RELIGIOUS ASPECT OF HUMAN SOCIAL ACTIVITY IS THIS ALREADY PAST?

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Abstract

The paper aims to present the place of religion and religiosity in human social engagement. The analysis carried out shows the decreasing importance of the phenomena under the study as factors explaining the social involvement of the modern man. Religiosity is a phenomenon that is impossible to study within the framework of a single scientific discipline, hence an interdisciplinary perspective has been adopted in the analysis of the problem. The importance of religion and religiosity in undertaking social activity has been analysed within the framework of three scientific fields: Philosophy, Ethics and Psychology. Philosophical analyses point to the socially normative significance of religion arising from the ontic condition of a man. Ethical analyses emphasize the role of religion in creating and justifying ethical norms of human social activity and contemporary problems in this area. The psychological approach, on the other hand, provides empirical data on the role of the subjective experience of the phenomenon of religiosity in the type of activity studied. The analyses conducted: (1) provide arguments for the importance of the religious context in engaging in the social world, (2) reveal the various kinds of difficulties and constraints contributing to the stated reduction in the importance of religiosity, (3) indicate the conditions for strengthening the role of religion and religiosity in undertaking social activity of a modern man.

Keywords: religiosity, interdisciplinarity, psychology, philosophy, ethics

1. Introduction

A man as an entity living in a very complex and diverse world needs appropriate, effective criteria to properly understand the situation in which he finds themselves and to take appropriate actions [1]. This set of criteria is a system of social norms and beliefs about the world, and about oneself that justify them [1, p. 123-125]. Living in an axiological space, a man also confronts the basic questions about the existence of the world and their own existence [2-5]. The reasons for such a confrontation are indicated by philosophers, ethics and psychologists in the ontic and personality endowment of a man [5-11]. In the

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answers given by a man, a natural reference to the Creator, Transcendent, God is visible. The universality of pointing to a higher being in giving meaning to reality is the basis for defining a man as a religious being, even religious in nature - homo religious [12], although he can implement his religiosity in various ways [13]. Adopting a religious perspective also helps to find justifications and motivation to take actions in the individual (moral) and social dimensions [14-17]. On the other hand, including it in the scientific description and explanation of human functioning allows a more complete characterization of human social activity [15, p. 246; 18-20]. However, nowadays there are more and more studies pointing to the diminishing role of religion and religiosity in explaining social commitment [14, 21, 22].

The paper aims to answer the following questions: is religiosity still an important factor that explains human social activity and where can the sources of the perceived changes be found?

This is achieved by adopting an interdisciplinary research perspective. Religiousness reveals itself in various areas of reality and is, therefore, studied in various fields of Science. The philosophical approach is used in the description and explanation of the phenomenon of religion and its significance for human existence; Philosophy works out a justification for the socially normative meaning of religion by referring to the ontic human condition. The ethical approach is used to describe the importance of religion in creating and justifying social and religious norms of human social activity, expressed in building positive social relations. The psychological approach, on the other hand, provides empirical data and their interpretations that define the role of religiosity in the social activity of contemporary people, adopting the context of the subjective experience of the phenomenon of religiosity. Each field uses a different research perspective, but in describing and explaining the phenomenon of religiosity, they can complement each other.

Two specific objectives have been adopted for the analyses. The first is to point out the importance of religion and religiosity as a factor that makes it possible to explain human social functioning. The second is to show the difficulties and limitations that relate to the place of religion and religiosity in undertaking and interpreting the social activity of contemporary man. Both goals will be realized in each of the adopted areas: Philosophy, Ethics and Psychology.

The rationale behind the research undertaken is the ongoing dynamic changes related to the phenomena of the present day. First, they include globalization, secularism and secularization [23, 24]. These phenomena imply a new philosophy of religion [25]. Another contemporary phenomenon is the departure from the absolutist understanding of ethics, which in human social activity entails the questioning of the role and meaning of ethical and religious norms of absolute importance, and finally the phenomenon of changes taking place in the actual experience of religion and religiosity in the social activity of contemporary man [14; 15, p. 246-272; 21; 26]. Despite the limitations that have a negative impact on the relationships presented in the paper, the research on

religiosity is still a rich source of data indicating the importance of this phenomenon in undertaking human social activity.

