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INDIVIDUALIZATION AS A SOCIO-CULTURAL PROCESS AND RELIGIOSITY

Indywidualizacja jako proces społeczno-kulturowy a religijność

Abstract

Great social processes (cultural megatrends) such as structural and functional differentiation, institutional specialization, socio-cultural pluralism, worldview competition and individualisation play an important role in secularized societies. Under the contemporary conditions of the social modernisation and individualisation and pluralisation that are all connected, crucial transformation of the religious and moral values and beliefs takes place. In the paper the accent attention is paid to a couple of important issues: social and cultural context of individualisation as well as the influences of the structural individualism on religious life of contemporary people. These influences lead to a specific "fragmentarisation" of the Church as well as to the evolution from the Church religiosity to pluralised, segmented, deregulated and individualized religiosity.

Keywords: individualisation as a social-cultural process, church religiosity, individualized religiosity, secularisation.

Streszczenie

W zsekularyzowanych społeczeństwach istotną rolę odgrywają wielkie procesy społeczne (megatrendy kulturowe): funkcjonalna i strukturalna dyferencjacja, pluralizm społeczno-kulturowy i indywidualizacja strukturalna. W warunkach modernizacji społecznej i związanej z nią indywidualizacji i pluralizacji dokonują się istotne przekształcenia na płaszczyźnie wartości i norm religijnych oraz moralnych. W niniejszym artykule zwróciliśmy uwagę na dwie istotne kwestie: społeczno-kulturowy kontekst indywidualizacji oraz na oddziaływania strukturalnego indywidualizmu na życie religijne ludzi współczesnych. Oddziaływanie to prowadzi do swoistej „fragmentaryzacji" Kościoła oraz do ewolucji od religijności kościelnie ugruntowanej (ufundowanej) do religijności spluralizowanej, zsegmentowanej, zderegulowanej i zindywidualizowanej.

Słowa kluczowe: indywidualizacja jako proces społeczno-kulturowy, religijność kościelna, religijność zindywidualizowana, sekularyzacja.

Introduction

Great social processes such as structural and functional differentiation, institutional specialization, socio-cultural pluralism, worldview competition and individualisation play an important role in secularized societies. Differentiation and individualization as social processes are closely related (condition and consequence). In this context there is a specific compulsion towards the privatization or autocentrism of religious decisions or a personal choice among traditional religious topics, "combinatorics" of a kind (Ebertz 2018: 411-436; Ebertz 2000: 142-152).

A pluralistic world is characterised by the weakening or even collapse of many previous "cultural cliches" and "religious obviousnesses cliches". In a functionally diversified society autonomous subsystems (partial systems) emancipate from the influence of religious beliefs and start operating according to their own logic. Religions (Churches), with their universalistic and total claims, face significant difficulties or even insurmountable obstacles in the modern world. Indirectly, they become, in a way, "producers" of unbound, individualized, dispersed, fluid, "mosaic", deregulated, fragmented religiosity.(Klimski 2019: 7-35; Zduniak 2017: 57-65).

The ongoing rapid social and cultural changes affect religion and churches. The crisis of religion (even "driving" transcendence out of society) and its rebirth (renaissance) in the postmodern world, spiritual sensitivity are mentioned. Religion finds itself on the market of various offers at the disposal of the individual. Religion itself – and even more so the churches – functions as a separate sector of society, with its own codes and laws (the so-called subsystem). The actually functioning religiosity is intrinsically diverse and pluralized. What is Christian is no longer identified with institutionalized religiosity or with religiosity shaped by the churches.

The non-church currents of religious life become socially viable. Under the conditions of increasing socio-cultural pluralism, there is a reference not only to secularization, but also the differentiation of religiosity and its individualized forms, both within and outside the Churches, e.g. deregulated, marginal, minimal, under-institutionalised, liquid, diffusive religiosity (Sztompka 2020: 274; Rogowski 2015-2016: 229-245; Olszewska-Dyoniziak 2008: 59-63; Wójtowicz 2003: 99-105).

In the traditional societies people lived in the environments that were characterised by homogeneity both in terms of faith and world view in general. Religious institutions played a significant role in the lives of individuals, social groups and society as a whole. Contemporary people live in societies that are diverse in terms of beliefs, pluralistic in terms of religious attitudes, and permissive in terms of moral attitudes. The pluralism of forms and figures of everyday life is not only a certain reality, but takes on the character of an important, sometimes the most crucial value. Everyone, as long as they do not violate the rights of others – in this perspective – can live according to their own beliefs and desires, so that no institution, including the Church and the state, cannot enforce specific models and patterns of life ("I have my own opinion"). For many contemporaries, pluralism as such (recognition of diversity) is a specific creed.

There are more and more producers and distributors of symbolic knowledge in the expanding "market of ideas". The market offers many varieties of values, norms, patterns of behaviour, lifestyles, etc. In "religious supermarkets" you choose your worldview like any other commodity on the supply market. All the human beings can choose according to their own preferences, but all of them are also responsible for the adverse effects of their choices. Even if it is said that in a pluralistic society human beings are "doomed" to choice, no one forces then to make one choice or another. The choice is based on subjective preferences that allow to choose from a variety of religious offers, to choose what is "suitable" for an individual. Such choice is less and less dependent on socially defined selection criteria (Mariański 2019: 116-125; Mariański 2003: 82-112).

