish religiosity, included in this essay, is thought to be multidimensional. Therefore the visual aspects of invisible religion and the remains of traditional religiosity will be emphasized. The answers for the questions of the form and the place of religion in the lives of Poles will be given basing on the rich attainments of empirical researches conducted in Poland (the results of author’s own research will also be mentioned), as well as recent literature from the field of sociology of religion.

The article consists of two parts. The first one outlines the theoretical base for the essay, it defines main terms and processes important for a sociologist of religion, as well as the meaning of discourse lead in the field of sociology of religion. The second, major part mentions the question of a slow transition inside religion, from institutional to private form, which takes place on Polish ground. Contemporary transition of Polish religiosity will be shown basing on empirical researches in the field conducted in my country for dozens of years. The third, general and in the same time very concrete part of article is an attempt to

¹ L. Dupre, *Inny wymiar*, Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków 2003, s.7[*Different dimension*].

² Czy Polska jest jeszcze krajem katolickim, *Więź*, maj 2002[*Is Poland still a catholic country?*]

synthesize Polish religiosity taking into account the democratic transition that took part in Poland³.

Institutional religiosity versus private religiosity– the theoretical basis

For the reflection on the change of role and place of religion in contemporary Poland there are two fundamental terms: institutional religiosity, ecclesiastical and non-institutional, private religiosity. But before we define those two terms, let us focus on the two processes that shaped them.

Undoubtedly the process of institutionalization of religion requires a lot of time. In fact this process is closely related to the history of religions – from the very first ones to contemporary ones. Obviously the process of institutionalization is related to the term: religious organization, an institution that expresses and controls a given religion. Therefore we may state that institutionalized religion implies the existence of three factors: the religious doctrine, the cult and the more or less developed religious organization. As Irena Borowik writes, *institutionalization of religion is a process, objectively expressed as a given period of development in religious doctrine, cult and religious organization. Subjectively it is expressed as institutional (ecclesiastical) religiosity.*⁴

Subjective level of institutionalization – ecclesiastical religiosity – depends mainly on assimilation and internalization of the doctrine, cult and organization by its believers. It is a form of an institutional insight into the religiosity of a society and as such is different to environmental perspective or inductively defined religion. It is expressed by attitudes and behaviours of members of religious organization, which emphasize the model of religious life propagated by the church (values, norms, patterns of behaviour). Therefore we may state that the greater level of such conformism the more often we may talk about ecclesial religiosity. We may gradate ecclesiastical religiosity depending on the level of its ecclesiastical expression and relation to religious institutions. Different types of religiosity are outlined in the sociological literature basing on this gradation.

³ Mariański J., *Religijność społeczeństwa polskiego w perspektywie europejskiej. Próba syntezy socjologicznej*, Zakład Wydawniczy NOMOS, Kraków 2004 [*Religiosity of Polish society from European perspective. An attempt to sociological analysis*].

⁴ I Borowik, *Procesy instytucjonalizacji i prywatyzacji religii w powojennej Polsce*, Kraków 1997, s.9.[*Processes of institutionalisation and privatization of religion on post-war Poland*].

The term ecclesiastical religiosity appeared in sociological literature in relation with empirical research concerning religiosity introduced by Gabriel Le Bras, who did not take an attempt to create a definition of religiosity. Instead by using the term *religious vividness* he described the relations between society and religion. A major indicator of religious vividness is religious practice with special emphasis on baptizing children, catechism studying and participating in the eucharistic sacrament during the holy mess. Religious vividness is also a vividness of a parish, which might be measured by the number of vocations for the ministry.

The term of institutional religiosity is also related to American sociology and authors such as Ch. Glock and R. Stark. They elaborated a multidimensional conception of religiosity. It appears to be: *institutionalized system of symbols, beliefs, values and practices focusing on the problem of final meaning*⁵. The aim of the authors was to operationalize religiosity in a way, which would allow to refer the term of religiosity to different religions in the same time. To achieve it they had to use more general criteria of religiosity than just religious practices. Ch.Y. Glock and R. Starck are considered to be the authors of five dimensions (parameters) of religiosity: dimension of experience, ideology, ritual, intellectual and the dimension of consequences.

The influence of empirical research introduced by Gabriel Le Bras, as well as Ch.Y. Glock and R. Starck is visible in contemporary Polish sociology of religion. One of the authors influenced by American sociologists - Władysław Piwowarski stated that *religiosity is a commonly shared and fulfilled number of institutional beliefs, values and symbols and patterns of behaviour related to them, which are implied by the differentiation between empirical and non-empirical reality*⁶. In contrary to American sociologists Piwowarski specifies the term of religiosity as religious forms influenced by the Roman Catholic Church. The definition mentioned clearly implies that religiosity as it is seen by Piwowarski is an institutionalised religiosity. Religion understood this way is important for our consideration of ecclesiastic religiosity, because for several years every empirical research in Poland will refer to Piwowarski's definition of religiosity and to his understanding of parameters of religiosity. However Borowik states that the parameters of religiosity and whole conception of Piwowarski is not an original input to Polish sociology of religion⁷. Lack of originality is in this case mainly lack of originality in operationalizing religiosity. Borowik states that the most important restraint to Piwowarski's conception is limiting of research issues to

⁵ Ch.Y.Glock, R.Stark, *Religion and Society in Tension*, 1973.

⁶ W. Piwowarski, *Religijność miejska w procesie uprzemysłowienia*, Warszawa, 1997, s.22 i następne [*Urban religiosity in the process of industrialization*].

