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BETWEEN “HEALTHY-MINDEDNESS” AND A “SICK SOUL” – ON PRAGMATISM AND CONSEQUENCES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE IN EVERYDAY LIFE¹

INTRODUCTION

Postmodern societies are characterised by pluralism of values and standards. The social world in the so-called developed reflectiveness is characterized by both the rediscovery of tradition and its disintegration². The process of change is expressed on the one hand by the progressive weakening of traditional social ties and obligations, and on the other by the growth of space of personal autonomy³. In postmodern culture everyone has the right to experiment in their own lives, also in the field of moral choices. The necessity and uncertainty of choosing, because of the multitude of values and options, is invariably bound with risk.

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² See A. Giddens, *Europe in the Global Age*, Cambridge 2007, p. 118.

³ See J. Mariański, *Religia w społeczeństwie ponowoczesnym. Studium socjologiczne*, Warszawa 2010, p. 24.

As a result, the freedom of choice becomes a burden⁴. In such a reality, the development of the world of everyday life⁵ seems a balancing act which calls for substantial dedication and sacrifice, often far beyond the capacities of individuals. All of this lays the groundwork for a society with no orientation and sense⁶. This lack of orientation and the loss of sense is offset by society by outlays on consumerism and luxurious life. Under the conditions of unbridled consumption, a society of experience is created with its slogans such as: “it’s your life”, “all things pleasurable are permissible”⁷. Too much stress on material values puts spiritual values at risk. The social processes associated with the increase in the sense of individual freedom make moral values emancipatory values, which, among other things, are freed from the impact of religions and Churches. As a result, in postmodern culture, the religious social “stage” is defined by the slogans of progressive secularization⁸.

According to Janusz Mariański, at present the claim of secularisation no longer explains anything and is increasingly criticised by scholars dealing with the place and role of religion in contemporary society. As the author indicates:

One mistake in secularization theories is to ignore the fact that religions in the modern era can and do undergo serious transformations and modifications. The changes can involve, hard as this is, shifts from being areligious to being religious. The transformations taking place in modern

⁴ See U. Beck, *The Risk Society. Towards a New Modernity*, London 1992; A. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Cambridge 2006, p. 3–4.

⁵ According to Alfred Schütz’s theory of the world we experience, the world of everyday life is the basic reference system for man’s actions and thinking. It structures its goals, intentions, as well as the motives of actions, at the same time determining the ways of experiencing and learning about reality. Everyday life is not shaped solely on the basis of private, individual experience, but is intersubjective; the world of everyday life is invariably co-experienced (see A. Schütz, “On Multiple Realities”, [in:] A. Schütz, *Collected Papers*, vol. 1, ed. M. Natanson, The Hague 1962, p. 207–259).

⁶ See J. Mariański, *Religia w społeczeństwie ponowoczesnym*, op. cit., p. 39–43.

⁷ See H. Słotwińska, *Pedagogika religii w relacjach z dyscyplinami teologicznymi*, Lublin 2016, p. 115–116.

⁸ The claim of secularization, prevailing for several decades in the sociology of religion, usually implies a dilution of the vitality of traditional religions in public life, a privatization of faith or a shift of the sacred into spheres which had remained outside the area of experiences defined as religious. As Janusz Mariański explains the importance of the thesis about the end of religion: “In the conditions of social modernization, religion is unable to maintain its dominant position and role in society and gradually loses its power of interpretation and integration. The basic thesis can be summarized here as follows: the more modern the society, the less religious it is” (see J. Mariański, *Religia w społeczeństwie ponowoczesnym*, op. cit., p. 75).

religiousness cannot be understood only in terms of secularization, but more broadly as transformation⁹.

Under these circumstances, what takes place in the public space of postmodern societies is not progressive secularization, but the process of de-institutionalization, individualization and pluralization of religion¹⁰. As a result, one experiments with one's own religious beliefs, which cease to resemble a coherent, compact structure, and more and more often resemble a patchwork¹¹ or a *bricolage*, a combination of content from a variety of sources.