In its classic form, the paradigm "modernization – secularization – secularism of culture and society", involving the loss of faith, does not fit in with many Asian countries, let alone in the American society, where modernization and state secularism do not negatively affect the religiosity of Americans. Protestant evangelicalism is developing very intensively, with great dynamics, and is able to change the religious landscape in the Third World countries and in South America (Mariański 2012: 81-84). Even if social modernization often has a negative impact on the changes in religiosity of the modern world, it is not the only factor influencing these changes. American sociologist Peter L. Berger clearly states desecularization and points out the growing importance of religion in the modern world. Religious revival refers to all the big religions (Berger 1999: 1-18).

Under the contemporary conditions of the social modernisation and individualisation and pluralisation that are all connected, crucial transformation of the religious and moral values and beliefs takes place. In the paper the accent attention will be paid to several important issues: social and cultural context of individualisation as well as the influences of the structural individualism on religious life of contemporary people. Such influences lead to a specific "fragmentarisation" of the Church (Mariański 2007: 199-215) and to the evolution from church-based (founded) to pluralised, segmented, deregulated and individualised

religiosity, cultural, postmodern, asymptomatic, balancing religiosity (Libiszowska-Żółtkowska 2014: 173--196; Kutyło 2014: 13-27).

Social and cultural context of individualisation

The process of individualisation is an important characteristics of modern societies and is closely related to social modernisation. Individualisation is understood in a variety of ways. The German sociologist Ulrich Beck defines this concept as the liberation of individuals from background, family, gender roles, neighbourly ties, class or professional affiliation, or as a tendency to self-development and self-fulfilment, or as a socially existing compulsion to ascribe to oneself the effects of their own actions (Beck 1983: 49-59). Discussing individualisation Detlef Pollack and Gert Pickel point out the process of increasing individual self-determination (*Selbstbestimmung*) and diminishing external influences (*Fremdbestimmung*) (Pollack, Pickel 1999: 625). An individual is assigned with the highest value in social life, politics, economy, culture, morality and religion, as well as in artistic creation (Wierzbicki 1997: 178-179).

Modern societies become individualised. Social relations are changing in regard to the existing traditions and cultural obviousness, both in family and professional life, in regional, national and religious ties, in patterns of everyday life, in gender roles etc. The social "anchoring" of individuals in society is changing. Society loses its obvious and given character to a free choice among many potentialities. The biography of life by choice becomes new normal. Breaking free from traditional social ties and diversifying the forms of everyday life is connected with the detraditionalisation of life patterns and life interpretation. Even the sense of life is not given, it is assigned, it is a long term task of an individual that is realised under the conditions of the multiple choice. Shaping one's own personal and social identity takes place under the conditions of individual freedom and autonomy (Gabriel 2000: 4-7).

Individualisation understood as self-determination does not mean that individuals completely liberate themselves from society and move in seemingly non-social space. On the contrary, there must be some social changes related to institutional and cultural differentiation or pluralisation of society for the individualisation processes to take shape. On the one hand, it is assumed that the standard of living and prosperity is increasing, the welfare state expanding, the work-life balance, the labour market and the relevangt economic situation transforming. On the other hand, cultural transformations are necessary, expressed in the weakening of moral sanctions and social control, extending the normative freedom of an individual in the pursuit of what is socially possible. The expansion of opportunities and possible activities give a chance to choose something relevant out of the multiple options, a chance to self-determinate. (Liedhegener 2018: 347-382; Beck 2002: 192-205).

Individualisation does not have to mean selfishness or extreme individualism, it can postulate solidarity individualisation, something called new solidarity and altruistic individualism. Individuals will look for new bonds in which they find support and security. In postmodern societies, individuals are in a way "forced" to seek and choose, by their own decisions, new life solutions, on the constantly expanding market of offers and proposals (Knoblauch 2018: 329-346; Keupp 1997). Piotr Sztompka describes this process as "the emphasis on the importance of an individual, free from imposed group ties and addictions, endowed with dignity and inalienable rights, not only as a citizen, member of society, but as a human being who independently decides about the shape of one's biography, has many life or career models to choose as well as being solely responsible for one's successes or failures" (Sztompka 2002: 579).

Sometimes religion is treated to some extent either as a kind of ethical reserve in secular society, or as something important as long as it brings some benefits ("what will I get from it?"). In postmodern societies, increasing individualisation combined with the need to choose from many values and norms leads to both the decay of the religious order and the traditional moral order. The relationship between religion and morality is established by an individual who, on his own and at his own discretion, constructs his world of values in a society where new experiences and search for fun are still important. Among various global elites here are many providers of religious and moral values. In a market situation, an individual is faced with a multitude of offers and must choose certain religious and moral codes among them.

The process of transformations is characterized, on the one hand, by a progressive weakening of traditional ties and social constraints, and, on the other, by an increase in the space of personal freedom. Social life is subject to the logic of various options and choices that are available to specific individuals. Values, norms, patterns of behaviour as well as main life orientations – formerly considered unquestionable and obvious – are treated as changing or even outdated, unfashionable, premodern. The common denominator of the ongoing changes is pluralism and individualisation. The scale of common values shared by most people today shifts dramatically from authoritative character (e.g. duty, responsibility, self-sacrifice, submission) towards individualised criteria (e.g. personal fulfilment, intensity of experience, success, career, freedom, self-actualisation) (Mariański 2017: 20-22).

The desire for autonomy becomes a fundamental experience in modernity, and especially in postmodernity. Personal identity is shaped on the basis of very heterogeneous elements. The network of contacts and social relations is not determined by the family of origin or place of residence, but becomes primarily a matter of free choice and a kind of bidding process according to the logic of the market. Many traditional views and practices are being challenged. The tradition itself is assessed selectively, according to individualised criteria, and it is clearly weakening. Constant change is a hallmark of pluralistic societies. Nothing is as constant as permanent change. Under the conditions of technical and IT progress, everything becomes feasible to some extent, "almost everything can be done".