⁷ Borowik I., *Procesy instytucjonalizacji i prywatyzacji religii w powojennej Polsce*, WUJ, Kraków 1997, s.37[.].

ecclesiastical issues. This restraint to the subject of multidimensional conception of Glock and Starck made the researcher unable to operationalise non-institutional forms of religiosity. In spite of all this Piwowarski's merit was that his conception classified and adapted the terms to the needs of empirical research of Polish religiosity. Which according to Irena Borowik was characterized by *institutionalisation, dependence on religious institution and the number of people identifying themselves with Roman Catholic church and considering the dogmas as own*.⁸

If we take into consideration the process of privatisation of religion, we have to admit that we do not know exactly when it began. The term itself according to Borowik⁹ was introduced to sociology of religion by Thomas Luckmann. This author states, that in the industrialised societies we may witness the evolution of religion. Ecclesiastical religiosity is being replaced by the new understanding of religion, which in terms of definition trespasses the institution of church. Luckmann, who himself is against the thesis of secularisation states that we do not witness the disappearance of religion, we witness the transition in its quality. The process of transition from ecclesiastical religiosity to invisible religiosity is a result of the process of privatization of religion. According to Luckmann this process means versatile and multidirectional process of transition in religion consisting in simultaneous decrease of the area of institutionalised sacrum and expansion of individualised sacrum. As a consequence of it the institutionalised religion becomes one of multiple forms of religion. Privatisation of religion is a dispersion of sacrum with simultaneous disappearance of borders between what is religious and what is not. Luckmann says that one of the reasons of the process of privatisation of religion is its specialisation that leads to separation and dispensation of several blocks (such as doctrine or cult) of issues. Next this strengthens the probability of separation of issues that are officially religious from issues that are subjectively important for an individual. *Inside the individual religiosity follows the separation of "official" religiosity and limiting its motivational force merely to this sphere of religion*.¹⁰ In this meaning we have to state that the term ecclesiastical religiosity is not anymore sufficient for describing the phenomenon of religiosity in general and we should treat it as one of parts of religious life. In this depiction ecclesiastical religiosity functions next to other social forms of religiosity: religiosity that is beyond institutions, selective, syncretic, private or invisible. Also Daniele Hervieu-Legere in his *Religion as a memory* emphasizes the insufficient depiction of

⁸ Tamże, s.39.

⁹ Encyklopedia Religii, PWN, T.8 [*Encyclopaedia of religion*].

¹⁰ Encyklopedia Religii, PWN, T.8.

religiosity from the ecclesiastical perspective. The author implies that contemporary manifestations of religion go beyond the area that used to be considered as *stricte* religious and find their place in different sectors of social life such as sport or politics¹¹.

The decreasing role of institutionalized religion does not mean neither that religion itself is disappearing nor even that institutionalized religion is vanishing. In the process of privatization a single individual shapes his or her religiosity simultaneously being pushed aside of the official model of religiosity. Luckmann compares human to a consumer, who chooses from the list of religious contents. What criteria does he use when choosing religious products? First of all his needs and emotions rooted in the private sphere. At this point we are coming to the moment in which we should mention the consequences of the process of privatization of religion. Firstly we are witnessing the religious pluralism, which is a multiplicity of attitudes and orientations among certain religious traditions. Secondly the privatisation of religion implies the process of combining different elements that will create own religion. Of course this is related to the possibility of choosing different elements of beliefs, doctrines and cult from different religious traditions.

Reaching the definition of privatization of religion we may accept, what Borowik states: *privatisation of religion is an objective process, which is subjectively expressed by private religiosity, expressing itself in interiorization of the features of this process by an individual, a group and a society*¹².

Sociological discourse

When we take a look at Polish literature in sociology of religion we need to state that majority of attempts to define religiosity relate directly to catholic religiosity. In the social science of these times there is no place for other types of religiosity that would be related to religious cultures different than Christian. Additionally we must state that religiosity in this case should be considered mainly from its institutional side. In spite of this in Poland there is a number of sociologists who would consider the practical dimension of religiosity from the

¹¹ Hervieu-Leger D., *Religia jako pamięć*, Zakład Wydawniczy NOMOS, Kraków 1999 [*Religion as a memory*].

¹² I. Borowik, *Proces instytucjonalizacji i prywatyzacji religii w powojennej Polsce*, s.11.

private, subjective perspective of the researched individual¹³. We should not be astonished by Polish sociologists occupying themselves only with catholic religiosity and explaining it by its institutional aspect. What is the reason? First of all sociology of religion is by its nature a Christian sociology. It was founded and shaped in this orientation in Europe and Poland. Secondly continuing the thread of institutional attitude towards the problem of religiosity we have to admit that the dozens of years through which Catholic Church existed in Poland are positively evaluated by the society. Undoubtedly this situation had a deep impact on the fact that human life realised mainly on the ground of church considered as an institution and a community of believers. It is important that the institutional form of religiosity was also supported by tradition.

Even if we take into consideration statements mentioned before we have to admit that more often Polish sociology of religion clashes both types of religiosity: the institutional and the private. This dispute is visible in methodology of research into religiosity. Piwowarski's parameters of religiosity used up to this day seem insufficient to describe the reality of religious life of a Polish person. Dimensions such as: global attitude towards faith, knowledge and religious ideology, religious experience, community and religious morality do not fully describe and explain religious life of a man. So let us ask a question: is there a place to think in terms of unchanged parameters in the age of religious and moral pluralism¹⁴? As Mariański notices in his publications from the beginning of the 90's¹⁵ and later: both religiosity and morality find themselves in the process of transition. That is one of the reasons why a sociologist of religion has to trespass the area of merely parametric description. Research methods in the hand of a sociologist should more often reach the hidden manifestations and forms of religiosity. They should concentrate private and subjective elements of religious life and in the same time they should not forget about the institutional aspects considered so far.

