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# **Implications of Reductive Anthropology for Religion (The perspective of Catholic personalism in Poland at the turn of the 20th and 21st Centuries)**

## **Abstract**

Experiencing the drama of being internally conflicted, postmodern people move away not only from God and religion, but also from the nature of other people. And yet, man cannot exist in an ideological or religious vacuum. This article reflects on the anthropological roots of the negation and affirmation of God and religion. The truth about religion is inextricably linked to the truth about man, and the question of perceiving man as a religious being is one of the important issues of philosophical anthropology.

## **Keywords**

God, man, faith, anthropology, atheism, religion

## 1. Introduction

Torn between body and soul, faith and doubt in God, passing time and eternity, and finally the animal and rational part of his nature, man does not cease to be, especially to himself, an insistent question. This question sounds particularly insistent in the epoch succumbing to the mirages of Promethean atheism, which, in the name of enhancing man's value, prophesies the end of God, stating at the same time that religion dehumanizes and enslaves him.<sup>1</sup> In the postmodern version, the goal of a secular pilgrimage is no longer the salvation of the soul, but the realization of the possibilities contained in the natural world.<sup>2</sup> The postmodern "nomad", devoid of a set goal, has little in common with the biblical Abraham wandering towards the unknown but promised by God land.<sup>3</sup>

Experiencing the drama of being internally conflicted, postmodern people move away not only from God and religion, but also from the nature of other people. And yet, man cannot exist in an ideological and religious vacuum. When his final horizon becomes foggy, he begins, sometimes desperately, to attribute a transcendent dimension to things that are transient by nature. Haunted by the same fears as people from previous eras – suffering, death or evanescence – he does not want to think and talk about such difficult topics. He willingly accepts a narrative that identifies the meaning of life with subjective happiness, or even with experiencing the state of pleasure.

From the point of view of Christianity, as indeed also of other great religions, the search for the meaning of life is, in fact, a search for God. This may imply finding Him and denying Him. A suggestive metaphor imposes itself here: of the world's great theatre as an illusion into which we have been thrown, as essentially dramatic beings. The fundamental question remains whether the source of this drama is an accident or someone's decision, the initiative of a being that transcends us – God.<sup>4</sup>

In this theatre, a dramatic and fascinating story, full of faith and doubt, flashes of light and moments of darkness, invariably takes place between God and man.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Z. Zdybicka, *Problem tak zwanej śmierci Boga*, in: *Aby poznać Boga i człowieka. Część pierwsza – o Bogu dziś*, ed. B. Bejze, Warszawa 1974, p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. J. Metz, *Teologia wobec cierpienia*, transl. J. Zychowicz, Kraków 2008, p. 111.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. J. Życiński, *Bóg postmodernistów*, Lublin 2001, p. 58.

<sup>4</sup> H. Balthasar, *Teodramatyka*, t. 1, *Prolegomena*, transl. M. Mijalska, M. Rodkiewicz, W. Szymona, Kraków 2005, p. 20.

For, although all the great religions believe that God speaks to man, it prevails, at the same time, that he never reveals to man the meaning of all mysteries. The role of man is, therefore, to listen attentively to the voice of God, to take the risk of faith, and to trust in His existence. The price for losing faith in the existence of God is to accept the meaninglessness of existence, one's own and that of the world. All attempts to soothe existential anxiety by means of entertainment or work are completely futile. For there is no other remedy than God.<sup>5</sup>

This article aims to address the issue of the anthropological roots of the negation or affirmation of God and religion. The truth about religion is inextricably linked to the truth about man, and the issue of perceiving man in terms of a religious being is one of the essential issues of philosophical anthropology.

