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“What has been is what will be,
and what has been done is what will be done;
there is nothing new under the sun.
Is there a thing of which it is said,
‘See, this is new’?
It has already been,
in the ages before us”.

(*Ecclesiastes*1: 9-10)

Resacralisation in postmodern culture. New developments of religion and spirituality

Continuity and change of religious landscapes

The faith in supernaturality, in the *sacred* of transcendent dimension is connected with the human fate “since time immemorial”. “There is no one without a religious need, a need to have a frame of orientation and an object of devotion. (...) Man may worship animals, trees, idols of gold or stone, an invisible god, a saintly man or diabolic leaders: he may worship his ancestors, his nation, his class or party, money or success”¹.

Only landscapes and atmospheres of religious or spiritual interpretations of content from the outside or found within oneself change, while they determine the frames of reference regarding existence and identity. Religious systems, changing over the centuries, suggest ready-made solutions, they explain “what the senses cannot”

¹ E. Fromm, *Szkice z psychologii religii*, translated into Polish by J. Prokopiuk, KiW, Warszawa 1966, p. 137.

and what is empirically untestable. The progress of civilisation and development of knowledge stimulated by critical reflection as well as the presence of charismatic figures cause the former solutions to be replaced by newer ones, old interpretations are rejected in favour of a new faith. Old Books are replaced by new canons. The images of God accompanying people throughout history undergo interpretative changes, giving way to His other representations and names. Every religion has its own vision of God and the original interpretation of articles of faith, which differentiates it from other religious systems or specific denominations. Studies of the history of religion prove the eternal pluralism and the liveliness of beliefs.

The religious panorama of the world is a kaleidoscope of forms, which undergo constant development. They divide, unite, transform and re-appear constantly competing with one another. In the 21st century, despite the 19th century conviction that along with the progress of science and development of secular ideologies religion will vanish, it still lasts and experiences a renaissance. In various parts of the world new movements of religious innovations are being established.

The history of sociological theories is a series of changing paradigms, internal arguments and crises as well as constructive criticisms and innovative resolutions. The clash of theoretical confrontation with empirical knowledge is a crucial factor of these transformations. Sociology describes and explains social life, which intrinsically tends to be dynamic and creative as well as unstable and unpredictable. People might always behave differently, compromise the socialisation arrangements and break loose from the diktat of social control. That is why social sciences theorems are only hypothetical to a greater or lesser extent. Under certain conditions they might be questioned and replaced with new concepts.

Secularisation connected with European modernity was treated as a universal process, to a certain degree irreversible and exemplary for societies undergoing modernisation. Sociologists of the bygone period, also in Poland, collected plenty of empirical data proving that there is an advancing process of leaving religion. It gave rise to a commonly repeated thesis on a one-track relationship: the more modernisation, the less religiousness, the more modern a society, the more secularised it is. A paradigm of secularization allowed a "zero-one" interpretation of obtained results. It polarised the studied population into believers and non-believers, religious and irreligious, practising and non-practising. Civilization transformations which underwent throughout 30 years after the end of military activity were characterised by the expansion of industry (especially heavy industry – the period of the Cold War) as well as a growing importance of the working class, which advanced in terms of society, education and civilisation. Sociologists from the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s considered industrialisation and urbanisation to be responsible for changes in outlooks on life interpreted in the paradigm of secularisation.

The thesis that modernisation unambiguously conditions the appearance of a(anti)religious trends, which is fundamental to the theory of secularisation, was

not confirmed explicitly in the postmodern culture. At the beginning of the 21st century sociologists – led by Peter L. Berger – admitted to incorrect forecasts. They assessed that the Western world is not heading for the negation of religion. On the contrary, they noticed the phenomenon of religious renaissance and revival. The establishment of autonomous religious groups was observed, inspired by tradition or differently experienced transcendence as well as religious communities inside the Churches or on their fringes. In postmodern culture, religiousness gains various shapes. In some countries Churches lose their significance, in others – for example in Poland – the position of the Catholic Church is still strong, while the authority of clergymen has the binding power in a public forum. In places where the position of a religious institution weakens, new forms of religious expression appear in the offer of outlooks on life. People not so much depart from God, as they seek Him “on their own initiative”, drawing inspiration from sources available to them. The falsified thesis on secularization has transformed into its antithesis, that is desecularisation, the return of religion to laicised cities².