2. Philosophical-normative aspect of religion/religiosity

Religion came with the man. Their activity over the centuries in various cultures produced different forms of religious life and manifold normative results for both individual and social life. In turn, religiosity, as an embodied form of religion, resulted in the emergence of a religious culture, which from a sociological point of view can be defined as a system of meanings concerning a certain area narrowed down to specific phenomena resulting from religion. "Religious culture is a model answering the question of how to profess a given religion", as said Sroczyńska [27, p. 254]. In this sense, religiosity leads to the formation of specific rules for practicing religion in religious culture.

Basically, the concept of religiosity has to do with the Enlightenment tradition. "Anyone who speaks of religiosity instead of God thinks in the spirit of the Enlightenment tradition" [28]. Ernest Müller claims similarly, linking the term 'Religiosität' with the German Enlightenment [29]. The Enlightenment's reluctance to religion manifested itself in the slow replacement of religion with the concept of religiosity, and consequently found religion itself on the basis of feeling, leading to its individualization and subjectivization characteristic of the phenomenon of secularization. As a result, religion becomes a subjective religiosity in which its normative-universalist character disappears. This state of individualization of religion is aptly characterized by British sociologist Steven Lukes, who maintains that the believer in this state no longer needs intermediaries, has the right to build a relationship with his God on his own and in his own way [30].

2.1. Is religiosity normative?

Religiousness founded on individualism does not provide a normative project of life. In it, religion becomes de-institutionalized and, consequently, loses its normative character. Stephen J. Hunt, describing the evolution of religion towards religiosity, claims that the meaning of religion is increasingly reduced to the usefulness of the individual, in the dimension of temporal life, consisting in the individual's search for temporal self-gratification [31]. Secularism, which locks man in the dimensions of earthly life, deprives religion of a normative meaning. Religion becomes only an instrument harnessed to meet the needs [32], especially the mental needs of an individual, it is only a cultural form, thus losing its normative and transcendental dimension, which is confirmed by the names used to define it. It is called "a secular religion, a temporal religion, or an implicit religion" [25].

Unfortunately, religiosity as a new religion has little connection with a philosophically understood religion. The latter is understood as a human relationship to some supreme essence or highest value, realized and expressed in human behaviour [33]. Religiosity - 'the new religion' - pushes away the

understanding of religion as a relationship linking a human being - the subject of a religious relationship with the object of this relationship: God, deity, sacred. The contemporary departure from the philosophical concept of religion as a relation results either from the neglect of the influence of the religious object on human life, or even from the negation of its existence [34, 35]. The process of changes taking place within the understanding of religion, taking an attitude towards religion and adopting an attitude in religion, aptly illustrates the diachronic model of the genesis of new spirituality referring to the change in the focus of 'religious matter', moving from a solid through a liquid form to a gaseous, ethereal state [36]. Religiousness would be the final phase of these transformations of 'religious matter', and only then does it become a religion of modernity [37].

Unfortunately, flat, immanent and sentimental religiosity does not provide an objective criterion to assess human behaviour and attitudes and the culture they create. According to the aforementioned diachronic model of the genesis of new spirituality, it only causes a change in the state of human aggregation, leading them to some indeterminacy. Religion pushed back to religiosity does not make the religious subject capable of specific activities inspired by religion in accordance with the classic principle that nothing results from lack of determination ('ab indeterminato nil sequitur') [38]. In what form does religion have a normative character and can be treated as a criterion for an axiological assessment?

2.2. *The normativity of religion understood as a relation*

Despite the increase in religious knowledge, there are still many discrepancies in the issues for basic religions. The differences concern what religion is, what its ultimate sources and foundations are, and what functions religion performs in human life. Historically and nowadays, there are two trends interpreting the fact of religion: a posteriori-realistic (metaphysical) and a priori-subjectivist [39]. In a posteriori-realist interpretation, proper to classical Philosophy, the search is for ultimate ontic reasons, the rejection of which is cancelled out by the very fact of religion. In this paper, this interpretation is considered to be the leading one. Religion is understood in it as an ontic and personal relationship of a human being to a religious object. It is precisely in this sense that religion understood as a personal bond of man with a personal God - the source, model and goal of human life is the source of normativity [J. Donahue, *Does Ethics Require Religion*, 2006, https://greatergood.berkeley. edu/article/item/does_ethics_require_religion, accessed on 2.09.2022]. Religion understood as a relationship always includes Ethics that define a set of norms of morally good conduct. Religion indicates the deepest motives for such behaviour, shows the sanctions of morally wrong behaviour and provides the means to achieve the goal of life [40].