## 2. Anthropological determinants of religion

As part of the theoretical analysis of explaining the fact of religion, philosophy clearly uses the conceptual apparatus of philosophical anthropology, and the question of the status of religion in a given philosophy is directly related to accepted anthropology. It is impossible to explain the fact of religion without recognizing the ontic status of human beings. This connection between anthropology and religion appears even in atheistic systems, although, in this case, the discourse takes on a caricatural expression. It is worth recalling the Polish representative of Marxist philosophy, B. Suchodolski, who states with satisfaction that, the philosophy of God is in fact a disguised form of the philosophy of man. At the same time, Suchodolski states that this thesis had been timidly proclaimed for a long time, although it is only Feuerbach who dared to fully reduce theology to anthropology.<sup>6</sup> Ignoring the ideological nature of the above formulations, it should be noted that when approaching the description of the phenomenon of religion, a person always experiences a feeling of intimidation, and even fear. After all, this field concerns the greatest mysteries of human life to be solved. The dispute between the thesis that religious needs are rooted in human nature and regarding it as a circumstance related to upbringing, tradition, a sense of loneliness or existential fear, will probably never end. *Homo*

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. L. Kołakowski, *Jeśli Boga nie ma... O Bogu, Diable, Grzechu i innych zmartwieniach tak zwanej filozofii religii*, transl. by T. Baszniak, M. Panufnik, Cracow 1988, p. 167.

<sup>6</sup> B. Suchodolski, *Narodziny nowożytnej filozofii człowieka*, Warszawa 1963, p. 7.

*religiosus*, as an anthropological category, will probably remain an unresolved problem, while the terms such as, for example, *homo sapiens*, *homo socialis*, *homo aestheticus*, or *homo oeconomicus*, are already regarded as indisputable definitions of the human being.<sup>7</sup>

The relation to God is not given to us by nature, and God is for me only to the extent that I myself genuinely exist.<sup>8</sup> This is because today, we are witnessing a clash in thought, and in life, of two basic types of visions of man, and simultaneously of two different concepts of humanism. Two types of humanism are fighting for so-called human happiness: atheistic humanism, according to which man is a completely autonomous being whose development is carried out through the activation of horizontal relations, and theistic humanism, which, recognizing the human person as the highest value in the sphere of derived beings, points to the timeless perspectives of human life and extends the existence of infinite dimension, which is a consequence of the ontic, mental and moral relationship of the human person with the transcendent “You”. However, this extraordinary value of man, confirmed by his stunning effectiveness in creating civilization progress, stands in striking contradiction to the work of destruction, for which he himself is also responsible.<sup>9</sup> This contradiction, moreover, causes an increasing alienation of man, who perceives with increasing horror that his condition does not give him a chance for salvation, although he needs and desires salvation. After all, it is a universal human experience to feel a state of existential insufficiency and existential incompleteness. The experience of this fragility and existential contingency relates to the need for man to transcend these limitations, to the striving to achieve fixation in being, to grasp some good that would give value and meaning to his existence.

### 3. Reductive vision of man and religion

While the philosophical image of man developed in ancient and medieval times clearly emphasized the spiritual side of the human being, which indicated his existential priority among earthly beings, the image of man created by the modern era has been deprived of this dimension. A large part of today’s dominant

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<sup>7</sup> Z. Zdybicka, *Człowiek i religia*, Lublin 1978, p. 16.

<sup>8</sup> K. Jaspers, *Wprowadzenie do filozofii*, Wrocław 2000, p. 44.

<sup>9</sup> W. Stróżewski, *W kręgu wartości*, Kraków 1992, p. 35.

anthropologies reluctantly perceive man as a material and spiritual being at the same time, natural and culture-creating, finite but desiring infinity, leaning towards the future, but strongly immersed in the past. This type of integral way of thinking about man is superseded and replaced by materialisms of various origins, which try to explain the phenomenon of human life within the same premises, as in the case of other living beings: matter, energy, natural selection, chance and necessity.<sup>10</sup>

Even a superficial observation of the reality at the beginning of the 21st century leads to the sad conclusion that modern man is often treated primarily in terms of an empirical being, and in his self-definition, he is satisfied with the results of research subjected to the rules of the exact sciences.<sup>11</sup> And yet, the search for understanding the world and man is not only about analyzing such problems that can be explained by the empirical sciences.<sup>12</sup> Modern man, despite the common experience of contingency, forgets that human nature consists in a constant effort to cross the boundaries of the animal nature inherent in him.<sup>13</sup> As Roman Ingarden writes, for this reason, he collapses helplessly into his pure animality, which in fact constitutes his death.<sup>14</sup> The “project” that is man becomes incomprehensible, even absurd, when it is understood only as a project-in-the-world. What is more, although it opens itself to all other beings, none of them exhaust its potentiality.<sup>15</sup>

Unlike other living beings, the human subject is able to objectively relate to itself, which means that all “animal” features of human life take on another meaning and not just a biological one.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, looking for justification only in the world of matter, man often ceases to be the master and user of things.