Classical Polish sociology of religion in the version of Piwowarski undoubtedly has had a great influence not only on the development of the discipline itself but on wide-ranged research related to the discipline. Therefore the institutional depiction of religiosity is still widely appreciated among empirically oriented sociologists. In spite of this institutional

¹³ O religijności subiektywnej pisze Grotowska S., *Religijność subiektywna*, Zakład Wydawniczy „Nomos”, Kraków 1999r [*Subjective religiosity*].

¹⁴ Borowik I., Doktor T., *Pluralizm religijny i moralny w Polsce*, Zakład Wydawniczy NOMOS, Kraków 2001 [*Moral and religious pluralism in democratic Poland*].

¹⁵ Mariański J., *Religijność w procesie przemian. Szkice socjologiczne*, Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, Warszawa 1991; Mariański J., *Moralność w procesie przemian. Szkice socjologiczne*, Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, Warszawa 1990.

religiosity should be treated as a kind of a starting point for sociological analysis of religiosity.

Currently in the publications of many sociologists we may witness an impact on *invisible* aspect of religiosity especially on the stage of the creation of a questionnaire. Luckmann's thesis about the *invisible religion* criticises the thesis about secularization through differentiation on institutional and non-institutional forms of religiosity. It seems to be the new orientation, which is being followed by contemporary Polish sociology of religion. In modern societies some form of religiosity – especially traditional Christian Churches – constantly loose its importance. Instead of them there appear new forms of religion that are generally non-institutionalised and therefore less visible. In general we may agree with Thomas Luckmann that religion has not lost its social meaning but its content and form has changed and nowadays it is difficult to identify it. The new forms of religiosity are dispersed and take into account such phenomenons as individualism, occultism, esotericism, psychology, the cult of New Age, Zen meditations and so on. Sometimes those invisible forms connect to traditionally religious forms and sometimes they replace it. Yet in every case they appear more private issue with highly individual character. Not necessarily given by religious institution. Is that the new religiosity of Polish people?

What is the state of Polish religiosity?

The change of internalised and accepted religious contents determines the change of role that religion plays in the life of a man in general. This statement concerns chiefly young people. Therefore we should take an intent look at this social group, which in few years time is going to become a carrier of cultural contents (also religious) important for Polish society. What does the religiosity of young catholic people in Poland look like? What is the role of religion in their lives? Does the *religion of choice* meet the expectations of its recipients in comparison with traditional religion?

As we have implied before on Polish ground the research on religiosity in general is a research on ecclesiastical and institutional religiosity. Such religiosity as Janusz Mariański writes is described in the aspect of culture and determined with a given socio – cultural

context and is related to religious institutions.¹⁶ Mariański states that the knowledge that religiosity is passed on in the process of socialization by different socializing subjects (such as family, catechism, sermon) has clearly institutional character. The reason for it is that it is oriented on values, norms and symbols of Churches or religious groups¹⁷. For this reason the parameters and indicators of religiosity have been used¹⁸. We may say that it is easier to study religiosity if it is considered as ecclesiastical religiosity.

Meanwhile the times of real communism, the times of first social and economical transitions of early 90's have inevitably gone by. Did institutionally considered religiosity go by with them? If we analyze contemporary empirical research it appears that the forms of religious life of Polish society, especially its younger part has been distinctly changed in this period. Not only do the quantitative data about people participating the holy mess and confessing change but also the form and expression of religiosity are in similar process and they do not have anymore institutional character. It seems that traditional monotheist interpretations are insufficient. In the same time it seems so obvious that the terms and religious institutions require general inspection that not many still accept them unreservedly. On one hand religion was narrowed (it does not anymore penetrate countless fields of human activity but it is driven to a given and does not trespass it – the thesis of secularization) on the other hand it was loosened (religious life does not concentrate anymore only on its ecclesiastical elements but more often it touches the fields, which were previously not related to religion – the thesis about individualisation or privatisation of religion). So Dupre's question becomes more current: *Is faith everything for a religious person, or is it just something*¹⁹?

To describe Polish religiosity complexively the author is going to use results of empirical research available in the literature of the subject. In order to grasp continuity and change of some processes taking part in religious life the results presented will concern several decades with an emphasis on results of surveys conducted at the turn of years 1990-2003. Here we should notice that the results should be treated cautiously in interpretation because they come from different polls (the researches have been conducted by different ecclesiastical as well as secular institutions), the samples were different (local, national, European research), different respondents were chosen to the samples (adults, youth, people

¹⁶ Mariański J., *Kościół w społeczeństwie przemysłowym*, Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, Warszawa 1983, s.18

¹⁷ Tamże, s.18.

¹⁸ Piwowarski W. *Socjologia religii*, Redakcja Wydawnictw Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, Lublin 1996[*Sociology of religion*].

¹⁹ Dupre L., *Inny wymiar. Filozofia religii*, Wydawnictwo ZNAK, Kraków 2003, s.7.

living in the country and in the city), finally they apply to different aspects of religious life. We should also mention that this attempt to describe contemporary transitions in religiosity is not a full description. In order to avoid chaos in presentation the author has decided to outline the results only of the most important research.

Contemporary transitions of Polish religiosity – is it a continuity or a change?

As we have mentioned above the research into religiosity on the ground of Polish sociology is mainly research into institutionalised religion. When we take up the discussion on contemporary transitions of religiosity in Polish society we should support ourselves on a research that uses the parameters of religiosity in its methodology.