A man is dependent in existence on a religious object, if they learn and experience this dependence, then they begin to see in it the sense of their own existence [13]. The religious object appears to the human individual as the ultimate goal of moral action. Religion, as a real relationship between a man and a really existing personal object of religion, is a way of man's existence inscribed in his potentialized nature, which prompts the personal subject to implement it through appropriate real actions [33]. However, the very directing of man to a religious object is not yet a religion, but it becomes a religion only when the human individual undertakes actions corresponding to him and through these actions fulfils the existential and potentialized reference of himself to the religious object. Religion, therefore, as a properly understood relationship between a human being and a religious object, is marked by moral obligations and as such becomes a criterion for the axiological assessment of human activity and the culture created by man [40].

The source of the normativity of religion understood as a relation is the nature of a man and the very object of religion. For the full realization of themselves, the religious subject sees the very dynamism of this relationship as necessary. It manifests itself first in the action of the religious object that initiates the dynamism of this relationship, and in the responsory of man's religious acts [33, p. 33]. A religious object is not only an ontic reason towards man, but also a person reaching out to him, imposing specific obligations on him. On the other hand, the religious subject recognizes them and if they believe it acts, then it actualizes itself in the personal dimension. The detailed content of these obligations imposed on the religious subject depends already on the nature of the religious object, the learning of which takes place on the basis of Theology. Philosophy, on the other hand, is mainly to investigate the subjective reasons for normativity in religion [41].

2.3. 'Homo religious' as the subjective source of normativity

The man has a natural tendency to be religious. These inclinations are referred to by religious scholars as 'homo religious' [42]. This concept is derived from Cicero, who combined with it some features of the human attitude. In Christianity, however, such an attitude is closely related to religious experience [43]. In the twentieth century the idea of 'homo religious' returned thanks to Mirce Eliade, who, on the basis of phenomenology, studied two existential situations of a man, the 'sacrum' versus the 'profane' [44]. 'Sacrum' is the existential situation of a man relating to what is constant, non-accidental, essential, and what creates the sphere of holiness belonging to the spiritual order. 'Profane', in turn, concerns the existential relationship of a man to what is material, earthly, changeable, ordinary and every day. It is in this first existential situation that man appears as 'homo religious', while in the situation of the 'profane' he becomes known as 'homo historicus'. A religious man - 'homo religious' recognizes the basic goal, which is the striving to be holy, and it is this goal that determines his or her way of being - in - the world, in contrast to the

existential situation of a secular man - 'homo historicus', who does not recognize such a permanent goal and does not meet it strives [44, p. 9-10].

'Homo historicus' has a constant point of support in the 'sacrum' sphere. Eliade calls this constant point of reference as the 'centre'. It is there that man comes into contact with the transcendent. They can be archaically imagined places, activities, or materialize by certain things. An example of such special things in which transcendence has materialized and thus provides a man with constant contact with transcendence is the pearl [45]. Otherwise, 'homo historicus', for which the sphere of the profane does not secure such a point of support, and moral obligations and judgments are relative in it. 'Homo religious' without this 'centre' can start and do nothing. The 'centre' is a source of normativity for him [43]. It enables him to find himself in the homogeneous and chaotic world of a lay person ('homo historicus'), who in the profane sphere only relies on his relativity, homogeneity and defragmentation [44, p. 20-21]. Otherwise, 'homo religious' living its existence in relation to the sacred, which not only has an orientation in it, but also reads the obligation to orient its actions morally towards the centre, and by referring to it, it makes moral choices and judgments. As can be seen, Eliade understands religion as a relationship marked by moral obligations, the ontological reason of which lies in the centre-oriented religious nature of a man.