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. S. Zięba, *Człowiek stał się człowiekiem*, in: *Teologiczna, filozoficzna i naukowa wizja człowieka*, ed. K. Moskal, Lublin 2018, p. 45.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn*, Lublin 1994, p. 95.

<sup>12</sup> M. Heller, *Nauka i teologia – niekoniecznie na jednej tylko planecie*, Copernicus Center, Kraków 2019, p. 73; Cf. D. Dawkins, H. Hitchens, *Cztery jeźdźcy apokalipsy. Jak zaczęła się ateistyczna rewolucja?*, Wydawnictwo CiS, Stare Groszki 2019, p. 53.

<sup>13</sup> M. Krąpiec, *Kim jest człowiek*, in: *Wprowadzenie do filozofii*, Lublin 1992, pp. 142–143.

<sup>14</sup> R. Ingarden, *Księżeczka o człowieku*, Kraków 1987, pp. 21–24.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Ch. Taylor, *Źródła współczesnej tożsamości*, in: *Tożsamość w czasach zmiany. Rozmowy w Castel Gandolfo*, ed. K. Michalski, transl. A. Pawelec, Kraków 1995, pp. 9–21.

<sup>16</sup> K. Bochenek, C. Mordka, J. Stala, *If there is no Religion – L. Kołakowski's Defence of the Sacred. Part 1*, “The Person and the Challenges” Volume 12 (2022) Number 2, p. 10.

Instead, he measures his value only by possessing things, which is all the more puzzling as never before had so much been spoken with regards to his dignity.<sup>17</sup>

In the description of human existence presented by the leading currents of philosophy, such as Marxism, existentialism or scientism, there are disturbing shortcomings. As Victor Frankl very aptly notes, these systems, based on false humanism claiming that man has allegedly become “everything”, inevitably lead to nihilism, according to which man is basically nothing.<sup>18</sup>

#### 4. Anthropological consequences of the “death” of God

The conflict between the affirmation of God and the affirmation of man, between absolute humanism and religion, so clearly outlined in contemporary thought, is expressed in the antinomian juxtaposition of the being of God and the being of man, of what is material and temporal, and what is spiritual, of faith and reason, of God and human rights. The question is, however, whether man can live after the “death of God”? Does the elimination and negation of God and religion really free and enrich him? The consequence of the “death of God” is, unfortunately, the “death of man”. All cognitive, ontic and anthropological concepts that eliminate the doctrine of God as a Personal and Transcendent Being consistently led to the elimination of the doctrine of man as a person transcendent in relation to the world of nature and history, they negate the spirituality of man, and the possibility of his existence after biological death. Man cannot escape from God without running away from himself, without crossing himself out.

One has to ask: how do millions of people who consciously profess atheism live today? The human psyche hates emptiness in this sphere. By eliminating God and religious values, man creates for himself imitations of the highest values, which he then zealously serves and glorifies. In the place of metaphysical references, there is a sad, albeit omnipotent “eschatology” of consumption, of broadly understood consumption, and not a search for objective values or a transcendent God.<sup>19</sup> The things that once referred almost everyone to God, are now becom-

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<sup>17</sup> Cz. Bartnik, *Personalizm*, Lublin 1995, p. 380.

<sup>18</sup> V. Frankl, *Homo patiens*, Warszawa 1971, p. 92.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. A. Aldridge, *Rynek*, Warszawa 2006, p. 13; J. G. Ritzer, *Magiczny świat konsumpcji*, Warszawa 2004, p. 8.

ing symbols of a new “religion”, that is, of what can be purchased and owned. Modern and today, post-modern society is trying to replace religion with utopia, which is obviously not a transcendent ideal, but a goal conceived by technology and spawned by revolution, which is carried out by history (progress, rationality, science). Just as medieval society found its equilibrium in God and the Devil, ours is based on consumption and its simultaneous condemnation. However, while around the concept of the devil there could at least form heresies and magic sects, in the world of prosperity there is no place even for heresy.<sup>20</sup> Consumption has taken over the role of the devil, tempting and transforming, taking over all spheres of life and taking away the ability to make decisions. Its social dimension is actually a religious dimension.

