

CHAPTER 4

Development of Religiousness in Young Adults

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The issue of religion and spirituality has been an interest of theoretical and empirical studies, including many describing developmental changes that occur in the course of religious life. Problems of emerging adulthood, here referred to as young adulthood (see Rydz 2012), including the structure, function and dynamics of religiousness in this period of life have recently attracted particular interest of researchers.

TERMINOLOGY ISSUES

The majority of researchers agree that religiousness and spirituality are fundamental processes and psychic phenomena. Thus, they cannot be reduced to other processes or limited to one-dimensional analyses (Zinnbauer & Pargament 2005). In their reflections on the evolution of scientific terms of religiousness and spirituality Zinnbauer and Pargament state that modern researchers note a polarization of their meaning. It consists of static-structural (social) approach to religion, an institutional affiliation to a religious community among with a system of values and principles, as well as a dynamic and functional (individual) approach to spirituality, associated with non-institutional and subjective experience of the transcendent reality (cf. Zinnbauer & Pargament 2005). According to the authors, this approach causes a simplification of the range of religious and spiritual experience, which disregards deep individual layers of religiousness, and historical and cultural context of human spirituality. Criticism of the polarized approach to the phenomena of

both religiousness and spirituality resulted in bringing up new approaches, which emphasize their richness and irreducibility. Pargament and Zinnbauer (2005) proposed two ways of distinguishing the terms: 1) recognizing spirituality as the one with a broader spectrum than religiousness, the point of reference looking for the sacrum, and 2) recognizing religiousness as the one with a broader spectrum than spirituality, where the emphasis is put not only on the search for the sacrum, but also for its traditional (institutional, cultural) context. In the second understanding, spirituality is the heart and soul of religiousness, its primary function, the core function of religious life (Zinnbauer & Pargament 2005).

Contemporary concepts of the development of religiousness, derived from various theoretical trends (among others: cognitive, psychodynamic, humanistic, comprehensive) provide their own definitions of religiousness (Fowler, 1981; Walesa, 2005). The researches focus on changes of its structure and function in the course of a lifetime, or on selected aspects of religion, such as development of religious thinking (Oser & Gmünder, 1992), religious language (Goldman, 1964) and others.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF RELIGIOUSNESS IN YOUNG ADULTS IN THE LIGHT OF CONTEMPORARY THEORETICAL APPROACHES

From the point of view of lifetime psychology the period of young adulthood is governed by mental processes which result from both prior experience and anticipation of the future. The majority of research on religiousness of adolescents is carried out in the normative understanding of development, which refers to general trends of human psychological development, especially cognitive development (cognitive developmental concepts of religiousness), personality development (humanistic concepts of the development of religiousness) and social-emotional development (psychodynamic concepts of the development of religiousness). These concepts assume stadiality of development of structure and function of religion.

Religiousness of young adults, as a phenomenon subject to developmental changes, is defined as a stage of personal-reflective faith (structural concept of faith development, Fowler, 1981), abstract thinking (development of understanding religious language, Goldman, 1964), pursuing an understanding of the environment (development of thinking and religious identity, Elkind, 1970),

absolute autonomy of orientation (absolute autonomy and deism, cognitive-structural concept of religious judgments, Oser & Gmünder, 1992), religious authenticity (cognitive-developmental concept of integral development of religiosity, Walesa, 2005), a stage of internal religious orientation (developmental concept of religious orientations of humanistic psychology, Meadow & Kahoe, 1984), transition to the level of reconstructed and internalized faith (object relations theory, Genia, 1990).

Non-normative concepts such as substance-functional approach, (Kwilecki, 1999), cognitive-cultural theories (Boyer & Walker, 2000; Harris, 2000; Johnson & Boyatzis, 2005), or theories of systems of development (Lerner, Dowling, & Anderson, 2003) describe and explain the development of religiousness as changeable over time, not relating individual experience to certain principles as stadial-structural theories view it, but through analyses of functioning and adaptation of an individual in various social contexts, cultures and religions.