In the sphere of the 'sacrum', the object of religion is revealed. Despite the irremovable dichotomy between these two spheres, the sacred, it displays its presence in the 'profane', enters the sphere of the 'profane' and can transform seemingly secular things into 'sacrum' things, which in the 'profane' sphere are still what they were before [46]. As in relation to 'homo historicus' they do not change the hitherto meaning and purposefulness, so 'homo religious' harnesses them in their own pursuit of life in the sacred universe. According to Mircea Eliade, the 'sacrum' has both an objective and a subjective dimension. Its objective dimension is recognized in 'hierophanies' - physical manifestations, and the subjective dimension in the human psyche as the primary element of its structure [47]. 'Hierophanies' can take many forms such as sacred objects, symbols, sacred places, divine beings. They are not limited to one area of human activity, but occur in every area of human life [48]. They are an expression of the historical manifestation of the sacred. Each of them has its own structure that distinguishes one 'hierophany' from another, and each expresses its own shape the obligation of a person to have a religious attitude towards sacredness [48, p. 35]. 'Homo religious' is, therefore, a kind of being - in - the sacred world with a normative and evaluative meaning. It is the basis for the disclosure of the religious subject in the social world through the created relationships with and with others. In turn, the social activity of a religious object is the subject of research from an ethical perspective. Norms of sociological significance are ethically justified, and the nature of norms that the subject of religion uses in social activity and axiological assessments is investigated.

3. Ethics vs. religion

The axionormative level of social relations concerns many aspects, both legal, social, religious and ethical. The authors would like to pay special attention to the connection between the concepts of ethics and religion. However, the subject of the correlation of religion with Ethics is not only multifaceted, but also very extensive. At this point, one can ask numerous questions that will outline further paths of reflection on the dependencies or the lack of them between the indicated issues. Before this happens, however, it is worth organizing the terms that are sometimes - unjustifiably - used interchangeably. This applies to the definition of ethics and morality as well as ethical and moral values.

3.1. Ethics vs. morality

The various meanings of these terms were indicated, among others, by Karol Wojtyła, explaining at the same time that Ethics "defines […] what is good and what is bad […] is a normative science (norms = judgments about what is good and what is bad). Moral facts speak of people, but not of principles directly. Morality itself is life, and therefore its creator is a man." [49] As you can see, 'morality' means a moral life, both individually and socially. Morality, on the other hand, refers to moral principles that are actually applied by individuals and societies at a specific stage of historical development. The science that deals with morality describes what moral norms have been and are practiced in a given society or in a specific historical epoch, but it does not decide what is right and what is wrong. It is nothing more than a descriptive science, a study of morality [50]. Ethics is a scientific discipline that deals with what is good and what is bad. It is, therefore, a theoretical approach to morality. "Ethics ... is independent of anyone's opinion or views on moral norms and values. It does not follow from facts and cannot be reduced (?) To facts. [...] It is a certain theoretical and, in a sense, ideal. It consists of norms and values; that is, as if thoughts having an authoritative, categorical, ruthless and irrevocable character." [3, p. 9] Thus, Ethics is a normative science that has a set of statements and judgments, and these are aimed at directing human actions. So we have descriptive science and normative science, the science of morals and norms, morality and ethics, actual human acts, and the doctrine of the norms and principles of those acts. Ethics in relation to morality remains like theory to practice [50, 51].

In view of the above distinction, it is worth considering how ethical and moral values relate to each other. In the rich literature on the subject, as Kudelska writes [52], it has not been possible to finally resolve and separate the semantic and thus functional scopes that these two concepts entail. It is generally recognized that the term 'morality' refers to particular moral views, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes resulting from them. Thus, the study of morality is not, by definition, a systemic approach, as the proclaimers of these views can be both great authorities and individual people in a given, unique situation. Of course, it

may happen that the views/actions of one person who is recognized as an authority will become a model and norm of behaviour for others. The latter situation will apply to what is usually referred to as 'ethics' [53].

3.2. *Morality vs. religiosity*

Norms and ethical principles functioning in social life shape interpersonal relations, they are like "grease that alleviates friction in the social machine" [54]. However, is the existence of rules and norms in a community in any way correlated with the religiosity of citizens? Does religion have the power to influence human behaviour? Can you be moral without religion? Does being religious provide any other motive for non-believers to follow ethical standards? Are there ethical judgments that flow from religious claims but are not ethical in nature? Does religion have something for morality? Does morality need God? There are definitely more questions than answers here. In Dostoevsky's 'The Karamazov Brothers', a devilish voice tells Ivan that without God, "all things are permitted" [53]. Morality has been linked to religion historically, empirically and systematically, but it seems that today it is losing its ontological basis in religion.