When we compare the self-declaration of faith in the 70's²⁰ we may state that the percentages of people considering themselves as believers was similar in both researches (75% - 80% of believers on national sample and on a youth sample)²¹.

In the 80's the process of secularization has not been noticed and even a 10% increase of pro-religious declarations in comparison to the previous decade was reported. The indicators of religious and strongly religious persons remained on a similar level and were both over 90%²² (both in the research based on a national sample as well as youth sample research). In the 90's starting with 1990 after the transition of a political system researchers begin noticing

²⁰ F.W. Wawro *Postawy religijne młodzieży szkół średnich*. W: *Z badań nad religijnością polską. Studia i materiały*. Red. W. Piwowarski, W. Zdaniewicz. Poznań 1986 s.208. (badania w latach 1969 – 1975); T. Szawiel *Religijność i jej korelaty*. W: *Ciągłość i zmiana tradycji kulturowej*. Red. S. Nowak Warszawa 1989 s.235-237. (badania w roku 1976); J. Jerschina *Młodzież i procesy laicyzacji świadomości społecznej*. Warszawa-Kraków 1978 s.24 (badania w roku 1978); K. Darczewska, *Katolicyzm we współczesnym społeczeństwie polskim. O niektórych uwarunkowaniach i postawach*. Wrocław 1989 s.51, 97-98, 117 (badania w roku 1977-1978)[*Essays on religiosity among youth*].

²¹ Por. Mariański J., *Religijność w procesie przemian*, s.35-55; Darczewska K., *Katolicyzm we współczesnym społeczeństwie polskim. O niektórych uwarunkowaniach i postawach*, Warszawa 1986, s.59; Por. Badania nad religijnością w: *Nowa rzeczywistość. Oceny i opinie 1989 - 1999*, pod red. Krzysztofa Zagórskiego i Michała Strzeszewskiego, Dialog Warszawa 2000.s.183-193.; *Religijność Polaków 1991 – 1998*, pod red. ks. Witolda Zdaniewicza SAC, Warszawa 2001. s.17[*Texts on changes of religiosity*].

²² According to four surveys conducted by CBOS, on national sample on the space of 1984-1985 indicators of believers dispersed from 82,5% to 90,5%, atheists – od 1% do 7% (the rest is undecided); Z Kawecki, *Religijność młodzieży – stan, uwarunkowania, kierunki przemian*. „Wychowanie Obywatelskie” 15:1984 nr 9 s.556 (badania w roku 1980); J. Mariański, *Problemy współzależności postaw religijnych i moralnych młodzieży na przykładzie młodzieży uczącej się w Płocku*, Kraków 1987 s.20 (badania w roku 1980-1981); G. Nowacki, *Postawy religijne młodzieży polskiej w połowie lat 80-tych*, w: *Oblicza religijności polskiej młodzieży*. Red. J. Bogusz, G. Nowacki. Warszawa 1986 s.23 (badania w roku 1985).

the wave of secularization as a consequence of the creation of Polish democracy. Yet the self-declaration of faith seems to be on a bit lower level than in the 70's and 80's²³.

In order to show a transition of religious attitudes among Polish people within the space of the 90's I would like to show the results of a research conducted in 1998 compared to the results of a survey from 1991²⁴. The conclusions are that the indicator of religious persons (68,6%) is on the lower level than it was in 1991 and it decreased by 11,3%. Surprises the indicator of strongly religious persons (16,7%) it increased by 6,7% on the space of 1991-1998. Total indicator of strongly religious and religious is about 85,3% for Polish people and is lower in comparison to 1991 by 4,6%. The indicator of undecided, but attached to traditional religiosity is 8,5% and is higher in comparison to national research that were conducted in the beginning of the 90's by 2,5%. The remaining attitudes towards faith such as indifferent for religion (2,6%) and non-believers (2,8%) are considered to differ slightly in comparison to 1991 results. Still it is a very small value nevertheless it constantly increases. When we look through sociological research into youth we may be puzzled by considerably high amount of youth, which depicted themselves as *undecided but attached to tradition* (12%). This may result from the fact that a young person starts to look for his way of living also his religious way of living. We have to remember that the period of getting matured is the primary period of moulding the religious attitude often blurred. The percentage of youth religiously indifferent and non-believing is similar to the results of national research and shaped around 2-4%.

When Irena Borowik analyzes the global declarations of faith among youth within the space of 1945 – 1992 she implies that there are slow changes of religiosity taking place in Polish society²⁵. The conclusions from the data presented by Borowik are that social category of youth is characterized by a lower percentage of believers than the rest of the society. Among mature Polish people the declaration of faith is around 80% whereas among youth it shapes around 70%. We may also notice a few relationships in the surveys conducted in Poland. First of all religiosity of schoolboys is higher than the religiosity of students. Secondly we witness a decrease of declaration of faith for people aged 18-19. Thirdly religiosity of students from rural areas is higher than religiosity of their peers from large urban

²³ The question of self-declaration of faith in 1992r. percentages of groups were as follows: strong believers 17,1%, believers 74,4%, doubts 5,5%, indifferent 1,6%, atheist 0,4%, missing value 1% (zob. K. Ryczan. *Wartości katolików a typ środowiska miejskiego* Lublin 1992 s.65) [*Values of catholics and the type of urban environment*].

²⁴ Por. Zdaniewicz W., *Religijność Polaków 1991 – 1998*, Warszawa 2001.