Modern human beings, more often than in the past, encounter religions distinct from their own religious traditions. The availability of publications from the area of traditional and new religions, the possibility of discussion with those “believing otherwise” and participation in their worship ceremonies (in their own country or during journeys abroad) favour, especially among young people, the relativisation of their own religious attitude. Your own world of religious beliefs in contact with the “otherness” is no longer an obvious world “of its own accord”. It needs self-confirmation, making sure you are right. Reality open to a multitude, allowing for the co-existence of this variety makes people responsible for their own choices. Free market provides opportunities, shows possibilities, suggests and tempts with competitive offers. However, it does not give ready, identical solutions. Everybody makes their own choices independently. It would be difficult not to agree with Peter Berger³, who claims that the contemporary world is not given to us in a certain, obvious or the only way. Human beings are left to their subjective feelings and individual experiences in their own judgment, hence they more often seek and experiment, also in the field of religion.

More and more people readily – not only on Internet forums – share their testimonies of experiencing transcendence, variously visualised God, mystical encounters, ecstatic raptures and the re-discovered *sacred*. Religion lasts more than science and secular ideologies not because it has earlier origins and is more primeval, but because of what it is able to provide people with spiritually and community-wise.

² Cf. K. Dobbela, *Sekularyzacja. Trzy poziomy analizy*, translated into Polish by R. Babińska, Nomos, Kraków 2008; J. Mariański, *Sekularyzacja i desekularyzacja w nowoczesnym świecie*, Wydawnictwo KUL, Lublin 2006.

³ Cf. P. L. Berger, *Pytanie o wiarę. Sceptyczna zachęta do chrześcijaństwa*, Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, Warszawa 2004.

In times of upheaval religion can effectively strengthen the “organic solidarity”⁴, which enables entities and societies to survive axionormative turbulence. Subjective experiences of entities confronted in the mutual process of communication preserve desired patterns of behaviour as well as generate community interpretative codes. Compatibility in or divergence of interpretation is conditioned on the social authority of the person who takes on a moral responsibility and leadership role in a given social situation.

Intellectual development, which is the outcome of searching for new content and forms of their expression, stimulates **differentiation of needs**. In the field of religion there are **diversifications**, which is confirmed by the studies of the history of religion and comparative religious studies. In modern times the 16th century Reformation of Western Christianity initiated by Martin Luther made people approach religion critically: they analysed it, reinterpreted it, started reading the *Bible* independently. The schism of Western Christianity and the establishment of Protestant Churches initiated a process of religion-forming invention (the second reformation: 17th-18th centuries; the Great Awakening of America: 18th century; the Second Great Awakening of America: 19th century; denominational syncretism of new religious movements: 20th-21st centuries). Contemporarily, Christian Churches consist of hundreds of autonomous denominations. In Poland the clear-cut evidence of the successively expanding religious scene is the register of churches and other religious denominations, which grows longer by the year. In October 2016 there were 179 registered positions⁵.

Democracy (defined as the freedom of: opinion, speech and conscience) favours the privatisation of religion, that is the independent choice of beliefs and worship from the canon of available outlooks on life. “In a democratic system the idea of freedom is important: without freedom a human being is human indeed, but not himself or herself. This is how totalitarianism manipulates human beings (...) However, can the Catholic Church with its undemocratic authority structure favour the creation of democracy? We all know that the birth of modern democracy was conditioned on the influence of ancient thought, reformation, the influence of deism, the liberalism of the Enlightenment as well as the concept of a human being “good by nature” – the ideas generally alien to Catholicism⁶”.

⁴ Organic solidarity is characterised by entities blending in a coherent order of a significant level of integration and correlations with regard to human relationships. Cf. E. Durkheim, *O podziale pracy społecznej*, translated into Polish by K. Wakar, PWN, Warszawa 1999

⁵ Ministry of the Interior and Administration (MSWiA), <https://mswia.gov.pl/pl/wyznania-i-mniejszosci/relacje-panstwa-z-kosci/13964,Relacje-panstwa-z-Kosciolami-przydatne-informacje-dokumenty-i-akty-prawne.html> (retrieved on 27 XII 2016); M. Libiszowska-Żółtkowska, *Religious Pluralism in Poland Today: An Overview*, in: *Sociology from Lublin*, R. Radzik, B. Szajkowski, A. Wysocki (eds.), Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Press, Lublin 2014, pp. 173-196.

⁶ J. Tischner, *Budowanie demokracji*, <http://tischner.pl/aktualnosc/1301/1/tischner-o-budowaniu-demokracji> (The Polish version retrieved on 27 XII 2016).

In a secular society, in which religion loses the power to give meaning to individual life, human beings feel absolved of the acquiescence and submission to the *sacred*, they stop treating holy things in an autotelic way. They become pragmatists, who make use of the *sacred* for extraordinary experiences and raptures, to make daily life festive. If the expectations they hold towards the *sacred* fail them, they become indifferent or choose a different system of meanings. In the contemporary world the *sacred* has lost its primeval feature (power), it no longer arouses fear or terror. What remains is the mystical fascination with unfathomable mystery.