To conclude, it can be said that modern concepts of the development of religiousness seek for a comprehensive model which would not be limited to one aspect of religiousness; a model which would allow for a multifaceted and detailed perspective of religiousness, and would give broad scope for interpretation on the basis of the whole of one's psychosocial development. Such research perspectives are presented by normative cognitive-developmental concepts which may be supplemented with other aspects originating from various theoretical models.

A cognitive-developmental concept of religiousness by Walesa seems particularly promising as it allows for a thorough view on religiousness, which is especially evident in the analyses of the dynamics of development and subtle changes in religious life, possible because of a stadial, structural-functional and psychogenetic view on the development of religiousness. This perspective permits a notional view on the bond between people and God, levels of reference for religious experiences and for classifying signs of the quality of religious life. Walesa introduces a structure of religiousness by distinguishing a set of parameters representing a psychosocial descriptive definition of its nature, which allow to categorize empirical data and perform a developmental analysis. Because of the psychogenetic approach it is possible to evaluate religiousness from simple to more complex forms which extend beyond average aptitudes in this sphere.

In the chapter forming of religiousness in adolescents in the view of current concepts, both normative and non-normative, will be presented. Striving to fully comprehend the issue of the development of religiousness in young adults

the chapter was enriched with a review of research on the role and various correlates of religiousness in everyday life of young adults.

NORMATIVE CONCEPTS OF DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG ADULTS

Theories of development of religiousness in the cognitive understanding derived from cognitive psychology (Piaget, 1972), assume that cognitive development is an axis of self-regulation of the psyche and is the basis for its structuring and hierarchization, also in the sphere of religious life.

Fowler (1981) views faith as a universal pursuit to meanings and values which are expressed in the transcendent ideal and revealed in the Christian religious tradition (Socha, 2000, p. 167). Faith is expressed as structured knowledge (belief system), valuation (commitment, ability to pay), and constructing the whole of sense (interpretation of religious texts and other contents). Fowler recognizes faith as an extensive phenomenon, taking into account the cognitive aspect, emotions, knowledge, values and commitment, as well as the communal dimension of religiousness (Fowler, 1981, p. 272). The author's inspiration is drawn from cognitive (Piaget, 1972) and social-cognitive theories (Selman, 1980), which concern taking into account perspective of other people. Moreover, he includes the role of religious symbols and a sense of coherence, expressed in logical thinking about reality.

People in their young adulthood are in stage four in the conceptualization of Fowler: stage of individual reflective faith. At this time the fundamental change, differentiating this stage from lower ones, is observed. It happens when heteronomy of faith, based on external authorities fluctuates to the internally justified autonomy of faith. The most important change is related to the maturation of cognitive functioning. It is expressed in the ability to be critical with the increasing level of rationality, which is the basis for creating a personal worldview. Fowler draws attention to the possibility of an open choice of values from different sources, as well as internalization, which results in being aware of one's own ideology while considering a broader social perspective at the same time. Young individuals make a synthesis of their roles, which is associated with an increased religious authenticity. Moreover, the ability to separate symbol from the symbolized content as well as being able to demythologize are cognitive achievements of the stage of individual reflective faith. This state of mind is compared to the status of enlightenment (Fowler, 1981, p. 183; Socha, 2000, p. 178). Nevertheless, a disadvantage of this period may be over-interpreting the

reality and a limited ability to take other people's perspective into account. As a consequence of this period, the fifth stage of faith: conjunctive (paradoxical-consolidation) emerges in people over 30. It is characterized by an increased sensitivity and religious tolerance towards self and others, and the ability to go beyond an established worldview.

In his theory of religious language development Goldman (1964) assumed that in regard to their nature, course and possible determinants, religious and non-religious thinking are the same. Religious thinking signifies the activity of mental processes focused on an object of thought, in this case, religion (Goldman, 1964, p. 3; Socha, 2000, p. 192). The assumption of the sameness of religious and non-religious thinking enabled him to use the theory of thinking development by Piaget (1972) in his analyses. The assumption was that mature religious thinking is the result of a preexisting stage of formal thinking. Quoting Piaget, Goldman argues that since religious language is symbolic and abstract, a correct understanding of religious messages requires one to be able to perform intellectual operations at the formal-logic stage. Young adults are in the fifth stage of abstract thinking, recognized by Goldman to be the final stage. At this stage people are capable of reasoning and formulating their thoughts using symbols and abstract terms, and do not need support from specific stimuli from the environment. They are able to move freely from a certain fact to theory, and vice versa. The ability to think in an abstract manner is acquired slowly and through training. Thought processes run faster and more efficiently, depending on age and familiarity with the subject of religious thoughts (Socha, 2000, p. 197).