Postmodern atheism is not about proving the non-existence of God. According to the proponents of the “death of God”, there is simply no place for God in the world. In such a space of human existence, where the complexes of modern Prometheans seem to come to life, unfortunately, we so often forget that there is nothing that we can steal from God.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, in the perspective of atheistic anthropology, “God” can actually mean only an enemy, and at best, a competitor of man, but the context in which one could talk about the God of the evangelical mission, the God of love and salvation, is not permitted here.

The position of Friedrich Nietzsche who considers the Christian system of morality promoting values such as justice, altruism, mercy, the primacy of spiritual goods, and asceticism as well as all other religious and moral ideals, to be completely false, can still be considered the most far-reaching system of man’s “defense” against a God who is hostile to him.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, in a truly just world, there is no place for God and man simultaneously. Only the demise of faith in God opens the possibility of full development for human creative potential, and man finally becomes the highest value. After the death of God, man no longer has to despise life and be its opponent.<sup>23</sup>

Nietzsche’s atheism which is based on vitalistically understood ethics advocating the Dionysian attitude, accepting the cult of life, dynamics, strength

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. J. Baudrillard, *Spółczesność konsumpcyjna. Jego mity i struktury*, Warszawa 2006, p. 275.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. J. Życkiński, *Medytacje sokratejskie*, Lublin 1991, p. 134.

<sup>22</sup> *Historia filozofii i etyki. Źródła i komentarze*, eds. W. Tyburski, A. Wachowiak, R. Wiśniewski, Toruń 1997, p. 468.

<sup>23</sup> F. Copleston, *Historia filozofii*, t. VII, Warszawa 1995, p. 405.

and freedom<sup>24</sup>, apart from numerous epistemological and natural justifications, also has a very important anthropological basis. This motif is particularly important even for the philosopher, who considered faith in God to be a kind of crime against human life, suggesting a permanent conflict of interests between God and man. Perceiving in God only a tyrant who threatens human freedom, he considered faith to be a betrayal of humanity, a condemnation of joy and happiness, freedom and love. No wonder then that the negation of Christianity and religion became, according to him, the *conditio sine qua non* of humanism, and faith in man was conditioned by abandoning faith in God.<sup>25</sup> “Enchanted” by the myth of Prometheus, Nietzsche tried to imitate him in freeing people from this slavery of faith. By attacking what is “extraterrestrial”, he calls for turning human energy towards earthly life, for overcoming the Christian tradition that points only to life after death.<sup>26</sup>

Nietzsche’s views resulted, among other things, from a complete ignorance of biblical anthropology. This anthropology seemed to him to break man, to completely deprive him of his freedom, to forbid the love of life, to cross out all natural values. Nietzsche was convinced that man was treated completely instrumentally by his Creator.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, the advent of the era of man, associated with the time of complete nihilism, means, above all, the final overthrow of the decadent, Christian civilization of Europe. At the same time, it paves the way for a new dawn, a re-evaluation of values, the emergence of a higher type of man. It is necessary to greet the most terrible of all guests who stands at the door: “Man is something that should be overcome (...) man is a bridge, not a goal (...) Superman is the essence of the earth. (...) a line stretched between the animal and the superman – a rope over the abyss.”<sup>28</sup>

For most people, crossing this Nietzschean line usually ends in disaster, but this does not seem to interest the German philosopher. Similarly, the reflection on the meaning of our lives, which is not very consoling for a human being,

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<sup>24</sup> S. Kowalczyk, *F. Nietzsche i jego proklamacja śmierci Boga*, “Zeszyty Naukowe KUL” R. XIII (1970) nr 3 (51), p. 28.

<sup>25</sup> S. Kowalczyk, *F. Nietzsche i jego proklamacja śmierci Boga*, pp. 31–32.