Choices connected with outlooks on life undergo relativisation. In a democratic society, affirming the freedom of choice, tolerance and pluralism, religion is a private matter. In relation to ecclesial religiousness, that is in accordance with the teachings of the Church, religiousness by choice is dictated by an individual preference. It does not mean that the borders of optionality of choices is unlimited. In general other human beings determine the limits of our freedom. We choose from an arsenal of availability what the ones who are more creative, charismatic or inventive have to offer. In a democratic society the freedom of choice determines not only the availability, but first and foremost the liberty of propagating ideas (also religious). However, even the most suggestive agitator is not able to convince and persuade others when he or she faces resistance and the unwillingness to cooperate (“I will not speak with sectarians”). Constructive dialogue occurs when they obtain positive feedback, when two intentions confront each other: a creative preacher with a spiritual seeker open to innovation. The transfer of ideas and imitation of behaviours take place not only through direct and personal contact, but also indirectly, through a cultural transfer. “Religion exists socially only as communication. What happens in the heads of countless human entities would never have formed religion if it was not for communication”⁷.

Resacralisation in postmodernity

Postmodern awakening and religious revival in new formulas of **resacralisation** result from the longing for raptures of the soul, for the mysticism of sensations and ecstatic experiences. Is it the self-fulfilling prophecy of Andre Malraux, who said in the middle of the 20th century in one of his interviews, and many repeated after him, that the “21st century will be a century of mysticism” that is spirituality? John Naisbitt⁸, a forecaster of megatrends, arrived at a similar conclusion in the 1990s, advancing a thesis on religious transformations: from the church model towards privatization and subjectivation of faith, from a church institution towards new religious movements

⁷ N. Luhmann, *Religion als Kommunikation*, in: H. Tyrell, V. Krech, H. Knoblauch (ed.), *Religion als Kommunikation*, Würzburg 1998, p.137.

⁸ J. Naisbitt, P. Aburdence, *Megatrends 2000. Ten New Directions for the 1990s*, New York 1990.

and new spirituality. Janusz Mariański referred to this thesis: "New spirituality is one of megatrends from the beginning of the 21st century, it is a *sacred* experience, sometimes nameless, understood in terms of something personal, intimate, something which refers to the power hidden inside a human being. This spirituality emphasizes the role of experiences and spiritual exercises, it recognises an inner, spiritual sense in a human body, which manifests the creative force of the Spirit; it respects nature and popularises healthy eating; it attaches great significance to interpersonal relations based on fidelity and love; to ethics expressed in respect for moral values recognized by itself; it is sensitive to art and also emphasises gender equality. This spirituality is holistic, democratic, easily accessible and not hierarchical; it is opposed to institutionalised religion, so it exists outside of the church"⁹.

From a structural point of view the emergence of the *sacred* in history is always the same – mysterious, manifesting something "completely different", whereas in terms of form it is diverse and disparate. The *sacred* reveals itself to a human being on different levels, which explains the great diversity of religious experiences – from the sacralisation of a stone to theophany. Human beings live in the world of the *sacred*, interpret it, while accepting its message, they manifest their fear and fascination in various forms¹⁰. "The »total man« is never completely desacralized, and one even doubts that this is possible. (...) In the most radically secularized societies and among the most iconoclastic contemporary youth movements (...) there are a number of apparently nonreligious phenomena in which one can decipher new and original recoveries of the sacred"¹¹.

Theologians, contrary to sociologists, call the quandaries and quests, which go beyond the church traditions a heresy, superstition or being lost. As opposed to traditionally understood religion, new spirituality emphasizes not so much the weakness and fallibility of human beings, as highlights their potential, indicates possibilities of self-development and encourages to exceed your own limitations. Also the Pontifical Council for Culture and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue noticed it in the document *Jesus Christ the Bearer of the Water of Life. A Christian Reflection on the New Age*: "Many have rejected organised religion, because in their judgement it has failed to answer their needs, and for precisely this reason they have looked elsewhere to find *spirituality*"¹².

⁹ *Megatrendy religijne w społeczeństwach ponowoczesnych. Studium socjologiczne*, ed. Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2016, pp. 302-303.

¹⁰ "Luther says: *Indeed we worship holiness with fear, but we do not run away from it, we feel drawn to it even more*": R. Otto, *Świętość. Elementy irracjonalne w ujęciu bóstwa i ich stosunek do elementów racjonalnych*, translated by B. Kupis, KiW, Warszawa 1968, p. 64.

¹¹ M. Eliade, *W poszukiwaniu historii i znaczenia religii*, translated into Polish by A. Grzybek, KR, Warszawa 1997, pp. 8-9.

¹² Papieska Rada Kultury i Papieska Rada ds. Dialogu Międzyreligijnego, *Jezus Chrystus Dawcą Wody Życia. Chrześcijańska refleksja na temat New Age*, Wydawnictwo M. Kraków 2003, p. 9.