Elkind (1970) proposed a definition of religion as a special form of adaptation to the surrounding world, which varies depending on the stage of its development, conditioned by one's cognitive aspirations. Those emerge gradually in different stages of psychosocial development.

The main aspiration of adolescents is to understand both their environment and themselves. The ability to think in terms of categories leads not only to establishing a relation between an individual and the world, but is also related to an urge of justifying these relationships rationally. This aspiration accompanies people throughout their whole life. A young person who has a desire to understand the surrounding reality, its meaning and relation to their existence finds a way of fulfilling it in religion, as long as they had accepted the concept of God, His presentation from the Bible, and a relationship between themselves and God offered by the Church in the form of worship.

Concepts of Oser and Gmünder (1992) belong to cognitive and interactionist trend. The authors state that the development of religious consciousness is closely linked to cognitive and social development. A relationship with God is a key point differentiating religious consciousness from its other manifestations. Hierarchy of religious structures explains changes in individual orientation of the relationship with the Ultimate Reality (God) over lifetime. Judgments result from intellectual processing of not only personal and social experiences but also different life dilemmas in the context of religion. The way of thinking determines not only interpreting the meaning of events or solving religious problems, but also selecting readings in the Bible and interpreting religious content.

Deriving from the theories of Piaget, Oser and Gmünder assume that the structure of religious thinking is universal, and at the same time, that stages of religious judgments are unique and specific to a particular religious tradition or culture. They assume that this structure is irreducible to logical-mathematical or moral patterns. Reaching higher levels of religious judgments is associated with the expansion of the world image and forming of appropriate intellectual tools, so an appropriate level of cognitive development is reached (Reich 1992). The authors describe stages of religious judgments, based on seven dimensions which presume the influence of God in human life. These are: freedom-dependence, transcendence-immanence, hope-despair, secrecy-openness of God's will, trust-fear, sacred-profane, aspects of life events and everlasting-ephemeral meaning of life choices.

Young adults go through the following stages : 1) the stage of absolute autonomy of orientation (perspective of absolute autonomy and deism), and 2) the stage of mediated autonomy and orientation to the plan of salvation (perspective of religious autonomy and plan of salvation), which undergo a process of self-determination (absolute autonomy) and separation of the sphere of action of God and the one of an individual (the sacred and the profane). God is understood as the First Cause, Donator of Rights who still leaves people their freedom. A significant improvement from the previous stages consists of taking responsibility and giving meaning and sense to one's actions. People are the only ones responsible for their conscience, awareness of good and evil, and personal choices related to it. Crisis can trigger an inadequate interpretation of causality in human activities (sphere of profane).

Gradually a focus on the plan of salvation emerges (mediated autonomy). God is seen as the basis of all existence, the guarantor of good who foresees everything, providing all the rights, the source of grace who creates opportu-

nities for meeting people, freedom and friendship. An individual discovers themselves as a part of God's plan of salvation which gives the opportunity to commit freely to God's purposes in the world (Oser & Gmünder, 1992; Socha, 2000; Król, 2002). However, these are not the final achievements of religious development. In further stages a person experiences God as the one "coming down to the people" and sees meaning through direct realization of God in the world, working for their neighbors or simply loving other people.

Walesa (1997, 1998, 2005, 2008) defines religion as a voluntary, personal and positive relation of a person to God. Religiousness is an integrated and unified phenomenon, even though multi-faceted, which is apparent in particular manifestations of mental and socio-cultural life. Religious development is essentially autotelic, transformative and transgressive, however, its transcending may have a vertical and/or horizontal direction, covering different areas (Walesa, 2005).