<sup>26</sup> R. Solomon, K. Higgins, *Krótką historia filozofia*, transl. N. Szczucka-Kubisz, Warszawa 1997, p. 273.

<sup>27</sup> S. Kowalczyk, *F. Nietzsche i jego proklamacja śmierci Boga*, “Zeszyty Naukowe KUL” R. XIII (1970) nr 3 (51), p. 34.

<sup>28</sup> F. Copleston, *Historia filozofii*, t. VII, Warszawa 1995, p. 415.



is circulated by the majority of existentialist philosophy, received both by masses of simple people and by intellectuals. Existential books emanate at least mild pessimism, and often simply terrifying sadness. Atheist existentialists, however, invariably maintain that humans can only emerge from the crisis they find themselves in as a result of the absurdity of life and the “death of God” by accepting that their earthly life is simply the only one they have and that religion greatly impoverishes it.<sup>29</sup> It is by developing their personal talents that they can finally make their lives truly valuable.

Man does not receive any signs from anywhere that would show him the way to proceed, so he himself must assign his actions and things proper value.<sup>30</sup> At the same time, existentialism diminishes the role of biological and sociological determinants, ascribing unrestricted freedom to man. Man is free, man is freedom, and being condemned to this freedom, he must take sole responsibility for his life. Man cannot transfer this freedom to anyone, not even God, because he is ontologically “sentenced to freedom”, he can only exist as a free being. His freedom, however, is completely devoid of foundation – after all, he cannot become a god-like being, and his “passionate” desire to achieve a being similar to God’s being is doomed to failure in advance. Therefore, man tries to escape from his anxiety, freedom and responsibility by providing his decisions with the appearance of objective justifications. This bad faith takes many forms, from the simple to the subtle. One of its manifestations is religion, which causes an individual, by giving up his freedom, to drop responsibility for the choices he makes.<sup>31</sup> In Sartre’s existentialism, in which numerous echoes of Dostoyevsky’s *The Possessed* and Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* resound, the negation of God takes place above all in the name of the existence of man understood as freedom.

Under the omnipotent and all-pervasive gaze of God, there is no question of the existence of a person. And hence the alternative: Him or me. God is the “Other” in an absolute way; man must fight for liberation. For if God exists, then “I” cannot be myself, I cannot be towards myself. The negation of the idea of God is therefore closely related to the description and understanding of human existence. Sartre systematically questioned theism, viewing it as a threat to human interests. Man, receiving a specific existential status from the

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<sup>29</sup> S. Kowalczyk, *Podstawy światopoglądu chrześcijańskiego*, Wrocław 1986, p. 41.

<sup>30</sup> J. Galarewicz, *Na ścieżkach prawdy. Wprowadzenie do filozofii*, Kraków 1992, p. 521.

<sup>31</sup> *Filozofia współczesna*, ed. Z. Kuderowicz, t. I, Warszawa 1990, pp. 319–320.

Absolute, would be determined in his actions. Sartre, however, points out that it is essentially irrelevant whether God exists or not, meaning that even if God exists, man remains free, for he is free to resist God, just as Orestes resists Zeus in *The Flies*.<sup>32</sup> For when Zeus says that he created Orestes free so that he might serve him, Orestes replies that since he was created free, he no longer belongs to Zeus, since he has become independent and capable, if he will, of facing the god. In this sense, it makes no difference, says Sartre, whether God exists or is an invention of man.<sup>33</sup> However, it is hard not to pay attention to the fact that the dimension of existence described by Sartre excludes not so much the God of religion as God understood as a superman, whose reference to man consists in treating him as an object, as his own product. Meanwhile, it is hardly necessary to prove that in this dimension, there is no room at all for the religious idea of God, so Sartre leads us astray not by what he says but rather by what he does not say, above all by the implicit suggestion that nothing exists beyond what he describes to us.<sup>34</sup>

## 5. Man in the context of Transcendence

A man can very easily lose his proper place in the world that he shapes himself, and he conceals this confusion with the appearance of self-confidence, in contrast with the frequent sense of despair, sadness and absurdity.<sup>35</sup> For man often becomes a god to himself in a way disturbingly reminiscent of Satan's promise: "You will be as gods." It is, however, a "god" not reminiscent of its Original; a "god" centered on himself, concerned with his greatness and self-realization; a god who rules out love and thus strikes both at the "other" and at himself.