Postmodernity is a post-traditional order. In highly developed or late modernity, identity along with the broader institutional context must be created in a reflective manner. The enormous variety of options and possibilities does not make this task easier (Giddens 2001: 5-6). "Modernity reduces the overall riskiness of certain spheres and ways of life, but at the same time introduces new risk parameters, almost or completely unknown to earlier eras. They include large-scale risks arising from the global dimension of modern systems. The late modern world – the world described as highly developed modernity – is apocalyptic, but not because it is inevitably moving towards catastrophe, but because it carries with it such forms of risk that were not known to the previous generations" (Giddens 2001: 7). Uncertainty and necessity to choose is always associated with risk, so for some people the freedom to choose becomes a burden. Scientific and technological civilizational development led to the formation of a risk society. "In the postmodern world, nothing is certain. Everything flows, constantly changing" (Bruce 2000: 99).

The shift towards modernization "leads to the liberation of the individual from class conditions as well as from a gender-based situation […]. Within and outside the family individuals become the actors who provide the basis for their existence at the market, planning and organizing their own life accordingly. […]. It means that along with relatively high standard of living and extensive social security, people have been removed from the traditional conditions of class belonging, deprived of family support and left on their own, on their individual fate at the labour market and its associated risks, opportunities and contradictions" (Beck 2002: 112). The market turns out to be the driving force behind the individualisation of individual lives, and the course of the so-called normal life course is not defined by tradition. On the one hand, the risk is related to the global nuclear and ecological threats, against which class differences seem to be less significant. On the other hand, there is an individual risk and uncertainty caused by the dynamics of social change (Beck 2002: 111).

Modernization processes bring about rapid social changes related to the transition from the "world of fate" to the "world of choice", from absolute imperatives to relatively unlimited possible options. The contemporary situation – as opposed to the traditional one – forces people to make constant, more or less conscious choices. Postmodernity and radical pluralism of choices are closely related. The real possibilities of choices and the chance to shape one's own life, lifestyle and development prospects etc. increase, regardless of tradition and origin. These various freedoms lead to a loss of security and stability in the private sphere. There is no alternative "either – or" any more, it is rather "both" that works now (*Kosmopolityczny makroświat…* 2002: 15). Universalistic morality is being destabilized.

What an individual thinks, feels, believes in, depends less – than in pre-modern societies – on the social origin and the social environment. An individual is able to create ("produce") its lifestyle and emancipate

itself from excessive contextual influences, but at the same time this autonomy of an individual does not mean freedom from the requirements of the labour market, legal regulations, political structures or cultural norms.

In the process of becoming independent from social conditions, an individual is not completely autonomous in society. He or she is influenced – at least indirectly – by various institutions, legal norms and cultural codes. It means that a human being have to take into consideration various restrictions of their individualisation that are significantly weaker than those in the premodern societies. Under the conditions of individualisation the relationship between an individual and society shifts towards an individual (Pollack 2007: 33-34). Young people are "socialized in the rhetoric of independence, to submit themselves to the cult of the rebellious »just doing their job«" (Barker 2007: 129).

Traditional cultural patterns are changing towards accepting a multitude of attitudes and lifestyles, as well as views on the social reality around us. This change is briefly defined as individualisation that becomes the basic meta-narrative of contemporary reality. Individualisation does not always mean real choices, but at least it guarantees an experience of freedom of choice from among many possibilities. "Individualisation means or rather creates the opposite principle: human biography is liberated from traditional guidelines and safeguards, from the applicable control and global moral laws, and transferred – open and decision-dependent – into the area of individual human activity as a task of an individual. The share of life opportunities devoid of decision-making power decreases, and the share of self-creating biographies with the ability to make decisions grows. A normal biography turns into a biography of choice with all the limitations and »inconveniences of freedom« […] that are acquired in return" (Beck, Beck-Gernsheim 2013: 8).

Under the conditions of individualisation the importance of one's own beliefs and choices increases (the culture of the ephemeral). Contemporary culture – acknowledges Zygmunt Bauman – "today consists of offers, not orders; from propositions, not standards" (Bauman 2011: 27). Anthony Giddens confirms that: "Under the conditions of late modernity, everyone has a lifestyle and, in addition, is forced to do so in a significant sense: there is no choice – you have to choose. A lifestyle can be defined as a more or less integrated set of practices adopted by an individual, not only because they are useful, but also because they give a material shape to individual identity narratives" (Giddens 2007: 113). The sphere of autonomy is expanding, and ephemeral imperatives of the present solidify. Everything seems to be negotiable.

Contemporary societies significantly expand human possibilities, but the more possibilities there are, the smaller the value of each of them becomes in the public view. These possibilities are significant only if an individual values them in an act of personal choice. However, freedom, success and concern for one's well-being are crucial. Individualisation is expressed in an interest in one's own physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health. Focusing on oneself means inner cognition as well as giving oneself autonomy in making decisions concerning one's own needs. Under the changing socio-cultural conditions people want to decide for themselves individually whether they will be associated with a particular institution or with multiple institutions, for how long and to what extent he will identify with one or all of them.