The phenomenon of "privatization" is characteristic of those individuals who, like in a supermarket, choose their own religious merchandise and arrange individual menus out of them. This market orientation manifests itself not only in Churches, but also in religious movements, which were created for the cluster of alternative forms of life. In this way new social forms of religion are created, where religious functions are more and more often performed by non-religious structures. This applies to phenomena such as "media religiosity" or the religion of the "electronic church", which is conducive to accelerating the ever-increasing privatization of the Christian faith. Religious functions are also taken over by "civil religions", i.e. new forms of communities and therapies, witchcraft and astrology, which are referred to as "secular piety"¹².

This statement indicates that in postmodern culture the tendency to emphasize autonomy not only in private life, but also in religious life is growing. In these circumstances, the functioning of a unified and coherent worldview is problematic. Religion and religious worship become a matter of cultural choice – a private matter belonging to the individual experiences of the postmodern man. Some try to free their everyday life from the influence of religion and the Church, while others feel loneliness, anxiety and instability, so characteristic of post-modernity. These states make them refer to what they consider to be divine, i.e. religious experience.

In the literature on the subject there are many examples describing how, in the conditions of liquid modernity, people deal with their own religious beliefs. Therefore, the article will not aim to review these

⁹ J. Mariański, *Religia w społeczeństwie ponowoczesnym*, op. cit., p. 131.

¹⁰ See *ibidem*, p. 143.

¹¹ See J. Marzec, "Polityka religijności w epoce instant", *Forum Oświatowe* 2011, No. 2.

¹² See T. Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion. The Problem of Religion in Modern Society*, New York 1967.

positions but to try to recognize the pragmatic nature and consequences of religious experience for the practice of everyday life of postmodern societies.

WILLIAM JAMES'S PHILOSOPHY OF PRAGMATISM

For a better understanding of pragmatism and the consequences of religious experience, it is worth referring to the concept of William James, who played an important role in the history of philosophical thought in the United States and Europe. In order to better understand James's views, it is necessary at the outset to refer to the fundamental concepts of pragmatism, which is the culmination of the research of the American philosopher and psychologist. These features would constantly surface in his way of thinking.

Pragmatism was one of the most important philosophical currents at the beginning of the 20th century and undoubtedly influenced the development of the most recent philosophy. Arising from the affirmation of life and science, it objected to the self-contained systems of the nineteenth century, developed in complete detachment from the then state of experimental sciences and in opposition to the philosophical concepts of empiricism and naturalism. The genesis of pragmatism was a rebellion against philosophy that purports to be the queen of sciences and imposes its ontological concepts on the other sciences. Pragmatism opposed them, referring to both the experience of sciences and the experience of everyday life. As a consequence, two fundamental philosophical tendencies of modernity found their roots in pragmatism. One is the pursuit of the methodology of empirical knowledge, the other – the pursuit of anthropological questions, i.e. those dealing with the human being and human life¹³.

The connection of the category of experience with life and action was not only the reason why pragmatism made a key breakthrough in the tradition of empiricism, but also created a link between pragmatism and the philosophy of life, fashionable at the turn of the 20th century. The category of life, as seen in the representatives of pragmatic philosophy, was not unequivocal. In the works of James, it was primarily psychological as it involved the history of the individual *self* and its various experiences and was synonymous with consciousness¹⁴.

¹³ See H. Buczyńska-Garewicz, *James*, Warszawa 2001, p. 11–17.

¹⁴ See *ibidem*, p. 27.

James introduced the most salient elements of pragmatism in *The Meaning of Truth*. The author observes that if what I am certain about at a given moment is the truth, pragmatism sees truth as “‘agreement’ of our ideas with reality”, as “the property of some of our ideas”. According to pragmatists, true ideas are those ideas which we can assimilate, validate, corroborate, and verify, as well as “any idea that helps us to deal, either practically or intellectually, with either the reality or its belongings”¹⁵. The problem is that the “belonging” is not permanent but variable. It means that it sometimes happens to our ideas and other times it does not happen to our ideas; it is the “usefulness of our thinking” that decides whether we deal with the former or with the latter. Whether the idea is useful is decided by whether or not it helps us “to deal with either the reality or its belongings”.