Christian philosophical anthropology, on the other hand, shows that man, thanks to his openness to transcendence, finds his ultimate justification in God, and the most dangerous alienation for him is an attempt to separate him from God. This God is the ultimate fulfillment of the individual's desires, and not, as atheistic philosophies believe, a sovereign striving to annihilate the human

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<sup>32</sup> F. Copleston, *Religia i filozofia*, transl. B. Stanosz, Warszawa 1978, pp. 74–75.

<sup>33</sup> F. Copleston, *Historia filozofii*, t. IX, Warszawa 1991, p. 354.

<sup>34</sup> A. Luijpen, *Fenomenologia egzystencjalna*, transl. B. Chwedeńczuk, Warszawa 1972, pp. 238–243.

<sup>35</sup> K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn*, Lublin 1994, p. 70.

“I”<sup>36</sup> Atheistic philosophies of man forget that religion is not only a mental, social or cultural fact, but a reality built on an ontic fact, that is, on the actual existence of God with whom man feels connected – because he exists thanks to participation in God’s existence.<sup>37</sup>

Without religion, human life, writes Whitehead, would be but a flash of momentary joy, illuminating a sea of suffering and misery, a tiny episode of passing experience.<sup>38</sup> Religion opens up infinite perspectives for human creativity, culture and civilization, and above all for his inner transformation. The relationship between man and God by no means enslaves man, as the masters of contemporary atheism argue (Feurebach, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, and Sartre), but frees his humanity (as claimed by such thinkers as Marcel, Levinas, Ricoeur, Wojtyła, Styczeń, Tischner); it radiates freedom and the promise of a reliable community. By saying “thy will be done”, man gains a share in God’s freedom.<sup>39</sup> Only in this climate of theocentric humanism, where God is his ultimate goal, can man find his fulfillment.

In the 20th century, we experienced how powerless and dangerous man is, when placed in God’s position. That is why philosophers and sociologists of culture talk more and more often about the “need for the sacred”, so that man could live like a man and for the culture created by people to be human culture. It emerges with increased clarity that even strong atheistic ideologies have not been able to eliminate religion from human life and human culture; they have not been able to “kill God”, because man still needs the experience of religion. This happens despite the fact that a modern man, full of spiritual fear of the emptiness of life, loneliness, senselessness, resulting from the lack of awareness of the purpose that would make sense not only of individual human actions, but also of his entire life, escapes into various utopias.

Philosophical anthropology can play a very important role in the search for truth about man<sup>40</sup>; anthropology liberated from metaphysical reluctance, one that brings man the truth about the meaning of his life, showing him the

<sup>36</sup> J. Smith, *Doświadczenie i Bóg*, transl. D. Petsch, Warszawa 1971, p. 24.

<sup>37</sup> Z. Zdybicka, *Religia i religioznawstwo*, Lublin 1988, p. 51.

<sup>38</sup> A.N. Whitehead, *Religia a nauka*, in: M. Heller, J. Życiński, *Drogi myślących*, Kraków 1983, p. 46.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. J. Tischner, *Polski młyn*, Kraków 1991, pp. 254–255; J. Galarewicz, *Człowiek jest wspólnotą. Podstawy antropologii filozoficznej Karola Wojtyły*, Kęty 2002, pp. 185–189.

<sup>40</sup> A. Gehlen, *W kręgu antropologii i psychologii społecznej*, transl. K. Krzemieniowa, Warszawa 2001, pp. 5–7.

right place in the hierarchy of beings. As Leszek Kołakowski notes, God is not indebted to anyone, He is not bound by any human rules regarding reciprocity, debts and claims. Therefore, libertine murmuring accusing God of not bending to the requirements of our human justice, of not giving up his sovereignty, is naïve.<sup>41</sup>