Sociologists emphasize that in the contemporary globalised world the importance of an individual, the freedom to choose new items and services, ideologies and beliefs has increased. "Probably never before has man been so free in making choices and has not had such freedom in creating his biography as it is now. Today, he is convinced about his freedom and has a lot to choose from, because the range of goods and services, life situations, world views and religious beliefs is rich. And although during a long process of education people are prepared to make choices, this preparation is probably so insufficient as it has been never before. The enormous diversity of today's world, the enormous pace of changes, the ease of life, and the rich offer of the outside world outweigh this preparation to make choices, that should be gained in the processes of maturing to independence. People think they are free, but in fact they remain overwhelmed by their freedom of choice and often choose what is easy to implement and pleasant, not what is good for their development (Dyczewski 2013: 30).

Individualisation has its positive and negative aspects. We live under continuous pressure to make choices. "An individual has an alternative: to use every occasion or to create one's own way of treating that multiplicity of choices and creation of one's own life thanks to a well-thought choice. Choosing, however, always means deliberately resigning from all other options, and this requires the internal ability to distance oneself from

the current situation and have one's own useful selection criteria and individual mechanisms enabling routine making of these choices in order to maintain an appropriate space for action " (Kaufmann 2004: 129-130).

Expanding and deepening individualism means focusing on one's own "I" that creates the ultimate horizon of meaning. Consequently, the emphasis is primarily on satisfying the perceived needs and freedom from external pressures. The individual meaning of life is related to temporal satisfaction, which is experienced as a self-realization or pleasure (hedonistic eudaimonism). This is connected with the belief that everyone creates a sense of life for oneself (relativistic constructivism).

So-called self-realization in practice is often associated with selfishness. The happiness of the individual is more important than the engagement and commitment to the common good. An individual wants to set values and goals of action, norms and patterns of behaviour by himself, he feels responsible only to himself. In any case, a subjective judgement of what is right and wrong means more than traditional moral norms. Individualism and respective subjectivism favour the questioning of traditional doctrines and institutions. In the name of the perceived freedom and preferred individual development, institutions (including the Catholic Church) are attributed an authoritarian character.

Structural individualism, religion and religiosity

The effects of globalisation are visible in the sphere of religious life. A human being rather than an institution defines what is religious (religion is localised in the individual "me"). Attitudes towards religion and religious practices are changing, they are based not so much on established normative systems, but rather on subjective, individual and "internal" patterns. In this context, varieties of postmodernism glorify life amid uncertainty and undermine belief in objective truth. For example, today people do not generally believe in one and only truth, but choose their own personally experienced truths from a multitude of truths ("multilingual", heterogeneous religiosity). Everyone shapes their faith and lives according to it, does not want to submit to the end and unquestionably any of the great "meta stories", including Christianity.

Religious individualisation (autonomisation) means that individuals choose their content from among various religious options, not limited to one tradition. While individuals formerly accepted whatever their church leaders told them, today they demand the right to decide for themselves both on their core beliefs and the details of those. They do not take over the package of beliefs and practices prepared for them by church institutions, but they have more and more freedom to choose beliefs and practices. They do not believe everything that Church leaders command them to believe. In fact, many members of the Christian churches display a variety of beliefs and practices that would formerly be considered heresy. Nor do they feel compelled to leave their religious community, when their religious views change. The fundamental change is a shift in the location of the religious sense. While in the past religious and church institutions dominated, today individuals dominate (McGuire 2012: 342-344).

Religiosity manifested in individualised contexts is not easy to convey. The traditional catechetical message of the faith, understood as an introduction to the established context of culture, encounters considerable difficulties. Religious education today must show how to deal with religious and moral options, and how to apply criteria in making free decisions. The future of the Christian religion – in social dimensions – is closely related to the family message of religious and denominational affiliation as well as the "thematisation" of religious content and patterns of behaviour on the level of interpersonal relations. Without religious socialization and the experience of faith in social interactions, the future stability of religion itself will be jeopardized.

In a society of options, religion begins to function easily according to the rules of supply and demand, becoming to some extent a kind of "commodity". From the multiplicity of the supply of religious offers from the competing Churches and various religious groups, those that correspond to personal needs are selected. This does not mean rejecting the entire religious tradition (detraditionalisation), but rather indicates a change in attitude towards tradition, which also becomes a choice. There is a significant shift taking place in the religious field, which sociologists describe as the transition from "fate" to "choice".

Everyone has to shape their faith on their own. A human being has access to various religious elements, as well as other elements of culture, that can connect with other elements in various ways (e.g. belief in reincarnation and Christianity). The dominant social form of religion in some countries is becoming a specific "Bricolage", which is a combination of religious content from various sources, combined in a syncretic way. Experiencing religion and its aestheticization are treated as more important than strictly defined dogmatic content offered for belief (Mariański 2009: 191-209). In our country these processes are *in statu nascendi*.

Individualisation reaches all the fields of reflection and action. It leads to creation of religiosity of one's specific kind and for one's own account ("I have my own opinion", "I believe in my own way"). There is so called do-it-yourself principle of reassembling various unsteady and ephemeral elements that concerns also the religious life sphere (religiosity "under one's own direction"). Institutionalized church religiosity is not the only religious reality that exists in modern societies. Especially the young generation, which is said to be "post-Christian" or "postmodern Christian", opens up almost automatically to culturally diverse alternatives, including religious ones. Postmodern religiosity is quite often syncretic in nature, at least not very institutionalized, "unchurched", with the domination of individual justifications for one's own religiosity (Gebhardt 2018: 591-610).