Contemporary resacralisation trends, interpreted by sociologists of religion in the **New Age** paradigm, occur in the form of **New Spirituality and New Religious Movements**. "New Age (...) is not a religion, nonetheless something religious, it is not a philosophy, but a view of humanity and of the world, and also a key to interpreting reality; not a science, although it rests on scientific laws, even if it searches for them in the stars. New Age is a nebula consisting of esotericism and occultism, of some mystic and magical ideas on the subject of life's mysteries, and also a small portion of Christianity; and all this mixed together with ideas derived from astrophysics. (...) The searches of many people are already aimed (...) at something open, something that expands these horizons. The former world will thus reach its boundary, and traditional religions will no longer manage to change anything. Let us search for something even bigger, something wider. Let us try and find something universal. (...) We are not interested in the errors of vague dogmas, we want to go forward, under authentic signs from heaven. We are ruled not by a phantom Holy Spirit, but by mysterious cosmic waves"¹³.

New Spirituality¹⁴ is the search for meanings and answers conditioning the awareness of your own existence and the choice of guidelines for everyday struggle. Spiritual seekers climb their own ladder to heaven, they reach their summit through a trail chosen by them, their freedom of choice is not limited institutionally, which is expressed thus: *I am spiritual but not religious*¹⁵. They perceive religion as something which happens "inside" churches, synagogues, mosques or other religious buildings and they associate it with such words as organization, institution, structure, dogmas, duties and orders. However, spirituality is associated with spontaneity and conduct adhering to proclaimed principles, devotion and behaving in a consistent manner, self-development and self-improvement. Spirituality is a manifestation of personal, subjective search for the *sacred* without the mediation of religious experts, supported by the authority of the office. Those who follow the innovative paths of creative development become their own "masters".

New religious movements, by assuming various and diversified forms, tempt with their values not taken for granted yet. Creative ingenuity of prophets, gurus, promoters or founders of new religions, which gain followers, is contrary to the near end of religion and religiousness forecasted cyclically since the Enlightenment. Contemporary religious innovations are examples of the trend of "re-enchanting the world" not always in accordance with the spirit of the predominant religion.

¹³ G. Danneels, Cardinal, *New Age: nowy ład, nowa ludzkość, nowa wiara*, translated by K. Skorulski, P. Kostyło, Wydawnictwo M, Kraków 1992, pp. 3-4.

¹⁴ "New spirituality is provisionally defined here as the worldly transgression of the human condition committed in the name of different values strongly associated with the physical (bodily) dimension of life and a holistic vision of the world.": Z. Pasek, A. Dyczewska, *Człowiek i natura. Nowy projekt nowej duchowości*, "Problemy Ekorozwoju", 2012, vol. 7, p. 67.

¹⁵ R. C. Fuller, *Spiritual But Not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America*, Oxford 2001.

The essential qualities of new religious movements are: a charismatic personality of the spiritual leader; the conversion of an adult person (meaning: spiritual transformation – from lack of faith to faith; converting from one denomination to another; a breakthrough in the life of a believer – spiritual transformation within the same confession); following the master – in person or his or her teachings, resulting in the change of social standing, the redefinition of the sense of life and lifestyle; separatism and exclusivism (usually closed groups, giving their followers a sense of identity and existential security – it is not easy to join them and it is difficult to resign from being their member); doctrinal fundamentalism, the perfectionism of worship, moral rigorism and institutional dependence – obedience and submission to the superiors; illuminism and elitism (the conviction of members of the movement of their unique relation with variously defined God; regarding yourselves as the chosen ones and orthodox – true believers and regularly practicing their faith); collectivism of life (organizing and spending time together, openness about personal life, public sharing of experiences, mutual control, financial help given to the community as well as regarding it as the basic group of reference and identification); proselytism, bearing testimony (the followers' ranks grow proportionally to the missionary activity and the number of present members as well as the attractiveness of their teachings. Moreover, the resonance of propagated "truths" is dependent on the extent of their demand and consent to this type of ideological services); ostracism, rejection, tension, lack of social acceptance.

A model example of a new religious movement is the Unification Church. The movement, also called the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, was established by a Korean Sun Myung Moon (1920-2012) who referred to himself as the Lord of the Second Advent. Moonies want to revolutionise the world, bring order assuring the reign of the Kingdom of God on Earth through a uniting idea of peace, mutual respect, cultural and religious tolerance. Mixed marriages (in terms of culture, ethnicity and race), arranged between strangers serve these purposes, while they accept the choice made by Moon to such an extent that they are able to love each other and form a family. In 2000, on the 80th birthday of the Founder, 360,000 couples got married simultaneously. In 2015, two years after his death there were – still a lot, that is 3,800 married couples of new believers¹⁶.