In this regard, it is worth referring to the opinion of Alfred North Whitehead, who a century ago pointed out that, without religion, human life would be only a flash of momentary joy, illuminating a sea of suffering and misery, it would only be a tiny episode of passing experience.<sup>42</sup> Kołakowski, in turn, describes *horror metaphysicus* – if nothing truly exists outside of the Absolute, the Absolute is nothing, and if nothing truly exists besides me, I myself am nothing (in the above sense).<sup>43</sup>

## 6. Conclusion

Postmodern societies, often rejecting institutional religions and related anthropologies and axiologies, are heading in a direction that is difficult to read unequivocally.<sup>44</sup> However, even if the influence of Churches on various spheres of political and social life is decreasing, this does not mean that religious beliefs as such have disappeared. There is a revival of religious feelings of considerable fervor among large numbers of people, for example in the form of Protestant movements referring to the Gospel in the United States and South America, or the revival of the Methodist movement in England.<sup>45</sup> Being in constant motion, religion, also in Polish society, takes various forms, adapting to the requirements of postmodernity. Secularization and desecularization are to some extent, stages in the dynamic process of the transformation of religion. Within the framework of liquid postmodernity, however, religiosity takes different forms

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. L. Kołakowski, *Bóg nam nic nie jest dłużny*, transl. I. Kania, Kraków 1994, pp. 54–55.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. A.N. Whitehead, *Religia a nauka*, in: *Drogi myślących*, eds. M. Heller, J. Życiński, Kraków 1983, p. 46.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. L. Kołakowski, *Horror metaphysicus*, transl. M. Panufnik, Res Publica, Warszawa 1990, p. 30.

<sup>44</sup> K. Bochenek, *Zjawisko laicyzacji w społeczeństwie ponowoczesnym*, “Wschodni Rocznik Humanistyczny” 1 (2019), pp. 77–87.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. J. Mariański, S. A. Wargacki, *Płynne sacrum w społeczeństwie ponowoczesnym*, “Uniwersyteckie czasopismo socjologiczne KUL” 17 (2016), pp. 14–21.

than in the past, when they were permanent and anchored in Church institutions. People today often seek the *sacred* on various, sometimes surprising paths.

Leaving aside the issue of evidence for the existence of God or an analysis of his essence, it should be pointed out that, after meeting God, the inconsistent existence of man may cease to be the life of a wanderer at the mercy of chance.<sup>46</sup> Even for people who do not see themselves in the category of God's beloved children on a daily basis, who do not believe in God very ardently, He is the one who provides answers to bothering questions. Without God, man feels lost, and his life seems to be meaningless. At this point, as P. McInerney aptly notes, it is enough to refer to atheistic existentialists who reject God and at the same time proclaim the absurdity of human life.<sup>47</sup>

John Paul II, in his anthropological analyses, goes in a similar direction, which the above-mentioned atheists would probably consider beautiful, but still futile, illusions. It is inconceivable that the search so deeply rooted in human nature should be aimless and meaningless. The very ability to seek the truth and ask questions leads to the recognition that man would not undertake the search for something about which he knows nothing and which he considers absolutely unattainable. Even if someone disagrees with the rather arbitrary conclusion of the Polish pope, it is obvious that man is looking for some form of the absolute that would be able to provide answers to his existential questions and give them meaning. He is looking for something deeper that could be the foundation of all beings, he is looking for the ultimate answer, the highest value, beyond which there are no further questions and no other points of reference. Various hypotheses, as the Pope tries to prove, may be fascinating, but they are far from satisfying. In fact, there comes a moment in every person's life when, whether they admit it or not, they feel the need to root their existence in a truth recognized as ultimate, which would give him an indisputable certainty.<sup>48</sup> From the perspective of people presenting deep faith, but also of many among those who stand far from the traditionally understood religiosity, religion remains an essential, if not the only factor of the sense of human existence. *Homo rationalis*, which in the area of faith intermingles with *homo religiosus*, has a chance to look at the meaning of his existence from a different perspective.

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. P. Cattaneo, *Dlaczego Bóg dopuszcza cierpienie?*, transl. E. Łukaszyk, Kraków 2008, pp. 6–10.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. P. McInerney, *Wstęp do filozofii*, transl. R. Matuszewski, Warszawa 1998, pp. 32–33.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. *Fides et Ratio* 27–29.

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