Individualisation not only means regaining freedom and autonomy in religious matters, it can become both a joy and a burden. As part of the project of their own life, people grants themselves the right to control not only their own time, work, culture or even body, but also morality and religiosity. As part of their individual choices and decisions people want to determine what to believe, to what extent and for how long. Their religious identity cannot be the result of the influence of collective beliefs or recognized customs and customs, but of their own initiatives resulting from reflection and thinking, or adapting to personal utility criteria to the current needs of an individual. The religiosity that develops in this way can be largely related to "the things of this world", to a lesser extent it concerns personal salvation or afterlife reward, and certainly not posthumous punishment.

In a democratic pluralist society there is no monopoly, but there is a market for various ideologies and philosophies of life, often promoting opposing values and life projects. One cannot force an individual any of these ideologies. He or she chooses them on his or her own. "Coercion to choose" in the individual and public consciousness corresponds to the pluralistic structure of values and norms. Their personal identities people have to construct and maintain on their own. "Coercion to choose" concerns religious na moral identity as well. The individual personally chooses what he believes in, how he lives, to which Church he belongs, and to what extent he participates in religious and church life. The dominant social form is the Christianity in a selective, to some extent way ("I am Catholic, but …").

The pursuit of individualisation and autonomy, and the associated pluralism, are signs of postmodern societies. This general development trend does not stop at the "gates" of the Christian churches and religions. Structural individualism has repercussions in terms of religiosity and ties with the Church. The weakening of tradition and the resulting social ties has an impact on religious and church ties (religious destabilization). The entire system of plausibility of models of religious explanation of life has become one of many possible models that an individual has. As a consequence, a multiplicity of individual belief systems and a multiplicity of experiences in the transforming society are created (a specific globalisation of individualism).

The processes of breaking ties with the religious tradition are closely related to religious pluralisation and individualisation. Religious individualisation means, on the one hand, freeing oneself from the influence of conventional religious ties (e.g. the breakdown of closed, religious social environments), on the other hand, "disenchantment' of the existing ways of explaining and interpreting life and expanding choices in terms of life orientations. Under the new social conditions the individual has considerable opportunities to shape his religious life through free decisions. Individualisation is therefore closely related to the subjectivisation and autonomisation of religious life. Both of these processes facilitate the growing distance from the Church's institutionalized Christian religion (Gabriel 1992: 46-49).

The individualisation of religiosity cannot be equated with withdrawing into the realm of pure inner self, even if in individual cases it means an extreme questioning of the external aspects of religiosity. Opposition to the Church and its religiosity results from the general principle of rejecting the institution that plays a role

of an intermediary between man and God. These people want to establish only direct contacts and do not accept any intermediary between their conscience and God, thus rejecting the Church as an unnecessary institution (religiousness not mediated by the Church). Both naturally and on the complicated paths of history a postmodern man often feels lonely and defenceless. He is also "doomed" to construct his life without anyone to care about it. It seems that in religious matters he is left to himself as well. Religiousness becomes a personal matter of a subject.

Individualism becomes a "modern religion" and the main focus of sociological reflections on what is religious. Danièle Hervieu-Léger speaks of a deregulatory approach to institutionalized religion. "The emphasis has shifted to patterns of the individualisation of religious beliefs, leading individuals to independently define their personal *credo*, giving their lives meaning according to their own attitudes, interests, aspirations and experiences. This emphasis on a do-it-yourself principle in the sphere of religious beliefs and practices does not mean that conventional religious traditions have lost their cultural importance in European society. It means rather that these traditions have more often come to serve as symbol stores and meaning repositories that are accessible to individuals and can be used repeatedly in completely subjective ways. Less and less the "codes of meaning" characteristic of the great religions are imposed on individuals "from above"; and less and less often individuals are adopting their religious identity from older generations within "natural communities". In modern societies, especially in Europe, religious identity is more often becoming a matter of personal choice "(Hervieu-Léger 2004b: 34).

While beliefs are individualised, the ways to express religiosity change as well. Individualisation change religious situation. With regard to religion people do not feel compelled to choose one and only binding model of religiosity. In religious matters they can choose from various possibilities (options) and this means usually individualisation of religious experience and shaping of their own, biographically defined religiosity. In addition to, or often even instead of beliefs, rituals, symbols, etc. that are conveyed by the Church and family, a specific "religious field" is created. Such filed is shaped by an individual. People must take care of their religiosity and the meaning of life on their own. As a result the religious situation in contemporary societies is characterized, on the one hand, by a weakening of ecclesiastical religiosity, and, on the other hand, by a renaissance of what is religious (Hervieu-Léger 2004a: 109).

Individualisation with regards religion means that it is no longer an irrevocable part of culture, but becomes an element of a personal decision. Religiocity transforms into something that is called spirituality. Danièle Hervieu-Léger calls this process the *Bricolage*, Robert Wuthnow – the *Spirituality of Seeking*, many sociologists use the term *Patchwork-Religion, Bastelreligion* in German, eclectic, diffuse religiosity, religiosity of "pilgrims", religiosity of "passants", renascent religiosity, religiosity à la carte. Religious individualisation can also mean a process whereby the need for God ceases to be obvious. Man can create himself without God as well. "In this climate of rationalism that closes in on itself and considers science to be the only possible model of cognition, everything else is subjective. Of course, the Christian life also becomes a subjective product only, that is, an arbitrary decision, and not a way of life" (meeting of Benedict XVI with the clergy of the Aosta diocese on July 25, 2005): 36).