Religious young adults are at a stage of religious authenticity. Knowledge or beliefs, feelings, decisions, participation, religious practices, moral principles, experiences, prayers etc. become more authentic as they start to come from people themselves, and are not a means of adapting to the environment, its patterns and conventions. At this age religiousness is expressed via intransigence, stubbornness and radicalism in the search for sincere answers to various questions. It is also based on accuracy, agreement with internal ideals and principles, what is reflected in long term plans and difficult practices. It coincides with spontaneity, openness, radical honesty, vulnerability, escape from the stabilization, reorganization, modifying the established routines of prayer and forms of worship. Moreover, it is expressed in the criticism against noticeable wrongs in the world as well as in the Church. Religiousness develops together with a unifying philosophy of life. Young adults undergo a dynamic development of their worldview. This period involves a change in personal attitudes and beliefs related to one's religious life. Authenticity permeates all activities which people undertake. Along with previous attributes of God (e.g. moral anthropomorphism) come qualities of affection and subjectivity, that is trust, holiness, and the person of Jesus Christ becomes increasingly important. Young adults begin to display their faith in everyday life through their attitude, interpersonal relationships and activities. What is more, they accept different religious content with sensitivity and openness. Phenomenon of conversion, which is active siding with radical faith, occurs sometimes. Religious authenticity helps adolescents to find their role and place in the world, it becomes the source of specific meanings and sense.

For people who succeed with the development of religiousness, the next stages of development bring confrontation with nonconformist aspirations and various forms of religious authenticity with the reality of everyday life. Requirements of common life stimulate the formation of criteria to differentiate and distinguish religious and non-religious phenomena, and within religious ones: those which are hierarchically higher and lower. Sense of responsibility for passing on faith onto others, for instance through religious education of children, increases.

Meadow and Kahoe (1984) distinguish four stages in unidirectional sequence of development: (1) external religious orientation, (2) cult (social) religious orientation, (3) internal religious orientation, and (4) autonomous religious orientation (fully mature religiousness).

Religious young adults are at the third stage of that sequence of development, internal religious orientation. They gradually evolve from the stage of social religious orientation, when goal of faith is God, Transcendence understood differently in different religions. Pro-social action is not an end in itself, but it serves God. What is more, a reversal of the relation of reciprocity God – person happens then. A person with external religious orientation wants to get something from God. The one with internal religious orientation realizes that the ultimate justification of religious practices and pro-social activities is God who “gets” something from an individual. Only a commitment to the ultimate concern (Tillich 1957) gives a person an undeniable sense of existence. The development moves towards autonomous religious orientation which is the result of a sequence of interactions between one’s characteristics and random unanticipated events. According to the authors it results in a courageous and creative improvement of truth and fullness of religious experience.

At the basis of the psychodynamic theory of religion by Genia (1990) is the development of ego as well as the primary determinant of development: the quality of relationships with people. Young people go through a transition period towards the level of reconstructed and internalized faith. Under favorable conditions, critical reflection of the transition stage reaches a climax when a person makes a choice of faith, which transcends their self-centered and utilitarian interests. At this level, religion provides a sense of purpose and meaning in life. Following the ideals of ego, superego makes religion an internalized basis for life choices. Religious standards are used extensively and consistently with regard to central matters of life.

Further development of religiousness moves towards the level of transcendent faith which is driven in a more flexible manner by universally justi-

fied morality. Relationship with God as an Absolute, a higher Being, becomes non-egocentric and devoid of utilitarian motives. Moreover, lifestyle and moral behavior is consistent with religious values. Religiousness experienced this way provides a deep sense of meaning and purpose in life.

NON-NORMATIVE CONCEPTIONS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUSNESS IN YOUNG ADULTS

A representative of the substantial-functional trend, Kwilecki (1999), defines religion in qualitative terms. Growth or development of personal religiousness happens when one increases their range of ideas and experience of supernatural reality. Criteria of religious development by Kwilecki are: scope of religiousness, its depth, presence of religion in life and dominance of religious values in overall hierarchy of values (Kwilecki, 1999, p. 32–33). The author defines faith as a source of strength. This person-centered approach sensitizes religious scholars to cultural, life events and personality factors. The author argues that religion cannot be assessed using only cognitive-developmental patterns taken from Piaget and Kohlberg.