This statement indicates that not only an idea, but also action must appear, which will determine the “meaning of truth”. One can assume, then, that the worldview of pragmatism (Greek *prágma* – action, activity) is predicated on action (practical or intellectual)¹⁶. The practical consequences resulting from experience are important and only they become a measure of truth¹⁷. Truthfulness, on the other hand, is related only to what is most beneficial for experience, i.e. what is useful. Nothing that has not been verified can be true. Truth, then, is something that takes place within experience and is subject to its control. In addition to cognitive elements, James’s concept of experience includes emotional and volitional elements. It is a subjective experience, shaped by the individual’s will¹⁸.

This position indicates that everything that man knows about the world is the result of a self-organising mind, which at the same time is self-controlled and self-regulating. An objective reality, even if it existed, would be superfluous according to pragmatism. The complex diversity of everyday human experiences and their needs could never be contained in its essence. Pragmatism postulates a subjective look at reality, devoid of objective facts.

¹⁵ See W. James, *The Meaning of Truth. A Sequel to ‘Pragmatism’*, New York 1997, p. ix-x.

¹⁶ See Z. Drozdowicz, “Pragmatyczna racjonalność religii i religijności w ujęciu Williama Jamesa”, *Przegląd Religioznawczy* 2010, No. 1, p. 32.

¹⁷ See W. James, “Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking”, [in:] W. James, *Writings 1902-1910*, New York 1987, p. 506-507.

¹⁸ See H. Buczyńska-Garewicz, *James*, op. cit., p. 84-86.

JAMES'S CONCEPT OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

In these circumstances, it is inspiring to see how James, in the context of his philosophy, interprets religious experience.

In an attempt to answer this question, it should be noted at the outset that in James's concept, the world of life is not only a sphere of the seen, but also of what is invisible. More precisely, it is the experience of "the invisible order"¹⁹, e.g. a religious experience, which is linked with ideas rather than actual objects. Hence, for the philosopher religious experience is a "study in human nature"²⁰, as borne out by the full title of the book: *The Varieties of Religious Experience. A Study in Human Nature*. One of the fundamental observations made by James is that psychological studies do not research religious institutions, rituals or ideas, but rather "religious emotions and drives"²¹, or an individual's actions and experience.

Of crucial importance for the understanding of the phenomenon in question is the understanding of the term *religion*, which in English means both an objective and subjective side of religion. James is exclusively interested in the subjective aspect. This is related to the methodological position of the author, who, as a supporter of introspection, does not deal with anything that does not appear directly or indirectly in consciousness, i.e. personal experience.

James defines his point of view as "exclusively biological". This means that he looks at the manifestations of religious life as a phenomenon from this world and uses the "empirical method of proof" to study them. Before applying this method, he performs an action that can be classified as "philosophical reasoning". It boils down to the study of "pure and simple personal religion as primary with respect to its institutional effects"²². At stake here are personal feelings, premonitions, emotions, piety, etc. "Like love, like wrath, like hope, ambition, jealousy, like every other instinctive eagerness and impulse, it adds to life an enchantment which is not rationally or logically deducible from anything else". He goes on: religion "ought to mean nothing short of this new reach of freedom for us, with the struggle over, the keynote of

¹⁹ See W. James, "The Varieties of Religious Experience. A Study in Human Nature", [in:] W. James, *Writings 1902-1910*, op. cit., p. 55-56.

²⁰ See P. M. Socha, "Przedmowa: doświadczenia religijne po 100 latach", [in:] W. James, *Doświadczenia religijne*, Kraków 2001, p. 1.

²¹ See *ibidem*, p. IV.

²² See *ibidem*.

the universe sounding in our ears, and everlasting possession spread before our eyes”²³.