Religious individualisation means the expansion of opportunities for action in religious matters. That means, on the one hand, the weakening of the normative power of traditional systems of interpreting life and the world, and, on the other hand, extending the offer of the other religious or para-religious systems. In postmodern societies, individuals have a choice not only of Christian traditions, but also non-Christian ones (major world religions such as Islam or Buddhism, New Age, esotericism, occultism, therapeutic groups). The spread of alternative religious forms additionally weakens the traditional forms of church religiosity. On the one hand, Christian churches are subject to processes of internal pluralism growth. But at the same time they increase their religious and church offer directed to the congregation and seekers, going far beyond participation in the Sunday Holy Mass. As the number of choices from various religious offerings increases, so does the chance of religious individualisation.

Striving for religious individualisation sometimes means breaking with the organization of conventional forms of religious affiliation, especially with the traditional forms of involvement in parish life and the transmission of faith through the family. Next to "faith without belonging" (Grace Davie), the model

of "belonging without faith" (Danièle Hervieu-Léger) is being shaped as typical attitudes of Europeans towards religion. "The attitude of belonging without belonging, which in Europe is opposed to the attitude of faith without belonging, is clearly visible among Danish and French citizens. The former, although they do not believe in God and do not attend church, still pay honestly the taxes that go to the Lutheran Church because they want the churches to be well kept and to be used for rite ceremonies. The latter remember with nostalgia the beautiful church services from their childhood and complain that mosques are being built in France, although they declare that »their foot will not be set in the church« until the day »the last bell rings for them«" (Hervieu-Léger 2006: 35).

People must set their own goals, choose the right selection criteria as a part of self-determination (autonomy) strategy. All this takes place in a situation where there is no basis for permanent, stable principles shaping the image of the world. In modern societies, there is a transition from the assigned identity to the achieved identity. The latter is built by making personal choices and shaping your own skills. It is not without significance for religiosity and ties with the Churches. "What gives so many people the feeling," asks Walter Truett Anderson, "that they can tinker with the sacred symbolic heritage of different communities with impunity, they can mix rituals and traditions like vegetables in a salad, invent new identities for themselves? […]. Pick and choose in the truths, deciding what to believe in and what not?" (Mathews 2005: 254).

The influence of individualization processes on religious life may be expressed in the fact that in their religious orientations and activities people feel less supported by the social environment, and the beliefs and practices themselves become less stable ("porous"). If people are left on their own, then their religious beliefs and practices lose the old obviousness that was characteristic for the pre-technical societies. People become more sensitive to doubts, questioning and criticism, their religiosity is reduced. Individualisation tendencies are strengthened by so-called culture of the ephemeral and fragmentation that divides our life into pieces, as well as a culture of relativity. Those types of culture enter into the experience of faith (for example, so called "Christian from time to time", "Christian by the way", "half Christian").

According to a competing hypothesis, structurally conditioned individualisation offers opportunities for highly individualised religiosity, at least partially liberated from institutional dependencies. Under the conditions of modern societies religiosity loses its conventional shape and is implemented in a specific way and on the responsibility of an individual. Where habitual religious commitment weakens, the likelihood of personal religious involvement increases. Only then can one speak of the proper religious faith of an individual. Some sociologists even put forward the thesis that institutionalized social forms of religiosity and individualized religiosity are inversely proportional to each other, the more the former, the less the latter (Pollack 2007: 34-35).

Actually functioning religiosity is internally diverse and pluralised, up to the forms of vague, non-binding, mobile, indefinite, fluid, non-institutional, fragmented religiosity, often syncretic in nature. It could be called "invisible" religiosity, because it is situated rather in the private sphere of life and is only incidentally revealed in the objectivised symbols and collective rituals, not only outside of the Christianity, but also within it. New religious movements, formerly known as youth religions as well as alternative movements (like psychogroups, occultism, esotericism, destructive cults, fundamentalist movements, charismatic movements, etc.), are extremely diverse. It would be difficult to reduce their features to a common denominator.

According to the German sociologist Detlef Pollack, the critics of the secularization thesis overestimate the processes of religious revival in the contemporary world, especially in Western Europe. It is true that in the last 30 years there has been a growing interest in various forms of non-church religiosity, but this growing interest does not compensate for the losses suffered by traditional Christian churches. Of course, all kinds of beliefs and practices related to non-church religiosity are much more common than formal membership in new religious movements. People rarely resign from being a member in their churches because they want to join a new religious movement, but because they do not attach any importance to religion in their lives, or have ceased to be interested in it at all. The view according to which the final balance of changes is zero, because churches are losing and religion is gaining, and the state of religiosity in society is fairly stable corresponds to functionalist sociological theories, underestimating the actual changes in religiosity in society (Pollack 2000: 22-27).

Detlef Pollack maintains the thesis that the individualisation processes in society have a rather negative impact on religiosity and lead to the intensification of secularisation processes. Also, the individualisation processes that are related to detraditionalisation and the weakening of family influences on the attitudes and behaviour of their members have a rather negative impact on church religiosity, while favouring the emergence of new forms of religiosity and spirituality. Sociological research shows that when an individual gains autonomy from society, forms of non-institutional, unconventional, new religiosity develop, regardless of whether an individual was subject to religious socialization as a child or not. Pollack argues that the theory of individualisation, which does not assume either a decline in the significance of religiosity or its growth, but discusses the transformation of its dominant form, is not analytically grounded in explaining religious changes and is associated with more undefined processes of modernisation and social differentiation. Although it is very popular in the German sociology of religion, it is not very useful for explaining religious phenomena (Pollack 2012: 77-78).