Kwilecki's works show the importance of certain forms of thinking and behavior, e.g. the importance of religious imagining in adults, which are often explicitly criticized and not recognized by the followers of normative theories. According to the author, it is the religious imagination, not perception, which is the basis for qualitative changes and growth of religion. Kwilecki focuses on qualitative methods in analyzing religion, however, she occasionally refers to the normative and quantitative definitions of development. She concentrates on religiousness of adults because she assumes that at this time most diverse and significant forms of religiousness occur. In her research she deals with ordinary as well as extraordinary examples of spiritual experiences. Describing such figures as Mother Teresa of Calcutta she shows a motivating force of faith in achieving goals, especially in the face of adversity. They are based on religious imagination which makes people aware of the supernatural reality.

In the cognitive-cultural approach the issues of stadiality and directing the changes of development are absent (e.g. Boyer & Walker, 2000; Harris, 2000; Johnson & Boyatzis, 2005). Supporters of this theory claim that children are more similar to adults in basic patterns of reasoning than it would occur from Piaget's premises. At the end, it is the system of cultural factors which explains age-related fluctuations in religiousness (Boyer & Walker, 2000; Harris, 2000). In thinking there is a process of a merger of ontology intuitive (intuitive logic of perceived

events), which takes a predominant part of everyday thinking and acquiring knowledge about the world, with counterintuitive ontology (knowledge contrary to empirical logic), used in contact with products of culture and religion (Harris, 2003). The result of the merger of the two systems is the ability to transfer conclusions from the world of beliefs to everyday life, and vice versa (Harris, 2000).

On the other hand, researchers of human religiousness in the trend of systems of development attract attention to the relations between an individual and the complexity and diversity of contexts in which he or she lives (Lerner, Dowling, & Anderson, 2003). The basic dynamism of development is the process of adaptation, and the rate of development is the quality of this adaptation to the environment. Functionality of this approach in the research on religiousness is expressed in a notion that religion and spirituality support better adaptation. What is more, they become an area of interest to researchers in this trend only if they serve a good (plastic) adaptation (Benson et al. 2003; King & Furrow, 2004). These concepts abounded in many interesting empirical studies, e.g. on adaptation of children, adolescents and adults in the context of risky behaviors (Regnerus & Elder, 2003).

ROLE OF RELIGIOUSNESS IN YOUNG ADULTHOOD

The majority of studies carried out in this trend revealed a positive, protecting and integrating function of religiousness in adolescents. Wink and Dillon (2002) as well as Aldwin and Lewenson (2001) showed a positive relation between religiousness and difficult life events (Rydz & Zarzycka, 2008, 2009). It was found that higher levels of personal religiousness in adolescents is associated with a lower level of risk behaviors, such as substance use and sexual activity of minors (Donahue & Benson, 1995), and with a higher level of positive behaviors (Regnerus 2003). Adolescents more interested in religiousness were actively involved in different forms of voluntary events (Youniss, McLellan, & Yates, 1999).

In their research involving parents and their adolescent children Gunnoe, Hetherington and Reiss (1999) found a strong direct relationship between high level of parents' religiousness and greater parental authority, as well as a mediating relationship between religiousness of parents and social responsibility of adolescents. The majority of results state a positive function of religion in achieving one of the key developmental tasks of young adulthood: building an intimate relationship with a person of the opposite sex, starting a family and deciding to have and raise children.