Interestingly, James never defined the relationship between religion and religious experience, which would clarify whether he equated the two concepts. Only two years after the publication of *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, when asked by his eminent disciple James Pratt about his understanding of religious experience, he replied that this is “every moment of life which brings the individual closer to the reality of spiritual matters”²⁴. This is a gift that can be received by people yet cannot be rationally explained. Theologians dub it a “gift of God’s grace”, while philosophers call it a “gift of our organism”²⁵. The probability that such a gift may appear is equal to that of the gift never appearing. For religious experience is only an addition to a person’s life, especially significant when the outside life is not satisfactory.

This statement indicates that cognition and experience are not selfless; they always serve a purpose and always have a pragmatic dimension. When human beings experience the nonsense of everything that they painstakingly create in their daily lives, religion often comes to the aid. A religious person enters a state of mind where the will of self-affirmation is stronger than the fear of the uncertain or the unknown. In this way, uncertainty and internal tension disappear, and concern for the future is superseded by happy relaxation and a “calm deep breathing of an eternal present”²⁶. This state can be had as a “gift”; some receive it, others do not.

At this point it should be noted that James is not concerned with simply identifying religion with some form of happiness. His research demonstrates that religious feelings are not merely a manifestation of escape or avoidance, although this may be the case for some people. The power of religious happiness lies in agreeing to the existence of evil with the knowledge that evil has been defeated once and for all. According to the philosopher, the negative or tragic element of human everyday life enriches one’s religious consciousness²⁷.

²³ W. James, “The Varieties of Religious Experience”, op. cit., p. 50.

²⁴ See P. M. Socha, “Przedmowa”, op. cit., p. IV.

²⁵ See W. James, “The Varieties of Religious Experience”, op. cit., p. 50.

²⁶ Ibidem.

²⁷ See ibidem, p. 52.

“HEALTHY-MINDEDNESS” AND A “SICK SOUL” – INDIVIDUAL WAYS OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

A good example of this phenomenon is the features (religious idiosyncrasies) described by James, which are characteristic of those who experience religion²⁸. This article will focus on two selected types of human personality, which demonstrate the underlying individual differences in the experience of religion and reveal the pragmatism and consequences arising from the selection of a specific path of religious experience, which I will endeavour to indicate in the further part of the text.

The first type of personality can be described as “healthy-mindedness”. At the root of its religious aspect is action aimed at “achieving, retaining or regaining happiness”. James observes that

With such relations between religion and happiness, it is perhaps not surprising that men come to regard the happiness which a religious belief affords as a proof of its truth. If a creed makes a man feel happy, he almost inevitably adopts it²⁹.

For many, this unique “religious happiness” is

congenital and irreclaimable. “Cosmic emotion” inevitably takes in them the form of enthusiasm and freedom [...] From the outset their religion is one of union with the divine³⁰.

Elements of the rationality of “healthy-minded” people include both the tendency “which looks on all things and sees that they are good” and the involuntary and methodical health-oriented mindset. Healthy-mindedness involuntarily perceives things as happy. On the other hand, methodical healthy-mindedness is based on the search for goodness and ignorance of evil³¹. James changed this activity, raising it to the rank of a therapeutic principle and a philosophical one: “The deliberate adoption of an optimistic turn of mind thus makes its entrance into philosophy”³². The latter was to contribute e.g. to the emergence of liberalism in Christianity and a “new kind of natural religions”, i.e. evolutionism.

²⁸ See *ibidem*, p. 57–76.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 77.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 78.

³¹ See *ibidem*, p. 85–86.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 87.

The idea of a universal evolution lends itself to a doctrine of general meliorism and progress which fits the religious needs of the healthy-minded so well that it seems almost as if it might have been created for their use³³.

The therapeutic principle, in turn, was to be instrumental for the birth and spread in America of a current known as the “Mind-cure movement”³⁴. The representatives of this movement believe in the salvific power of a healthy attitude towards life, manifested by hope, courage, trust towards people and the world. They despise doubt, fear, sadness. The philosopher reveals the doctrinal foundations of this movement, as well as its achievements: “The blind have been made to see, the halt to walk; lifelong invalids have had their health restored. The moral fruits have been no less remarkable”³⁵. It turned out that many people who did not see this ability in themselves were able to adopt a “healthy-minded” attitude of life as their own.