Another German sociologist, Olaf Müller, agrees in part with the representatives of the theory of individualisation, who maintain the thesis that traditional religious images related to the Churches are enriched with alternative forms of religiosity compatible with social modernisation. Younger, better educated people, with a higher social position and a more modern lifestyle are inclined towards these forms of religiosity. Sociological studies – at least in Germany – do not support the hypothesis that traditional religiosity is displaced by alternative religious ideas and practices and that the socio-demographic contours of religiosity are blurred. The field of alternative religiosity can only be partially separated from traditional religiosity. Traditional forms of popular religion and popular devotion (e.g. belief in healers) are spread mainly in societies with a relatively well-developed religious and denominational culture. The phenomena of new religions, such as Zen meditation, occultism, New Age etc., are more often found in societies that are more secularized. Overall, they find relatively little resonance everywhere. Müller admits that the individualisation thesis is in some way useful for the interpretation of some developmental tendencies in religiosity (Müller 2012: 97-98).

In the individualisation thesis, it is emphasized that along with the decline in institutionalised religiosity, manifested primarily in the weakening or disappearance of religious practices ("unchurching"), there is no progressing decline in individual religiosity. One should distinguish between individual-subjective and socio-institutional religiosity. The process of "unchurching" does not correspond with the decline of religiosity, but with a change in the forms of personal religiosity. Even if the need for religion is an irremovable human feature, specific religious choices are shaped in the human lives and the lives of social groups in various ways. "When there is no answer in the systems known to people, they correct those systems, complete them, shorten them, combine them and create their own. Such an attitude shows both a crisis and an inalienable need for religion. You rarely leave it without building your own. Apart from exclusive membership – to only one Church and nowhere else, today it is more and more common joint membership – to several Churches and elsewhere. Religious institutions take such behaviour into account, and some even accept it, only not to disappear from the scene" (Guizzardi 2013: 195).

In relation to religion and morality, an individual may choose the appropriate ones from a set of ultimate meanings, guided by the preferences determined by his social biography. The new social form of religion spreading in the modernity is radically subjective, it is characterized by an incoherent and non-obligatory sacred cosmos and a low degree of transcendence compared to traditional types of religion (Luckmann 1996: 135-155). The supporters of the individualisation thesis believe that the processes of change in Europe are not so much an expression of the loss of religiosity, but rather a change of the previously dominant forms of religiosity. Religion becomes one of the options to choose from: belonging and faith, belonging and partial faith, belonging and lack of faith, lack of belonging and faith, etc. At least some of the representatives of the theory of individualisation maintain that the increase in extra-church or non-Christian religiosity is an argument undermining the existence of a general secularization trend. The transformations of religiosity are not one-way.

The processes of religious individualisation do not mean that individuals with such orientations completely give up any form of community construction. In this context, Winfried Gebhardt points to new, post-traditional structures of social life, the so-called social scenes. Scenes are groups of people who share similar

interests, meet at a specific time and place to fulfil their needs. These can be charismatic groups or communities gathering around some prominent personalities, both in established Churches and, above all, outside them (e.g. various communities of alternative spirituality). In general, people belonging to these new groups show little interest in traditional church communities (e.g. parishes). They are comfortable with belonging without obligation, open-mindedness and respect for their individual worldview (Gebhardt 2007: 304-307).

There are many other forms of community construction, new forms of religiosity and spirituality, such as mega-churches, religious events. Contemporary people, even if they do not trust institutions and institutionalized authorities too much, are nevertheless looking for new forms of belonging and community. Many of them live or want to live according to their own choices, but this does not mean depriving themselves of any anchoring in tradition or the belief that everything is fluid and without any foundation. For many, religion is not only a conscious choice, but also an undisputed way of life, also in religious communities, many seek to anchor in national and church culture. The feeling of homelessness, also symbolically in the religious sphere, is difficult to bear.

Final remarks

The processes of religious individualisation often coincide with the phenomenon of desecularisation, and sometimes even cause it. The individualisation thesis, which explains these changes, cannot be treated as competitive or as a substitute for the secularisation thesis. Both are needed as paradigms explaining the changes in the contemporary religiosity. They indicate the change in the position and a role of the Christian churches, but not their disappearance. Churches continue to play an important role in social life, though not as significant as they used to be. The crisis of the churches does not mean a crisis of religion to the same extent. Few researchers of social life expect the disappearance of religion, few want to issue "death certificate" for it, on the contrary, it appears in many new forms and shapes. These new forms of individualised religiosity are sometimes referred to as postmodern religiosity. Frederick the Great in 1740, in addition to the questions put to him in connection with the existence of Roman Catholic schools in Berlin, wrote: "In my country, everyone has to become a saint in their own way" (Kaufmann 2004: 112). Everyone today can and becomes „saint" in their own way (Widl 1999: 360).

New forms of alternative or individualised religiosity do not compensate for the deficits of religiosity shaped by the Catholic and Protestant Churches. It cannot be ruled out that on the grounds of the anthropologically shaped individual religiosity there will be a return to church membership in the future. From the point of view of the interests of the Church, an important problem arises: on the one hand, the need to shape individualised religiosity as personal religiosity (personalisation) and, on the other hand, transforming it into communal religiosity (socialization in the Church, "ecclesialisation"). The handling of both challenges facing the Church is by no means easy. There is no rapid change method in these matters that consolidates and harmonizes the "fragmented" components of the Church into a well-integrated whole. In the social reality there is not only a sense of crisis or lack of value, there is also a strong need for order (Mikułowski Pomorski 1999: 203-239).