²⁵ Borowik I., *Deklaracje wiary młodzieży w Polsce 1945-1992. ciągłość czy zmiana*, Kwartalnik NOMOS, nr 3/4, Kraków 1993.

centres. Fourthly religiosity of students generally depends from their place of inhabitancy²⁶. To sum up we may state that the auto declaration of faith seems to be a hardly changeable indicator (a slight decrease of the percentage of believers) within the space of precious thirty years.

It is not difficult to guess that the religiosity of Polish people does not fulfil in a single parameter. Due to the fact of existence and constant increase a group of so called nominal Catholics, whose religious life is delimited just to identifying themselves as Catholics, we need to take a close look at different parameters determining the religiosity of a society.

The process of identification with a group is expressed not only by acceptance of its common aims and rules of operating, but also by cooperation inside the group in the frames of common activities. In the case of Church it is being done by outer forms of religiosity such as religious practices. Many sociologists of religion dealing with the transitions of religiosity from the perspective of the theory of secularization focused on the issues of loosening the bonds with institutional Church in the context of decreasing participation in institutional life. In traditional society the religious practice was a culturally obvious thing. In contemporary societies lack of practice slowly becomes a norm. there is a shift from intensive to reduced participation in life on the Church.

The parameter of religious practice is considered as a crucial one by the sociologists. Any changes taking place in this parameter cause changes of religiosity in general²⁷. Gabriel Le Bras stated that religious practices are very sensitive for the influences of modernity²⁸. Research done within few dozens of years proves that during those years we witnessed the process of decrease of the number of regularly practicing people. This fact is one of the proofs that the faith among Polish people has weakened. Just as in the case of self-declaration it is a slow but progressive process. Weakness and the disappearance of religious practices firstly concerns repeated religious activities such as Sunday holy mess. Secondly it manifests in resignation from catechesis for children, from the ecclesiastical wedding and religious funeral and finally from the baptism for children. Attachment to single practices is so strong that sometimes even those who identify themselves as non-believers do not renounce breakthrough sacralizations for them and their children. Withdrawal from public religious practices is far more advanced than withdrawal from basic commandments of the faith. Weakness of religious practices is often suggesting the decrease of intensively in faith and

²⁶ Por. Tamże, s. 85.

²⁷ Por. Mariański J., *Religijność społeczeństwa polskiego w perspektywie europejskiej. Próba syntezy socjologicznej*, Zakład Wydawniczy NOMOS, Kraków 2004, s.179.

²⁸ Por. Borowik I., Doktor T., *Pluralizm religijny i moralny w Polsce*, s.125.

morality. Engagement in religious practices is generally a force that integrates religiosity whereas participation in such practices as Sunday holy mess strengthens the subjective feeling of membership in Church. Therefore people who practice regularly have much stronger bonds to the Church than people who practice less often.

Frequency of religious practices implies similar regularity as the parameter of self-declaration of faith. National samples are characterized with greater percentage of people having regular religious practices than samples from the research into youth. However young people fulfil majority of religious practices especially those ordered by the Church²⁹, the factor of religiosity is relatively weak in their motivation. Often the important factors are habitual, they also are part of environmental pressure and they might as well be related to mood and sentiment. This shows that Polish religiosity is mechanical and routine³⁰.

Of course the Sunday holy mess is one of manifestations of obligatory religious practice. But besides it there are other practices such as confession, Holy Communion and a range of optional practices such as vespers, rosary service, the Way of the Cross. The results for those optional practices are much lower than in the case of participation in Sunday holy mess³¹. In this case we can clearly see the difference between rural and urban religiosity. Therefore we may state that percentage of people participating in optional religious practices is much higher in rural areas than in big cities.

When we take a look on religious practices from the European perspective it appears that Poland is characterized by a high level of such practices in comparison to other European countries. Borowik³² wonders if the truth is not that religious practices are a value themselves independently to the ideology, which they should pass on? In order to answer this question we shall take notice of a few facts. Firstly we are coping with excessive routine in the range of religious practices frequently repeated such as holy mess, Holy Communion or confession.

²⁹ Por. *Nowa rzeczywistość. Oceny i opinie 1989 - 1999*, pod red. Krzysztofa Zagórskiego i Michała Strzeszewskiego, Dialog Warszawa 2000, s.184-185.; Mariański J., *Religijność w procesie przemian*, s.55 – 73; *Religijność Polaków 1991 – 1998*, pod red. ks. Witolda Zdaniewicza SAC, Warszawa 2001. s.24 – 25 (systematic practices – 53,7%, unsystematic practices– 27,1%, rare practices– 11,6%, I do not practice– 6,1%). To compare the results for the age category 18–19 from same survey: systematic practices – 42,0%, unsystematic practices – 34,0%, rare practices – 11,0%, I do not practice – 10,0%. In 1985 youth aged 16-18: systematic practices – 53,4%, unsystematic practices – 24,6,0%, rare practices – 4,9,0%, I do not practice – 2,8,0%. Repeated surveys of the Institute of Research into the Problems of Youth confirm the high level of participation in religious practices. Categories systematic practices and unsystematic practices were 61,3% of sample in 1981, 76,9% - in 1982, 82-2% - in 1983, 69,6% - in 1984 i 89,5% - in 1985. Indicators of respondents who did not practice were as follows: 15,8%, 11,4%, 10,4%, 10,2%, 6,4%; Por. Mariański J., *Religijność w procesie przemian*, s.55-97; *Religijność Polaków 1991 – 1998*, pod red. ks. Witolda Zdaniewicza SAC, Warszawa 2001.

³⁰ Mariański J., *Religijność w procesie przemian*, s.139-253.