However, indirect influences were also significant. One could hear everywhere about the Gospel of Relaxation, about the movement against sadness, about people whose life’s motto was “youth, health, vigor!”. In families professing the Gospel of Relaxation one cannot complain about something that is beyond one’s control, for example bad weather. Neither can one talk about unpleasant things or complain about the deficiencies and inconveniences of everyday life³⁶.

The perception of goodness and the denial of evil is a form of suggestion or autosuggestion, a phenomenon known as faith healing³⁷. People who have experienced faith healing tend to be passive rather than active, and relaxed rather than tense. Their philosophy of life is based on the principle:

Give up the feeling of responsibility, let go your hold, resign the care of your destiny to higher powers, be genuinely indifferent as to what becomes of it all, and you will find not only that you gain a perfect inward relief, but often also, in addition, the particular goods you sincerely thought you were renouncing³⁸.

This is the nature of salvation according to James. It can only be experienced by those who, in their thinking and acting, go beyond a critical

³³ Ibidem, p. 89.

³⁴ See ibidem, p. 91.

³⁵ Ibidem, p. 92.

³⁶ See ibidem, p. 92-93.

³⁷ See P. M. Socha, “Przedmowa”, op. cit. p. XII.

³⁸ W. James, “The Varieties of Religious Experience”, op. cit., p. 105.

point that allows them to get the impression that they are under the influence of some external power. The capacity or lack of it of such experience is what differentiates a religious from a merely moralistic character:

With those who undergo it in its fullness, no criticism avails to cast doubt on its reality. They *know*; for they have actually *felt* the higher powers, in giving up the tension of their personal will³⁹.

In answer to the question where these successes come from, James points to the skilful use of “suggestive power”, the most important factor of which is “the force of personal faith, enthusiasm, and example, and above all the force of novelty”⁴⁰. Of special significance for the success of the mind-cure movement is that “its founders have added systematic exercise in passive relaxation, concentration and meditation to their reasoned advice and dogmatic assertions”⁴¹.

In his work, James refers to the examples of “mind-cure”, which are a form of today’s psychotherapy based on suggestion and a special set of optimistic beliefs (e.g. Gestalt, neurolinguistics). Another example is the preference for “spiritual vigour” in modern culture, in its religious form, which is necessary in order to cope with the “rat race”, where “evil is simply a lie”. All this in different parts of the world has resulted in new forms of expression for human spirituality and religious beliefs.

Opposing the attitude of the “healthy-minded” people, who consciously seek to diminish evil, there is the attitude which enables the intensification of evil, which James described as the “sick soul”.

“The sick soul” is a type of melancholic, a man of weak life energy. He is a victim of “pathological melancholy”⁴². It manifests itself in the form of helplessness and disillusionment with life, abandon, lack of interest, and a black-and-white vision of the world. The “sick” can either rebel against it or passively give up. He can accuse himself of this state of affairs or make claims to external power. Religion and religious experience are not only unable to cure him of this disease, but they can actually exacerbate or perpetuate this condition. The presenting symptoms of this disease vary from person to person. Some cases are more dangerous and others less so. For some, evil

³⁹ Ibidem, p. 106.

⁴⁰ Ibidem, p. 108.

⁴¹ Ibidem, p. 109.

⁴² Ibidem, p. 136.

means inadequate adaptation to things, an inappropriate attitude to the environment⁴³.

According to James, “positive and active anguish”⁴⁴, which takes on a variety of forms, is a far worse suffering. It can be expressed in distrust of oneself and self-doubt, suspicion, anxiety, concern, fear and disappointment with everyday life. The consciousness of a passive person is infested with a sense of evil, and thus the person loses the sense of existence of any good in the world. His consciousness ignores and excludes goodness. That is why he perceives the world only in black colours. This attitude does not allow him to seek help in his religious experience. Rather, it inclines him towards irreligiosity.