Research conducted both in Poland and in the world shows a certain trend that we can define as the fulfilling vision of Francis Fukuyama, according to which the deepening individualism and the desire to constantly increase the scope of individual autonomy lead to questioning all forms of authority, principles and imperatives [55].

Numerous studies conducted in Poland on the correlation of religiosity and morality, among others, by Boguszewski [56-64], indicate a significant trend. The percentage of the surveyed believers claiming that they do not feel the need to justify morality by religion, deciding to choose through their own conscience has clearly increased. They are also not interested in the relationship between religion and morality. At the same time, the number of people convinced that only religion can justify correct moral principles has decreased significantly. Perhaps we are dealing with something like the sacralization of subjectivism. It is 'my me' that becomes the authority in all moral choices. According to Mariański, "modern man wants to sovereignly decide about good and evil, that is, about moral values. [...] he is not able to precisely distinguish between what is good and what is bad, what is better and what is worse. [...] does not make moral decisions on the basis of unambiguous criteria of good and evil, sanctified by the authority of the religious tradition, but is guided by axiological options, based rather on individualized criteria." [65] The trends noticeable in Poland are also no stranger to research in the world. These results show that external factors in the education system may have a greater influence on shaping choices than Ethics and religious courses [66]. The lack of correlation between religion and Ethics was also noted [67]. Interesting data also appear in the text 'Religiosity and Consumer Ethics', where two dimensions of religiosity were studied: internal and external religiosity. The conclusions from

the research indicate that internal religiosity was an important determinant of consumers' ethical beliefs, but external religiosity was not related to them [68].

Perhaps the broadly understood development and progress indicate a certain separation of conscious ethical norms from religion, especially symbolized by the institution. Research shows that religious countries are less developed economically [69]. The dynamic acceleration of social changes, with the simultaneous apathy and inertia of the Polish Church towards them, means that more and more supporters are looking for answers to elementary questions not only in opposition to the current faith, but also beyond it. However, instead of proclaiming the decline of religion and religiosity, it seems worth paying attention to the changes in the forms of religious life. Research into new religious movements, begun by classics of secularization theories such as Bryan Wilson [70], does not come to any clear conclusions. Some of the researchers note the confirmation of the processes of secularization in the studied phenomena and - consequently consider this trend of research an integral part of the theory of secularization, while others see them as evidence of the changeability and vitality of religion, interpreting new religious movements as a response to the challenges of modernity [71, 72]. This is mainly because the concept of secularization has different meanings. We can view secularization as the decline or disappearance of religion, resulting in a non-religious society. However, it can also be defined as adaptation to the world or the infiltration of religious content into secular life. It is also sometimes confused with the desacralisation of the world, i.e. disenchantment or separation of society from religion [J. Mariański, *Słownik KNS*, http://www.kns.gower.pl/slownik/sekular yzacja.htm, accessed on 18.02.2018]. Moreover, some authors referring to the classic works of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer see secularization as an opportunity for religion, especially in the broad sense of the term [S. Obirek, *Sekularyzacja może być szansą. I dla Kościoła, i dla niewierzących*, https://oko. press/sekularyzacja-moze-byc-szansa-i-dla-kosciola-i-dla-niewierzacych-obirek/ accessed on 10.07.2022].

4. Psychological aspect of religiosity in the social world

Psychology as an empirical science provides many research results that show the importance of religiosity in human life. An often studied area is the place of religiosity in the social functioning of the individual and its importance in intergroup and intragroup psychological processes [14, 22, 26, 73]. However, there are also numerous limitations in empirical learning about the phenomenon of religiosity, which make it difficult to clearly define its meaning [14, 17, 21, 73].

Religiousness is revealed in the manner and degree of human involvement in social reality in the area of prosociality, morality and politics [16, 26, 73, 74, 75]. The dependencies concern both cognitive categories describing the social world and specific actions.

4.1. General relationships between religiosity and social functioning

Most generally, it can be indicated that religiosity fosters shaping the social identity of an individual, and is also a factor in building a community and social responsibility [11, 14, 18, 19, 73, 75]. It increases the level of involvement in building social bonds based on trust, empathy, altruism, charity [15, p. 265; 76; 77]. It is associated with an easier departure from self-centred thinking and strengthens the possibility of focusing on the good of the group [15, p. 189; 78].