³¹ Por. Mariański J., *Religijność społeczeństwa polskiego w perspektywie europejskiej. Próba syntezy socjologicznej*, Zakład Wydawniczy NOMOS, Kraków 2004, s.223 i nastpne.

³² . Borowik I., Doktor T., *Pluralizm religijny i moralny w Polsce*, s.126 i następne.

Secondly we may witness the phenomenon of lack of reflexivity in faith considered as some kind of dislike to understand theological meaning of cult. Thirdly religious practices are part of tradition of Polish Catholicism, which is determined by historically – political events. It means that the increase of religious practice in some years should be considered as manifestation of national feelings.

Another important feature of Polish religiosity is that commonly declared positive attitude towards religion is not supported by religious knowledge, what in turn results in passive and weakly grounded reflexion over the questions of faith³³. Similarly attitude towards the dogmas of faith frequently is not relevant to theoretically – dogmatic basis of Catholicism. We are witnessing a turn from religiosity oriented rigorously on dogmas propagated by Church to generalized religiosity oriented more on believing in God and on the most general contents of religious doctrine.³⁴

First of national surveys in the group of youth aged 16-24 indicated that 68.5% researched respondents believed in God without contradictions. 16.2% did not believe or were not sure if the God was the creator of the world. In Sociological research from the 70's including youth deriving from different social backgrounds God was considered as a creator of the world by 88.7% of strongly religious youth, 73.0% of religious youth, 36,5% of believers who had some reservations 5.4% of non-believing youth who were attached to religious traditions.

A broad report of transitions in religiosity in post war Poland was done by I. Borowik³⁵. She considered dogmas concerning God, the Holy Trinity, creation of the world and resurrection of the bodies. During whole post war period the acceptance of the Holy Trinity and Jesus Christ as a God is very high. The percentage of people believing in the Holy Trinity is dispersed between 71% among youth in 1989 up to 93% in rural areas in 1967. In 1990 76% of respondents believed that God created the world while 79% believed that also human was created by God.

³³ Por. F.W. Wawro, *Spoleczne uwarunkowania religijności maturzystów. Studium socjologiczne zrealizowane w wybranych miastach południowo-wschodniej Polski*, Lublin 1982r. s.116-123.

³⁴ Por. Mariański J., *Wartości religijne i moralne młodych Polaków*, Warszawa 1991r., Mariański J., *Religijność w procesie przemian*, s.73-97; Domagała H., Grzymała-Moszczyńska H., *Postawy wobec religii a niektóre sposoby i warunki społecznego funkcjonowania młodzieży*, „Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Studia Religioznawcze” 1979, nr 4, s.37-82.; Chrapek J., *Uwarunkowania recepcji programów telewizyjnych przez młodzież. Studium socjologiczne*. Lublin 1985r., s.176-177; Radwan M., *Profil religijno-społeczny maturzystów 1984 i jego korelaty* (maszynopis) s.2-3;

³⁵ Borowik I., *Procesy instytucjonalizacji i prywatyzacji religii w powojennej Polsce*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego Kraków 1997.

The dogma on Resurrection is negated by many respondents considering themselves as Catholics. In rural areas up to the end of 60's almost 40% of respondents doubted in this dogma. In a representative survey conducted in 1990 64% of society had similar doubts.

The researches quoted above as examples are not the only ones concerning the issue. They are a proof that the content of declared religious attitudes does not need to be relevant to theoretically – dogmatic assumptions of Catholicism. Therefore we may state that membership in the community of believers does not imply positive attitudes towards certain dogmas of faith. Many people considering themselves as believers appear to be interpreting basic statements of faith according to their will. What is the reason? Probably this is related to observed religious pluralism and pluralism in views what results in coexistence of different religious traditions. Nowadays in the age of society of free choice people may believe in Resurrection as well as reincarnation. Many young Catholics in Poland choose the aspects of Catholicism that suit them from their subjective point of view. They are similar to the clients of a supermarket choosing different goods according to their needs. Therefore the model of religion that is propagated these days more often is inadequate to the general (official) model. It is more like an eclectic collection of religious beliefs.

The greatest transitions of Polish religiosity took place within the parameter of consequences. These days we may witness the tendencies to make functional relations between people and the tendencies to withdraw into small social groups. Sociological research indicate significant dislike of younger and older people towards durable, invariable values and moral norms. On the other hand we witness widespread compromise attitudes and indirect attitudes, which is obligatory and imperative even if its intensity is limited. So can we this situation as a crisis of values? We should rather talk about transformation of values or their reconstruction. Moral relativism in Poland (majority of Poles agrees that there are no clear rules that help to distinct the good from the bad) concerns rather moral norms than the sphere of values. The process itself could be defined as transition from universal to particular values.

On the ground of consequential parameter we need to take a deeper look at morality from the area of marriage and family. The question is: will the traditional model of family survive in Poland? If we want to answer this question we should take a look at some empirical research. First of all it appears that we are witnessing the weakening of strong family ties. There are many reasons for it, but I would like to focus on one of them: the increase of individual freedom. In particular it concerns the youth, which often expresses sharp opinions on the ingestion of Roman Catholic Church into people's private lives. In the light of empirical research majority of young Polish people thinks that sexual life is their matter and

Church has nothing to do with it. Secondly we are coping with the relativism of catholic norms concerning marriage and family. Such behaviour as sexual contacts before marriage, divorce and the usage of anti-conception or abortion more often gain supporters and undecided people (answering *it depends on a situation*- in some of mentioned issues this category rises up to 40%). Thirdly dispersion from catholic moral norms is significant on rural areas as well what might be a bad prognosis for the future. Polish country which up to this moment was a mainstay of Catholicism in Poland and a guard of values related to religion and religiosity in the aspect of morality within marriage and family is under the process of change as well. The cities and villages have come closer. Young people often study in cities, what undoubtedly has influence on absorption of urban patterns of behaviour. So does folk religiosity still exist? Yes, probably, in the aspect of cult, but not in the aspect of moral patterns of behaviour.