According to James, a “healthy-minded” personality and a “sick soul” need a different religion. The philosopher believes that the method of distracting human attention from evil and of “living simply”, as in the case of a “healthy-minded” personality, works as long as it fulfils its purpose. As long as it is effective, it cannot be blamed for anything as a religious solution. Unfortunately, its effectiveness breaks down when disillusion with life, melancholy (inability to feel joyful) and difficult situations occur in human life.

James believes that “healthy-mindedness” as a philosophical doctrine is something incomparable to the “sick soul”, because the incidents of evil, which the “healthy-minded” person does not want to admit, are an indispensable component of reality. The fall of man and his life failures is a natural, ordinary human fate. Everyday human life is constantly permeated with such experiences, own mistakes, wasted opportunities, because the nature of man is made up of setbacks. Therefore, even in the case of a person who appears happy on the face of it, one can find something evil inside.

The old man, sick with an insidious internal disease, may laugh and quaff his wine at first as well as ever, but he knows his fate now, for the doctors have revealed it; and the knowledge knocks the satisfaction out of all these functions⁴⁵.

⁴³ According to James, such evil can be cured in a natural way. It is enough to change the human being or the environment, or both simultaneously. There are cases, however, when “evil is no mere relation of the subject to particular outer things, but something more radical and general, a wrongness of vice in his essential nature, which no alteration of the environment, or no superficial rearrangement of the inner self, can cure, and which requires a supernatural remedy” (see *ibidem*, p. 127).

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 138.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 132-133.

In these circumstances, material goods and carefree fun become nothing; they do not make us happy in the face of misfortune.

James, referring to the findings of contemporary psychology, points out that

Some persons are born with an inner constitution which is harmonious and well balanced from the outset. Their impulses are consistent with one another, their will follows without trouble the guidance of their intellect, their passions are not excessive, and their lives are little haunted by regrets. Others are oppositely constituted; and are so in degrees which may vary from something so slight as to result in a merely odd or whimsical inconsistency, to a discordancy of which the consequences may be inconvenient in the extreme⁴⁶.

The first type is that of a “healthy-minded” individual, and the other that of a person with a “sick spirit”,

Their spirit wars with their flesh, they wish for incompatibles, wayward impulses interrupt their most deliberate plans, and their lives are one long drama of repentance and of effort to repair misdemeanors and mistakes⁴⁷.

As a result, “sick souls” are internally split, hypersensitive and neurotic.

Interestingly, James can relate better to the experience of the “sick soul”. He considers its religious experience to be more valuable because, as he claims, the sick mind involves a larger scale of experience than the “healthy-minded” one. In his research, he assumed the hypothesis that evil facts (phenomena) are just as true components of the world as good ones. A world that denies sadness, suffering and death is incomplete and false, a poetic fiction rather than reality⁴⁸. In his opinion, bad experiences, difficult life events are the best key to understanding one’s own life and only they can open one’s eyes to a deeper knowledge of the truth about oneself and one’s life⁴⁹. These are “religions of deliverance”⁵⁰. In order to experience them, a person must die to an illusory life, before he can be born to a true one.

⁴⁶ Ibidem, p. 156-157.

⁴⁷ Ibidem, p. 157.

⁴⁸ Ibidem, p.151-153.

⁴⁹ Ibidem, p. 152-154.

⁵⁰ See ibidem, p. 154.

CONCLUSION

The findings of James's work indicate that there are two types of life: natural and spiritual. Man must lose the first one before he can enter the second one. We therefore get two different types of experience of the world, two different views on life. On the one hand, we see a "healthy-minded" person and, on the other hand, a "sick soul". The former is happy since biological birth; the latter must be born again in order to experience happiness.

James's work reveals that the "sick soul" itself can effectively heal itself. Religion is one of the paths to inner unification; "easily, permanently and successfully, it often transforms the most intolerable misery into the profoundest and most enduring happiness"⁵¹. James points out, however, that in non-religious cases man can also be reborn again. He points out that one can be reborn not only to religion, but also to irreligiousness; by being reborn one can move from the sensitivity of conscience to freedom or licence. Still, "In all these instances we have precisely the same psychological form of event, – a firmness, stability, and equilibrium succeeding a period of storm and stress and inconsistency"⁵².