In every religious community there is one festive day a week devoted to a prayer meeting. In the church setting believers, dressed in accordance with the circumstances, expect the miracle of revelation and the experience of spiritual ecstasy. However, only few can participate in it, the majority celebrate the community bond and obedience in fulfilling the weekly duty. Contemporary youth is not the only group which is

¹⁶ M. Libiszowska-Żółtkowska, *The Unification Church in Poland*, [in:] *New Religious Phenomena in Central and Eastern Europe*, I. Borowik, G. Babiński (eds.), Nomos, Kraków, 1997, pp. 341-348; M. Libiszowska-Żółtkowska, *Kościół Zjednoczeniowy w Polsce – jednostkowe wybory, zbiorowy ostracyzm*, „Przegląd Religioznawczy”, 2000, no. 4, p. 38-58.

not satisfied with such a formula. Reaching beyond the walls of the churches, they seek other forms of spiritual elation. The development of **new Catholic communities**, inspired at grass-roots level by secular people, is a visible sign of such a need. Believers searching for small communities of faith, close relations with people of similar sensitivity and lifestyle, while focusing on improving their own spirituality when striving for holiness, distance themselves from traditional church services in an anonymous crowd. Secular members of the movements not only deepen and develop their own religiousness and spiritual sensitivity and are active in the community, but they also re-evangelise, lead prayer groups and healing workshops, organize street happenings, spiritual events, such as: *Przystanek Jezus* (The "Station: Jesus") at Woodstock, *Lednica*, *Marsze dla Jezusa* (Marches for Jesus), *Katolicy na Ulicy* (Catholics in the Street), hip-hop rappers chant religious education rhymes: „Nie wiesz jak powstało życie?/Otwórz Biblię, pomódl się chwilę, zamiast jarać tyle”¹⁷ (You don't know how life originated?/Open the Bible, pray for a moment, instead of smoking so much), „Jestem listonoszem Boga, wiarę nosze po domach”¹⁸ (I am the postman of God, I deliver faith to your home) – this is how Tau presents himself, a rapper of spiritual music. John Paul II called the spiritual revival of secular people the springtime of the Church.

New Spirituality Movement, the scraps of which also reached Christian Churches, originated on the rising tide of the hippie opposition to the dualistic European philosophy, technological civilization as well as institutionalized religion. Ideas called New Spirituality are present in the contemporary, postmodern culture (in music, art, literature, film), in peace, ecology and women movements, also in those protecting animal rights, ethnic and sexual minorities as well as in new religious movements. The movement of the "flower children", which opposed the Vietnam War, created the general rule of freedom from violence (*make love, not war*). Making people sensitive to the idea of subjectivity and autonomy gave rise to aid movements driven by the message of worldwide solidarity.

New Spirituality followers are characterised by the interest in altered states of consciousness; occultism and spiritism (channelling, mediumship); out-of-body experience (extra body experience); yoga, zen, sufism; fortune-telling (astrology, the Tarot, palmistry, numerology); dowsing (rod, pendulum); crystallo-mancy (crystals, amulets); meditation; ecstatic states (psychedelic substances, e.g. ayahuasca); the philosophy and practice of reincarnation and karma as well as alternative medicine. Those who doubt the wheel of birth are advised to refresh their memory of previous incarnations in a state of hypnosis. There are also special techniques cleansing bad karma acquired in past lives.

¹⁷ <https://www.musixmatch.com/lyrics/TAU/Remedium>

¹⁸ <http://teksciory.interia.pl/tau-list-motywacyjny-feat-paluch-tekst-piosenki,t,648890.html>

Demand created supply or maybe vice versa, in any case the seekers of spiritual sensations can use the help of various centres for spiritual healing. Energy therapists, healers, diviners, dowsers offer their services. Alternative medicine uses the faith in the power of cosmic energy and auto-suggestion. The popularity and demand for these types of services as well as for objects which have magical properties (crystals, stones, amulets, relics) and alternative medicine fairs are gaining more and more customers.

Paul Heelas calls it a “spiritual revolution”¹⁹. Religion, which requires obedience to the Church tradition and mediates between a human being and God through orders, is no longer enough for people and it simply does not suit them. Spirituality from outside Churches is an experience of the *sacred* understood as something personal, intimate, inner and existential. Such spirituality indicates a certain sacralisation of the “personal self” and resembles human beings that they truly live when they have no stress or tension connected with toils of life. Life itself is God and not God of a religion which exceeds this life. Such spirituality is sometimes described as the “spirituality of life”. Consumers of spirituality of life do not count on “life after life”, but they want to experience life “here and now”, they wish to be happy every day, not in the eschatological dimension. **They perform a peculiar sacralisation of earthly life.**

New spirituality paved the way for innovations not only in the religious life, but also in the sphere of business activity (from “the invisible, predatory hand of the market” to company ethics, banking ethics, business coaches or development coaching), in the sphere of health (the holistic definition of health according to WHO: “health is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, but a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being”) as well as in the sphere of integral ecology (Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato si’, mi’ Signore*: “Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs”)²⁰.