In the aspect of proportionally high indicators of self-declaration of faith and religious practices we may imply that the hypothesis of marriage and family morality shaping independently from the order of institutional religion. In this aspect we may witness the critics of the ethics of warrants and prohibitions. Next stage is transition from the Christian system of norms to one more vague or even atheist axiological system. Derivations from traditional sexual morality are so significant that without a doubt we may state that we witness moral revolution. Moral consciousness of Catholic People in relation to marriage and family is under processes of pluralization and relativization. The rigour concerning questions related to sexuality visibly weakens. Polish morality becomes more autonomic and so does the individual itself.

New religion–what religion?

More often we may observe beliefs which trespass Christian beliefs with its form and content. Overestimation of the decrease of religious and traditional practices may mean that we do not perceive new forms of religiosity or quasi-religiosity, in contemporary world. Meanwhile people who go away from ecclesiastical religiosity do not become atheists. All the time they declare themselves as believers however the form of those beliefs has changed. We should agree with Luckmann that ecclesiastical religiosity is being replaced by new understanding of religion which trespasses the institution of Church. The change of the place

of religion in peoples life mainly relies on so called Para religiosity. In Western Europe during the two recent decades of the XXth century roundabout a quarter part of society believed in reincarnation and horoscopes. Over half of society believed in foreseeing the future and about a third part of society believed in ghosts. The increase of different eclectic beliefs gaining social popularity is perhaps a reflection of problems with identity, dissatisfaction with Christian religion and many other personal and social conditions. Another important factor is the individualization of religiosity. Extreme example of such individualization is the belief of self-redemption.

Parareligious beliefs and practices assume the conviction about the existence of some kind of metaphysical space in which the strengths and ghosts are situated and we may establish a direct or mediated contact. The border between visible world and the invisible is trespassed thanks to different methods and techniques equally physical and spiritual. This is supposed to bring supplementary knowledge and spiritual forces to a person. Contemporary men may choose from countless religious and Para religious offers.

According to some people Para religious phenomenons fulfil the compensative function. Faith is stronger among people who have worse education, women, single people, unemployed and workers with smallest wages. What are the main reasons that people give up religion for Para religion? They are: the need of membership, the sense of community, seek for cultural identity, the need of spiritual leadership, the need of engagement and being included. Let us notice that all those motives may be convergent with motives that make people join Catholic religious community. Why then we do not observe an increase of members of such organizations? The reason is that people more often look for something new, new experiences, new forms of self-manifestation through membership in different movement which is not as known. This feeling of exceptionality is the main reason for joining parareligious communities.

There is still not many researches over Para religious phenomenons in Poland. From those which are accessible it appears that highest respect is given to faith in healers and bioenergotherapy. Percentages of people believing in such kinds of phenomenons are over 30% of Polish society³⁶. It is worth to realize that much more often Poles believe in Para religion than practice it. So the case is similar as with the parameter of self-declaration of faith and carrying out religious practices in Roman Catholic Church.

³⁶ Por. Mariański J. *Religijność społeczeństwa polskiego w perspektywie europejskiej. Próba syntezy socjologicznej*, Zakład Wydawniczy NOMOS, Kraków 2004, s.311.

Sociologists and psychologists in western countries admit that during previous years there was an increase of different occultist practices especially among youth groups. This tendency should be expected also in Poland. A proof for it might be a constant increase of publications from the range of fortune telling, ufo sightings or self-redemption.

New religiosity inside and out of the Church is also the creation of new religious movements, which are more or less related to the institution. New communitarian forms of religiosity started to arise in Poland during the 70's. In the 80's the church enriched of many communities and religious movements, which were a sign and a field of activity for secular people. Movements and associations in Roman Catholic Church start to develop more intensively in the 90's. It is estimated that the number of believers belonging to religious movements and societies is about two millions in Poland³⁷.

In general religious Catholic movements and societies do not origin neither from theologically doubtful premises nor from the protest against ecclesiastical hierarchy, therefore they do not cause problems to them. There are some organizations which mutate into sects, but in Poland they are marginal. We should ask ourselves why are we still dealing with new religious movements in Poland? The answer is that new religious movements are an alternative to life of a parish they fulfil the emptiness between the members of a parish and hierarchical ecclesiastical power. The development of such communities is important in pluralist society. Consequences of participation in small local communities are such as spiritual strengthening, gaining emotional support, but also strengthening own religiosity and everyday living with strong faith. Developing movements, communities and organizations within the Catholic Church indicate a slow process of changes in Polish Catholicism. Those changes are going to make it more sociable. A growing amount of Catholics, not only participates religious practices but also engages themselves in the life of Church.

One of the problems deriving from the existence of post modern culture is a decreasing number of members in large ecclesiastical organizations. Next to new religious movements in the frames of a Church there also expand organizations which are shaped beyond Church. Their particular development in Poland took place by the end of the 80's. Then we witnessed an increase of number of communities with sect character, mainly created by young, well educated, single people. The expansion of new non-catholic movements lasted in the 90's when the personality of a leader and techniques of influencing people were important for gaining new members.