According to the Italian philosopher Vittorio Possenti, "cultural phenomena are open and that there is probably not enough empirical evidence at present to show that in the process of civilization there is an increase in secularization and the decline of religion" (Possenti 2005: 185). And he adds: "It is difficult to say whether the starting de-privatisation of Christianity and its new public role will continue or not. Nor do I want to claim that we are witnessing an epochal reversal of a long-standing secularisation trend. Theological, anthropological and social reasons suggest that it would be beneficial, provided that an important element of secularisation would not be missing, which is the distinction between a religious and a civil community, the state and the Church „(Possenti 2005: 341). In any case, the claim that Western civilization goes towards secularism and the extinction of religion is not as certain today as it was 30 years ago.

The development of various forms of individualised religiosity gives sociologists new and difficult research tasks. "Studying only pure religious practices is no longer sufficient. It does not reflect subtle modifications, it is powerless against religious phenomena *in statu nascendi*, which are somewhat present everywhere in our societies. Nor does it reflect the actual extent of the religious factor and its influence (Campanelli, Cavallaro,

Cipriani, Padiglione, Pozzi 1990: 142). Studying of new religious phenomena in their richness and uncertainty one cannot use traditional concepts and methods of sociology, especially when religiosity becomes cognitive and emotional indeterminacy. However, the characteristics of the new forms of religiosity lack conceptual and empirical clarity.

It is not easy to define what belongs strictly to religion in contemporary manifestations of religiosity and what does not belong to it (fragmentation of the definition of religion) (Pollack 2018: 17-50; Krech 2018: 51-94). The problem of extensive and restrictive definitions of religion is actual in this case. Extensive definitions treat all constructions of ideas in which groups or individuals attempt to make sense of everyday experience as religion. As part of the thesis on the dispersion of what is religious, sociologists see manifestations of religiosity in literature, movies, music, sports, and alternative medicine practices *(implicite* religiosity). In this way, the boundaries between the religious "field" and other "fields" of human life become fluid. According to some sociologists, religion as a subject of sociological research should not be associated with the belief in a personal God, but should be extended to all the belief systems of mystical, aesthetic and ethical nature.

Restrictive definitions reserve the definition of religion only to those products of sense making, which refer *explicite* to the resources of reference systems and symbols belonging to the tradition of historical religions. According to restrictive definitions, some of the phenomena defined as non-religious individualised religiosity do not belong to religiosity (e.g. respiritualization without God, hidden religiosity). According to extensive definitions, these manifestations of religiosity are just as religious as church religiosity. In any case, individualised religiosity may be – despite being detached from the institutional context – the object of sociological studies of religion. Nowadays many sociologists do not try to define what religion is, but rather adopt an "open" attitude to new phenomena of religiosity or spirituality (Pollack 2018b: 303-327; Knoblauch 2008: 3-8).

The model of ecclesiastical religiosity, as a strictly binding and resistant model, loses its importance, and unorthodox forms of religiosity and spirituality appear more and more clear. The "silent apostasy" mentioned by John Paul II in the Post-Synodal Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, characterizing those who live as if God did not exist (EE, no. 9), takes place in many European countries. They are believers who exclude God from their daily lives or reduce their faith to occasional and superficial episodes and gestures at life's turning points. In the future one cannot rule out more obvious increase, especially in metropolitan environments, of indifferent attitudes towards religion and atheistic attitudes as well as the loosening of the ties between personal identity and religious participation. Chances are opening up for non-church and individualised religiosity (Nowak 2007: 236-239).

The individualisation of religiosity does not exclude the processes of re-composition and return in some form to religiosity associated with and defined by the Churches. The process of transition from church religiosity to individualised (privatised) religiosity is a significant, but it is not the only one tendency in the transformation of religiosity in the contemporary world. Desecularisation processes are becoming more and more visible. However, the religious and ecclesiastical world is changing to such an extent that one has to think about it a bit differently than before. The changes taking place cannot be ignored on a larger scale. The individualisation of religiosity is as important process as secularisation (Mazurek 2019: 31-43). There are many different development trends.

Contemporary sociologists no longer pose questions about whether religion will survive or when it will end, but about the forms in which it will exist in pluralized and postmodern societies. Will the era of individualisation favour very different forms of "do-it-yourself" religiosity, or rather religious indifference and sometimes atheism? Even today there are multiple followers of individual churches who believe that you can believe in "this" or not in "that", accept "this" moral rule and reject "the other". Between unreserved believers and non-believers there is a vast semantic "field" of various attitudes towards "what is supernatural" or ecclesiastical and the moral obligations that follow. "The features of individual religions will undergo far-reaching changes in the future, but religion will survive while maintaining its strong position" (Stark, Bainbridge 2000: 379).

Despite possible the transformation of the historical trends does not happen suddenly. However, a revival of Christianity in Europe in an undefined future cannot be ruled out. Today already sociologists talk about a

strong trend of re-spiritualisation in the West. People still consider themselves religious, but they shape their relations with church institutions in a strong sense of freedom. They seem to say: "No" to Church – "yes" to spirituality. "Such private religion is quite blurry and its image of God is very vague. These are premonitions, not specific knowledge. So one can rather think of spirituality or search for religion. Churches are treated as a refuge for bad times" (*Kościoły Starego Kontynentu…* 2002: 10). Despite various assessments formulated by sociologists with regard to the new forms of religiosity, which have been conventionally called in this paper "postmodern secularisation", the classical theory of secularisation is losing its importance as the only or the most important scheme for interpreting religious changes in the contemporary world. Secularisation has its internal limitations (Adamski 2002: 121-124).

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