Seekers of stimulants triggering spiritual (mystical) ecstasy claim that it can be experienced during a techno party, where electronic music is connected with multimedia show and group dance with the use of chemical psycho-stimulants, new generations of LSD discovered by the hippies.

Extreme sports generate emotions, similarly to religion. Accounts of experiences of people going in for this type of sports or one-time daredevils are similar to the descriptions of a mystical experience. Expressions describing “depth”, “silence”, “unimaginable peacefulness”, “unity with the universe”, “experience of unlimited space and great freedom”, “a feeling of sense” and “the great value of the experience” appear in their accounts.

¹⁹ P. Heelas, L. Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2004.

²⁰ http://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_pl.pdf.

Also music can provide spiritual fascination and ecstatic trance in “another” dimension – depending on personal preferences and consumer taste – classical, relaxing, liturgical or the silence of a forest, open air landscapes far from the hustle and bustle and human interference in the majesty of nature.

While seeking for operant conditioning of attiring new robes by the *sacred* (let us hope they are not *the emperor’s robes*) and resacralisation of new spaces, it poses no difficulty to indicate another, after the hippie revolt, “culprits” or “benefactors”. They are: **globalisation** responsible for **pluralism** of offers of outlooks on life, **the crisis of trust towards traditional Churches** and **the world of risk and change**, also **the postmodern pop culture** as well as its **media** and **Internet transmitters**. Religious culture diffusion and circulation of ideas might result in their resemblance and fusion, or conflict of the native traditions with new trends not only on the institutional plane, but first of all on the level of individual self-awareness.

Globalisation brings about pluralisation of both the outside world towards human beings, but also the inner world, that is their consciousness and knowledge. **Pluralisation** of religious life, examined from many sides, is both the effect of globalisation, as well as the cause of occurring transformations. Pluralism and multiculturalism of the global world favour the confrontation and relativisation of axionormative systems, thereby undermining trust in conventional and traditional authorities.

In postmodern pop culture the world of fairytales merges with the real world, the line between fact and fiction is being blurred. One spectrum of media communication is created, in which the imaginative authors blend the plots of traditional myths and religions with fantasy, forming new worlds full of magic and spiritual message. The more fanciful they are and at the same time more plausible, the better acclaim they get from the public thirsty for this type of stimulus. Worldwide popularity of Dan Brown’s novel and the film “The Da Vinci Code” might serve as an example. The fact that in Christian countries the Church was afraid that the contents of the novel and the film will undermine the foundation of faith, proves that clergymen do not have a high opinion of their believers and are afraid of losing with pop culture.

Pop culture holds nothing sacred, it breaks all taboos. We can even venture an opinion that the more of “desecration of what is held sacred”, the higher audience ratings or the better place at a best sellers list.

By broadcasting religious ceremonies, **television** on the one hand deprives them of their sacred nature, making performances out of them, treated as customary curiosities, but on the other hand it contributes to the popularisation of often distant forms of religiousness, it suggests directions of the quest in order to revive abandoned worships (e.g. Slavic) or indicates the origins of contemporary borrowings (shamanism).

The availability of various religious and spiritual traditions as well as overcoming their semantic differences, with the help of a web browser, is extremely easy and useful, not only when writing texts by the method of “copy – paste”, but also when

assembling parts of a religious patchwork. When you get bored with it or if it fails to live up to your expectations, it can be re-sewn anew. **The Internet** suggests and tempts with entering new paths of spiritual development or it turns our attention to the religious activity of the Church, which is a part of the family tradition. It has a lot to offer to seekers of the knowledge of religious studies and/or spiritual experiences.