Much research concerns the relationship between religiosity and prosociality. Religious people indicate a higher degree of prosociality in self-report studies, but similar relationships are also found in many quasi-experimental studies [17, 75, 76]. Also, a global survey conducted by Gallup World Poll provided results indicating that a greater proportion of charitable donations was characterized by people with high religiosity, even though the average income of less religious people was about 75% higher than those of more religious people [17]. On the other hand, there are also studies showing that prosociality is not such an obvious effect of religiosity [14, 21, 26].

Research indicates that the relationship between religiosity and social beliefs is based on the fact that different religions attach great importance to traditional values regarding family, power, authority, life, and gender [15, p. 155; 74; 75]. As a result, most religions have difficulty understanding how liberal environments deal with sensitive issues such as sex, marriage and abortion [15, p. 309; 17; 75]. Religiousness is also associated with moral reasoning and making moral decisions, as indicated, for example, by Haidt [15, p. 266] and Walker [79]. This relationship is also visible in research on religiosity as a factor of social control that can trigger social activity. Activating the context of God or religiosity in people causes more moral behaviour and in line with social expectations [16, 17, 22, 80]. However, this context can also be used to initiate actions against individuals or communities functioning differently [73], as well as terrorist actions [14].

Religiousness is an important predictor of political beliefs and electoral behaviour in most Western democracies [74; 78, p. 369]. Religious people from different countries describe themselves as more right-wing than non-religious people [81]. They are characterized by greater conservatism [15, p. 271; 73], right-wing authoritarianism [73], greater collectivism and less individualism [82] and anthropocentrism [83], as well as community [84]. As a result, religion plays a significant role in the ideological justification of the existing social order [73]. Many studies have confirmed that religious people are also more likely to vote for conservative or right-wing parties [85]. A specific set of social beliefs related to religiosity is also associated with activities in the public sphere, with greater civic involvement of religious people [15, p. 266: 74; 75; 78, p. 443].

Research on the relationship between religiosity and prejudice has a long history. And since the beginning of the research, a specific paradox has been noticed: religious people demonstrate more prejudices than non-religious people, additionally they also show aggressive intentions, however, religiosity is also a

factor that reduces antagonisms between people [86-88]. It is also worth pointing out that prejudices also occur the other way - towards religious groups, especially if they are treated as responsible for negative social actions [14].

The results presented above show the existence of a wide spectrum of research on the significance of religiosity in human social functioning. It is impossible to present a full review of research in this field in one article. They can be found in more detail in many sources [16, 21, 73, 76, 89]. However, research on the relationship of religiosity and social functioning is often too general and simplifying, and as a result may lead to different interpretations [16, 22, 73, 74, 90].

4.2. *The complexity of the phenomenon of religiosity and difficulties in determining its social meaning*

The researched dependencies are often more complicated and require a description on a more detailed level [16, 22, 82, 91]. Hence, in many studies religiosity is considered as a complex phenomenon. Such an approach is not new, in studies of the properties of religiosity this assumption is implemented [75, 86, 91, 92], however, in studies of its social significance, many studies treat religiosity one-dimensional [93].

However, the complexity of religiosity is categorized differently. The basic distinction concerns the indication of two aspects: the religion with which a person is associated (religious affiliation) and the strength of the relationship, defined by the level of religiosity. Religious affiliation appears as a criterion variable in many studies, also in national and cross-cultural surveys [14, www.worldvaluessurvey.org, www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu, www.afrobaromet er.org]. The level of religiosity is most often tested by determining the subjective importance and frequency of participation in religious events [14, 90].

For a real indication of the importance of religion in the context of social functioning, it would be valuable to consider both aspects at the same time, but together in research they do not occur often. For example, Malka presented a summary of research results showing the differences between Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox, Muslims, Hindu, Buddhists and non-religious people, as well as between people with different levels of religiosity, in terms of political and social attitudes in intercultural research [90]. However, the presented results show the importance of both aspects of religiosity separately, independently of each other.