Results of a meta-analysis of contemporary research on the function of religion in family by Mahoney and Tarakeshwar (2005) showed that religiousness of spouses is positively associated with overall satisfaction of marriage, marital commitment, positive strategies for recovering from conflict, as well as preparing for parenthood and parental roles (Dollahite, Marx, & Goodman, 2004; Mahoney, Pargament, Tarakeshwar, & Swank, 2001; Mahoney & Tarakeshwar, 2005). Studies show that higher individual religiousness of spouses is related to a greater commitment to marriage, with control variables such as demographic factors and marital satisfaction (Larson & Goltz, 1989; Wilson & Musik, 1996; Mahoney et al., 2001). Moreover, religiously homogeneous couples show a higher positive relationship with commitment than married couples who are religiously inhomogeneous (Mahoney et al., 2001). Sharing religious values can help cement the relationship in the form of “pair identity”, which was proven to be associated with higher dedication and harmony in marriage (Stanley & Markman, 1992). High compatibility of religious beliefs of spouses is associated with a lower frequency of conflicts and improved verbal communication (Curtis & Ellison, 2002; Mahoney & Tarakeshwar, 2005). Moreover, the issue of religion is rarely the subject of direct disputes (Oggins, 2003). Higher religiousness of both spouses is associated with a more constructive conflict resolution strategies (Brody, Stoneman, Flor, & McCrary, 1994; Mahoney et al., 1999).

A protective function of religiousness against marital problems like divorce, domestic violence and betrayal was put forward by Mahoney and Tarakeshwar (2005). People religiously measure, those who perform religious practices of their church, manifest a lower risk of taking a divorce than those who do not (Mahoney et al. 2001), even when factors like alcohol or drug abuse appear (Booth, Johnson, Branaman, & Sica, 1995).

People with high scores in indicators of religiousness, less than people with lower ratios, are victims of spousal abuse (Fergusson, Horwood, Kershaw, & Shannon, 1986), and are less violent with their partner (Ellison, Bartkowski, & Anderson 1999). Higher religiousness is associated with a higher disapproval of outside of marriage intercourse in the United States, Germany and Poland (Scott, 1998), especially among the Catholics and the Protestants (Cochran & Beeghley 1991). Moreover, Mahoney and Tarakeshwar (2005) conclude that marital infidelity can be more stressful and traumatic for more religious spouses.

Religiousness of spouses may be a facilitator for psychological readiness to have children (Mahoney & Tarakeshwar, 2005). Higher frequency of attending church is closely linked to higher number of children within a marriage (Krishnan, 1993). Becker and Hofmeister (2001), and Palkowitz (2002) describe birth of

children as entailing positive transformations in spiritual orientation of parents. Findings of various research show that high religiousness of mothers can facilitate the adaptation to being a parent and increase the sense of well-being in difficult circumstances (e.g. single motherhood) through religious coping (Garcia, Perez & Ortiz, 2000; Koenig, McCullough, & Larson, 2001). In case of having children with special needs many parents spontaneously state that religion helps them with parenthood (Dollahite et al., 2004). One of a positive form of religious coping with parenting a special needs child is religious re-analysis and reinterpretation of the child's problems of the parents' role as caregivers.

CONCLUSION

Detailed studies on the development of structure and function of religiousness done in the cognitive-developmental conception of C. Walesa allowed me to construct a pattern of dynamic, structural-functional religiousness of people in the period of young adulthood (Rydz, 2012). Its specificity is expressed in a characteristic arrangement of specific components and in the occurrence of developmental processes common to young adults. Results of these studies show that the following stages can be distinguished:

early phase of religious authenticity (from 18 to 21 years of age), which is characterized by (1) dominance of formal-logical forms of reasoning with a predominance of negative criticism (negative doubt), (Rydz, 2012), which is also known as religious uncertainty (Levenson, Aldwin & D'Mello, 2005), (2) lower motivating power of religion and its lower power of adjustment, (3) lower level of religious authenticity;

late phase of religious authenticity (from 21 to 24/27 years of age), which is characterized by: (1) an increase in harmony between the components of religiousness, (2) a reduction of differences in the structure of religion related to gender, (3) post-formal thinking in religious reasoning, with dialectical reconciliation of contradictions, expressed by the development of critical thinking in constructive characteristics (positive doubt), (4) an increase in the level of internalization and centralization of truths and principles of religion, (5) an increase in regulatory capacity, based on religious commitment, expressed in philosophical and vocational decisions (involving religion in one's life plans, reflected in deciding to join the church, the community, and setting up a family), (6) an increase in the level of authenticity of religion, expressed in deepening one's own existence, and (7) a stabilization in the sphere of religious feelings and other parameters of religiousness.

The results show the development of integrating, regulating and significance-giving function of religiousness in young adults.

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