Films, computer games and board games on the subject of *science fiction*, *fantasy* or *thriller* blur the line between the conventionality of fiction and reality. A peculiar distortion occurs, erasing the boundaries between what is real and what is illusory. The message conveyed by the media or simultaneously created by players writes a new story, gives meanings and sense, takes the viewer/player "through the looking glass", which is available only to the chosen ones. With reference to the *sacred* it means that the difference between "true" religion mediated from the family tradition and its simulation borrowed from popular culture texts disintegrates. This simulation, due to computer generated images and hybridisation of language becomes equally true. What is more, the traditional understanding of the difference between the *sacred* and *the profane* is becoming blurred. **The postmodern sacred embedded in pop culture becomes** – according to Jean Baudrillard's theory²¹ – **a simulacrum**. Postmodernity is the world of simulacra – images not referring to anything but their own self. In place of a symbol – the former representation of God – comes an icon, that is a sign representing itself. The *sacred* is neither real, nor fake, it is a textual simulation of religious traditions in the new narrative. Popular culture, which provides inspiration for its consumers and believers, becomes to them, as Emily McAvan²² defined it, a **hyper-reality**, that is the reality which is more real than reality itself. "The *sacred* offered in the hyper-real, superficial code of modernity, in which the illusion of a vivid composition is more fascinating than the real content, becomes a means of conveying the spiritual world. Pop culture reduces the essence of the *sacred* to aesthetic compositions based on intertextuality and superficial symbolic and semantic associations"²³.

The most popular example of a religious hyper-reality is **Jedism**²⁴, that is one of the new religious movements referring to the Jedi character from the film *Star Wars*, directed by George Lucas. **The faith in the Force**, experiences with the Force are not

²¹ J. Baudrillard, *Symulakry i symulacja*, Wydawnictwo Sic!, Warszawa 2009

²² E. McAvan, *The Postmodern Sacred*, "Journal of Religion and Popular Culture", 2010, vol. 22 (1).
E. McAvan, *The Postmodern Sacred: Popular Culture Spirituality in the Science Fiction, Fantasy and Urban Fantasy Genres*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2012

²³ E. Stachowska, *Nowa ewangelizacja a wyzwania współczesności*, in: Stachowska E. (ed.), *Kościoty i wspólnoty chrześcijańskie w przestrzeni społecznej w Polsce i na świecie. Dziedzictwo tradycji a współczesne wyzwania*, PTS, Warszawa 2012, pp. 51-52.

²⁴ There is no emotion – there is peace. There is no ignorance – there is knowledge. There is no passion – there is serenity. There is no chaos – there is harmony. There is no death – there is the Force. In Poland, according to the 2011 census, 1344 people declared affiliation to this denomination. <http://elmoryah.blogspot.com/2017/01/rycerze-i-mistrzowie-jedi-szambala.html>

a new religious phenomenon. It appears to be rather a revival, a renaissance of ancient beliefs and spiritual philosophy in a new form. Magical novels, such as *Harry Potter* perfectly adapt to the social needs of the 21st century generation for a religion which serves the goodness of a human being as an entity, as well as the goodness of humankind on the eve of the Cosmic Era. Another form of pop culture borrowing is Matrixism, connected with the film trilogy of *The Matrix*, directed by the Wachowski siblings, which was inspired by the simulacrum theory of Baudrillard as well as Scientology, established by a *science fiction* writer L. Ron Hubbard.

Some books and films from the pop culture world of fantasy, *per analogia*, assume the role of holy books by revealing (showing) the initiated hidden spiritual meanings due to their metaphorical reading. **The postmodern sacred in pop culture exists as a supplement of religion** (defined substantially and colloquially). The difficulties of the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster (Pastafarianism) to be registered as a religious community in Poland²⁵, publicised by the media, have been a major surprise lately. The curious might ask a question why exactly the tangled pasta arranged in the shape of a head with meatball eyes (or broccoli in the vegetarian version) has become an allegory of God? The answer: "why not?" is also right. However, a more accurate explanation is suggested in the novel entitled *Jacob's Books (Księgi Jakubowe)*: "Beresz Baal Szem Tov explained to his disciples: And when you look at something intensely, when you see something often, the image of this thing imprints in the eyes and the mind, bites into them as lye. As the human mind needs holiness, it searches for it everywhere, like the shoot of a plant, which grows in a cave and climbs to every, even the tiniest light"²⁶.

Pop culture religious movements attract young people with their street happening formula, the antithesis of a demanding God as well as the strict Church. What is more, they carry the conviction that you can question authorities and believe in what you want and how you want it. The civilisation of the Net generation and fluid postmodern culture, more often than in years past, confronts the logic of religious dogmas with the findings of science and it is less and less inclined to take untestable dogmas "on faith" and "by the power of the Church authority". Nowadays the number of Pastafarians, the followers of Matrixism, Jedism and unicorns amounts to several hundred thousand people in the world banded together *via* the Internet. The message appeals to people of similar intellectual sensitivity, searching for the niche of outlook on life and bickering with the institutional Church. The entertaining form of message referring to a kitchen prop (a colander) and savoury Italian pasta, a long-eared little monster, a four-legged unicorn will amuse ones, while disgust others with its idiocy and parody. **Religion has been treated as a fairy tale**, in which

²⁵ Cf. M. Libiszowska-Żótkowska, *Homo religiosus. Teoria wyjaśniająca kazus pastafarian*, in: *Tradycja i innowacja w polu refleksji socjologii religii*, S.H. Zaręba, I. Borowik (ed.), Kontrast, Warszawa 2016, pp. 247-260.