³⁷ Por. Mariański J. *Religijność społeczeństwa polskiego w perspektywie europejskiej. Próba syntezy socjologicznej*, Zakład Wydawniczy NOMOS, Kraków 2004, s.386.

Researches into new religious movements existing beyond the official model of a Church were developed in the 90's³⁸. However they are still in the initial phase and require more refinements and operationalisations³⁹. The number of members in non-ecclesiastical organizations remains unknown. Nonetheless the search for alternative forms of religious life is a social fact in Poland. Attitude of majority of Polish people towards non-catholic organization is generally tolerant with emphasis on indifference rather than acceptance and dialogue.

Ending

That is in short the characteristic of Polish religiosity. If we posed a question whether this is a change or a continuation of traditional religiosity we should admit that Polish religiosity is under process of small, inevitable changes. Of course the description mentioned is not as exhaustive as Mariański's in his recent book⁴⁰. Unambiguously we witness slow process of leaving the institutional character of religion. Really, as Luis Dupre has said the religion has changed and becomes more elastic. According to Luckmann in none of contemporary industrial society, Polish as well Christians speak with one voice. Christian motives are not the only typically religious offers on the market of transcendence⁴¹. If we were bound to create a picture of Polish Catholic we would definitely have a big problem with defining his religiosity. In spite of hardships that await us let us try. We have to admit that the picture created would not be for everyone, but for average Polish Catholic. Therefore it will not depict neither people who live with their faith and develop their spirituality nor non-

³⁸ We should mention the research of M. Libiszowskiej-Żółtkowskiej the Unition Church, Jehova's Witness, Mormon Church (Libiszowska-Żółtkowska M., *Konwertyci nowych ruchów religijnych z perspektywy socjologicznej*, „Chrześcijanin w Świecie” 1993 nr 3., s.138-149; Libiszowska-Żółtkowska M., *Model małżeństwa i rodziny u Mormonów*, *Przegląd Religioznawczy* 1994 nr 2, s.61-68; Libiszowska-Żółtkowska M., *Kościół Zjednoczeniowy- Sun Myung Moona i jego polscy wyznawcy*. W: *Ruchy pogranicza religii i nauki jako zjawiska socjopsychologiczne*. T.5. red. T. Doktor, Warszawa 1996, s.81-122.), or by Tadeusz Doktor over New Age and other religious movements (Doktor T., *Światopogląd „New Age”* W: *Ruchy pogranicza religii i nauki jako zjawiska socjopsychologiczne*. T.5. red. T. Doktor, Warszawa 1996, s.167-216).

³⁹ Methodological problems of research among new religious movements are mentioned by M. Libiszowski-Żółtkowska (Libiszowski-Żółtkowska M., *Metodologiczne problemy badań nowych ruchów religijnych*, „Przegląd Religioznawczy” 1997 nr1, s.65-77.) oraz T. Doktor (Doktor T., *Metodologiczne problemy badania nowych ruchów religijnych*, „Przegląd Religioznawczy” 1994 nr1, s.57-66.)

⁴⁰ Por. Mariański J. *Religijność społeczeństwa polskiego w perspektywie europejskiej. Próba syntezy socjologicznej*, Zakład Wydawniczy NOMOS, Kraków 2004.,

⁴¹ Por. Luckman T., *Shrinking Transcendence, Expanding Religion?*, In: *Sociological Analysis* 1990, 50:2 127-138

believers and indifferent. Definitely the picture we want to create concerns many people belonging to Church in Poland. What is the typical Polish catholic?

First of all it is an autonomic individuality, which makes many choices, some of which concern different aspects of faith. Often it is a consumer, who chooses some religious motives from the offer and constructs his personal system of final meaning. His religious traditionally religious views with typically Christian roots seem to be fighting with religious orientations deriving from different sources. His religiosity consists of religious practices, which seem to loose importance and do not correlate the self-declarations expressed by the individual. Polish catholic rather systematically attends the Sunday Holy Mess but he does not care for any supplementary practices. He rarely participates in the Holy Communion and confession. In religious practices he does not have religious motives but routine and habit. Polish catholic clearly divides morality from religiosity and builds his own, private morality. His faith is not supported with any concrete religious knowledge. We may say that his socialization on this field has stopped on the level of theoretical preparation to the sacrament of confirmation. More often he is interested by different forms of religiosity inside and beyond the institution of Church. They are a result of his undeserved psychical needs related both to stiff institution and the need to experience exceptionality. The faith of Polish people is a selective faith – there is no total belief. It is not an unconditional faith, which accepts everything and trusts in everything. Human chooses what is best for him. The faith is simplified and adjusted to his needs. He is not looking for answers to difficult questions. He gives up if the faith requires being systematic. This sort of faith hates sacrifice – sort of a religious short cut.

To sum up I would like to quote Luckmann from one of his last articles. I think that those words will be a good resume of the article: [...] *the range of transcendence shrinks. Contemporary religious motives such as self-realisation, personal autonomy and self-expression have become dominant. Recently they have combined with new pseudoscience and magic or with given articulations ecological factors of „New Age”. Shrinking of the transcendence does not mean the loss of saint. Dominant motives in contemporary saint cosmos give some sort of a saint status to the individual itself through the articulation of its autonomy. Due to the fact that the transcendent social order does not have common meaning anymore, important matters for the privatised, egoist, hedonist and ecological, symbolically altruist individual, gain saint character. The offer of traditional social constructions of great transcendence by traditional universal religions is still actual*⁴².

⁴² Luckmann T., *Shrinking Transcendence, Expanding Religion?*, In: *Sociological Analysis* 1990, 50:2 127-138.