In the context of the complexity of religiosity, types of religiosity are also distinguished as separate ways of experiencing a relationship to a religious object and dimensions describing personal religiosity [91, 92]. The search for types of religiosity is already visible in Allport, who distinguishes between external religiosity (constituting an instrumental means for realizing personal interests) and internal religiosity (constituting the goal of his own actions and decisions) [86]. The distinction between seeking religiosity and religious fundamentalism is also useful in social research [94, 95].

Treating religiosity as a complex phenomenon allows a more precise search for connections between the aspects of religiosity and other social variables [14, 17, 82]. For instance, the adoption of the five-factor Huber's centrality model describing religiosity in the area of interest in religious matters, beliefs, religious experiences as well as private and public practices [92, 96] allowed indicating that the greatest importance in explaining the relationship between religiosity - vertical collectivism, lack of horizontal individualism, and private and public religious practices as well as religious beliefs [82].

This approach brings more detailed analyses, but they are often very detailed and therefore difficult to understand the data obtained. Therefore, the creation of more complex research models is abandoned in favour of examining the relationships between two or three complex variables, or in complex research models, the study of religiosity is used one-dimensionally, determining only its level [93].

4.3. *Contextual nature of the social meaning of religiosity and ambiguity in its understanding*

The importance of religiosity in social functioning often depends on additional factors. It is clearly visible in the area of prosociality. Religious people more often help their relatives than hypothetical strangers, also more often people who, in the opinion of the helpers, are not responsible for their difficult situation alone. They also provide help in the form of planned activities, such as charitable donations, more often than non-religious ones, and more often help members of their own religious community [16, 17, 75].

An important modifying factor is also the importance of religion in the country under study. For example, it differentiates the dependencies between religiosity and agency and community as well as political convictions. In non-religious countries, weak or negative ties between religiosity and community and positive ties with agency are visible. Positive ties with the community can be found in religious countries, such as Turkey or Poland, although Turkey is a Muslim country and Poland is a Catholic country [93]. The relationship between religiosity and right-wing and conservative views was present in practically all the countries surveyed, but it was significantly greater in countries with a high level of religiosity. The existence of a religion binding the nation was important, as well as a high level of participation in religious practices, while religion itself was of less importance [74].

However, the observed phenomenon on a global scale is a global decline in the number of believers. The number of people declaring themselves as non-believers in the world is the third largest group, after Christians and Muslims [14]. Social perceptions and norms regarding people's identification as non-religious are also changing. As a result, it is becoming more and more difficult to clearly understand who non-religious people are. As Anderson points out, they can be agnostics, atheists, as well as people poorly or not living their lives in the context of their relationship to God [14]. Therefore, it is not known what

the results of people indicating a low level of religious commitment mean in the context of the studied social phenomena.

The presented changes may be a significant limitation in the context of comparing the results obtained over a longer period of time, as the importance of religiosity in research has never been so dynamic [74]. Most of the existing literature focuses on the influence of religion on religious people, but currently the subject of research is also the influence of religion on non-religious people and the definition of phenomena that take the place of religiosity [14, 21, 73].

The last issue, but also very important in the description of the phenomenon of religiosity, also in the context of social functioning, are the ambiguities in the interpretation of the research results. They arise from various sources. First, various theoretical concepts are adopted, within which research questions are created and the relationships discovered are explained. On the one hand, they may assume the existence of God, and on the other one, they may accept religiosity as a by-product of evolutionary processes [15, p. 249; 26; 73]. Secondly, various scopes of meaning of concepts are adopted and the evaluation of social phenomena revealing their relationship with religiosity. Such social phenomena as altruism, authoritarianism, conservatism, prejudices may be defined in various ways, and as a result assessed as fulfilling positive or negative social roles. As a result, there are various evaluative interpretations in terms of assessing the social significance of religiosity [15, p. 265; 16; 17; 21; 22; 26; 73]. The existence of differentiation in the definition of phenomena and the interpretation of results among researchers of religiosity is visible, for example, in the discussion on the importance of religiosity as a predictor of prosociality, which took place in *Psychological Bulletin* [16, 17, 21, 22].

Thirdly, the ambiguity in understanding the obtained results may also be related to the existence of curvilinear relationships between religiosity and certain social phenomena. Allport and Ross [86] pointed to this nature of dependencies, and it is also noticed today [22, 97], although not every dependency is of such nature [17].

5. Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to determine the significance of religion and religiosity in human social functioning and difficulties in describing the studied dependencies.

The first part examines the philosophical reasons for the normative meaning of religion. It has been shown that religion transformed (slipping) into religiosity is losing its socio-normative dimension [25, p. 219; 31, p. 9]. On the other hand, it has a normative meaning for human social activity when it is understood as an ontic, personal and dynamic relationship between a human being and a personal God [39-41]. The second part indicates the role of moral norms based on religion and the difficulties resulting from the juxtaposition of the axionormative plane of religiosity and ethics, especially in the context of contemporary civilization changes. It was also indicated that the contemporary understanding of religiosity may be broader than its traditional understanding,

and this may open up new possibilities of religious justifications for ethics. The third part presents the results of psychological research and the areas in which there are difficulties and limitations in determining the importance of religion and religiosity for undertaking social activity.

The first detailed aim of the research was to indicate the role of religion and religiosity in the research area. Philosophy and ethics reveal man's relation to God as an ontic reason for action [13], while Psychology presents empirical data confirming the importance of the relation to a religious object in terms of social activity. At the same time, as a result of an interdisciplinary approach, the currently existing difficulties and limitations in grasping the social meaning of religion and religiosity were presented, which was the second detailed objective of the research.

The conducted analyses allow answering the basic research question posed in the article: is there still a place for religiosity in explaining human social activity? Religiosity is still an important factor in understanding and explaining human social activity, but its meaning changes and is noticeable under certain conditions. These conditions result from certain significant obstacles concerning the very nature of religiosity and the contemporary understanding of the relationship between man and religious object. They can be grouped into three categories.

Firstly, the separation of religion from religiosity and the adoption of religiosity as basic for social activity, and as a result, relativism in the assessment of reality, also in moral issues [32, 98]. This basic separation and focus on religiosity, and thus a subjective perspective, is necessary for the empirical study of the phenomenon of human religious experience [89]. However, the failure to relate human life to the objective criteria defining the essence of religion and human nature may pose a threat to the perception of the importance of a human relationship to a religious object in its functioning. This lack may also result in empirical research explaining social phenomena through the prism of subjective experiences, without taking into account the relationship to a religious object, which was observed in the analyses carried out.

Secondly, religiosity itself is such a complex and dynamic phenomenon that it cannot be fully explored in research. As a result, it is difficult to build adequate categories and full multi-faceted models determining the meaning of religiosity [14, 16, 20, 21, 91, 99]. Hence, religiosity is often investigated in a too simplified manner, which may lead to the finding of a lack of dependence [17].

Thirdly, the dynamic civilization processes, which remove the religious perspective from the spectrum of consciousness, also influence the definition of the meaning of religiosity. As a result, there are visible changes in the way people experience religiosity, as well as the expansion of the group of non-religious people [14, 74].

Contemporary focusing on the subjective perspective of human functioning and departing from ontic reasons of religion in research on the phenomenon of religiosity generates the further development of already

undertaken research directions, such as: defining the changing (weakening) significance of religiosity in the processes of human social functioning [77, 91].

However, one can also notice the emergence of new areas of research, such as identifying factors that take over the role of religiosity in the mechanisms of human social functioning or making life decisions. Such phenomena as spirituality, ideologies, values, moral codes play a separate motivating role in social activity [5; 15, p. xiii], but it seems that they take place of the external religiosity.

Research on religiosity reveals the diminishing role of the religious object in human functioning in the social world. This leads to a change in the meaning of religiosity in the social activity of a modern man. It is largely influenced by changes in the cognitive understanding of human nature, as well as cultural and civilization changes [14; 30, p. 84; 34, p. 16; 72; 100]. It is also worth noting that the indicated factors also play a role in relation to the people who conduct the research. It is on their acceptance of the way they understand the relationship between religion and religiosity and, as a result, the understanding of specific concepts and the phenomena studied, that determines how the role of religiosity in human functioning will be interpreted [15, p. 266; 16; 71]. These analyses allow the formulation of a general conclusion that religion and religiosity still play a significant role in a social activity. Despite the cognitive limitations indicated in the work, the importance of religion and religiosity in social activity may be the subject of further interdisciplinary research. They are justified by the accelerating process of civilization transformation, which may soon lead to radical changes in human social functioning.

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