²⁶ O. Tokarczuk, *Księgi Jakubowe albo Wielka Podróż przez siedem granic, pięć języków i trzy duże religie nie licząc tych małych*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 2014, p. 812.

you can freely replace heroes and change scenarios. Most importantly, the need to seek transcendence of somebody/something beyond/above a human being has not been squandered. On the contrary, it is shown in yet sharper, stroboscopic light, shimmering with all the colours of the rainbow.

In real life the *sacred* might be encountered where you least expect it and with the message literally fitting into the motto of the 16th Polish Sociological Convention (14-17 IX 2016, Gdańsk) *Solidarity in times of distrust* (*Solidarność w czasach nieufności*). The believers of the **Street Church** share the Good News about Jesus publically, they preach the Gospel first of all to the socially excluded, marginalised people. They are not indifferent to the spiritual and material condition of the homeless and addicted. They appeal to their hearts to come to their senses, make an effort to free themselves from addiction. They provide warm meals to the hungry and chilled, since they see in them lost souls, who deserve unconditional help. What happens in the symbolic space between the “religiously revived”, that is those who experienced spiritual illumination in recent past and liberated themselves from addiction, and those who are yet to tread this path, has a dimension of Christian and humanitarian solidarity. The help provided to your neighbour in spiritual and financial need.

Old and new developments of religion and spirituality, difficult to count and call by name, prove that human nature is constant in striving for the recognition and fulfilling its spiritual sensitivity. Finally, it would be appropriate to yield the floor to a spiritual person, Pope Benedict XVI, who – in the name of human weaknesses and limitations – had the courage to resign from earthly honours: “Man is religious by nature, he is *homo religiosus*, just as he is *homo sapiens* and *homo faber*. (...) The “digital” man, like the cave man, seeks in the religious experience ways to overcome his finiteness and to guarantee his precarious adventure on earth. (...) Man bears within him a thirst for the infinite, a longing for eternity, a quest for beauty, a desire for love, a need for light and for truth (...)”²⁷.

Contemporary Poles cultivate religious and spiritual life within various denominational and worldview associations, in “mutual admiration societies” and alone. Apart from Catholics, the believers of other Churches and Christian communities meet together during church services, Buddhists meditate, Hindu groups do mantra practice, Muslims recite the Surahs of the Qur’an, Jews light the Sabbath candles, the full moon creates the rhythm for the spiritual raptures of esoteric communities, Shaman drums send into a trance, rockmen trigger ecstatic enthusiasm of their fans at their concert tours, Pastafarians meet at a bowl of pasta, preachers of the Street Church give away meals to the homeless and bring spiritual solace to them, the listeners of Radio Maryja unite in common prayers, people fascinated by the majesty of

²⁷ Benedict XVI, 11 V 2011, (<https://ekai.pl/biblioteka/dokumenty/x1155/katecheza-benedykta-xvi-podczas-audiencji-ogolnej-maja-roku/>) (access 27 XII 2016). As befits a scientist, the Pope referred to Eliade’s concept.

nature find peace and inner comfort... "It looks as if God created men in all their diversity to prove to Himself how many forms are assumed by the human definition of His creation. As if flesh and blood people were baskets for different ideas, outlooks and views. When you looked at them from a human perspective – the differences were enormous, but when you looked in the way God observed them from His distance – there were few differences"²⁸.

A human being as a complex, multidimensional and polyphonic entity is open to continual transformation, constant discovery and formulation of the religious and spiritual sphere, which confirms and explains the Old Testament wisdom quoted in the motto.

Maria Libiszowska-Żółtkowska – RESACRALISATION IN POSTMODERN CULTURE. NEW DEVELOPMENTS OF RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

Contemporary resacralisation trends, interpreted by sociologists of religion in the New Age paradigm, appear in the form of New Spirituality and New Religious Movements. New Spirituality is the search of meanings and answers conditioning the awareness of your own existence and the choice of guidelines for everyday struggle. New religious movements lure with their not yet all-too-familiar values by assuming various and diverse forms. The imagination of prophets, gurus, promoters or founders of new religions gaining followers is in contradiction to the near end of religion and religiousness, which has been forecast cyclically since the Enlightenment. New spirituality has paved the way for innovations not only in religious life, but also in business activity, health, integral ecology. Old and new developments of religion and spirituality can be hardly counted and called by name, which proves the constancy of human nature in aspiring to recognize and satisfy spiritual sensitivity.

²⁸ O. Tokarczuk, *Podróż ludzi Księgi*, Wydawnictwo W.A.B., Warszawa 1996, pp. 20-21