The religious states of happiness and suffering described by James, which are part of religious experience, are important because of their diversity and the so-called practical fruits of life which constitute the value and pragmatism of religious feelings. James considers usefulness to be the criterion of truth – any religion that meets the needs of man's life is true⁵³. This observation indicates that faith in supernatural powers fulfils a certain essential function in culture. It satisfies specific needs that cannot be satisfied by any other cultural factors. Religious experience can therefore be considered pragmatic because of the effects it has on the well-being of those who experience them.

The brief analysis of individual forms of religious experience carried out in this article helps to distinguish two types of consequences of faith in the deity: dysfunctional and functional.

The former can be briefly described as the shift of responsibility. Man is considered here as passive, shifting responsibility for one's own life and deeds to higher powers. In his idea, it is the deity who chooses a strategy for solving a life problem and therefore a person passively

⁵¹ Ibidem, p. 163.

⁵² Ibidem.

⁵³ Ibidem.

expects signs from the higher powers in order to find out which of the ways of solving the problems should be applied. The effectiveness of such behaviour breaks down as soon as difficult and borderline events come to light in the person's life. An individual who has entrusted his or her life to external forces cannot on his or her own cope with them. This restriction prevents the individual from demonstrating an active attitude towards his or her own life.

The latter is fundamentally different from the former. It can be described as a self-direction. The individual takes action on his or her own to solve his or her own problems without the need to appeal to the higher powers. He treats himself as someone who has been endowed by the higher powers with the abilities and resources necessary to solve the problem. Religious experience is a kind of support for him/her in finding the sense of life and in implementing the process of transcendence, and as a result, harbouring hopes for a better quality of life. In these circumstances, the consequence of religious experience is the activation of the individual, who tries to understand and address the essential requirements of his or her life.

The usefulness of James's work boils down to two aspects. The first, with a more general meaning, is to see in his book a set of general instructions, which can be of benefit to any thinking reader; the second is a set of inspirations and instructions for pedagogy or, more broadly, for education.

An important issue addressed by James in his book is the call to confront head-on difficult situations in everyday life. Their conscious experience leads to an inner union and enables a better level of self-awareness and knowledge of one's life. Therefore, a person should be able to face negative experiences from an early age. From the pedagogical point of view, it is not so much important to offer help in the fight against them, as it is often simply unfeasible, but to support the person in the process of educating him/her to discover the meaning of life. In the case of young people, one of the ways of such support may be religious education and religious upbringing⁵⁴. In relation to adults, it may be important to provide religious themes for reflection on one's own life⁵⁵. Individuals who are not religious can discover the meaning

⁵⁴ See H. Słotwińska, *Pedagogika religii w relacjach z dyscyplinami teologicznymi*, op. cit., p. 111.

⁵⁵ See A. Walulik, *Edukacyjne wspomaganie dorosłych w refleksji nad życiem*, Kraków 2012.

of their own lives, for example within the framework of the emerging sub-discipline of science – the pedagogy of everyday life⁵⁶ or existentially important pedagogy⁵⁷.

I leave open the question of what educators can do to increase the role of questions leading to the discovery of the meaning of life in the education process.

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⁵⁶ "Pedagogy of everyday life" helps educators regard daily life, identify there what eludes attention, discover the unknown, find new senses and significations, change all that it is criticised for. Reflections on the pedagogy of everyday life are in particular addressed in texts such as: Z. Melosik, "Pedagogika życia codziennego: teoria i praktyka", [in:] *Edukacja a życie codzienne*, vol. 1, ed. A. Radziejewicz-Winnicki, E. Bielska, Katowice 2002; *Codziennosc jako miejsce i źródło uczenia się*, ed. E. Kurantowicz, M. Nowak-Dziemianowicz, "Teraźniejszość – Człowiek – Edukacja", special issue, Wrocław 2003; R. Sulima, *Antropologia codzienności*, Kraków 2000; *Socjologia codzienności*, ed. M. Bogunia-Borowska, P. Sztompka, Kraków 2008; *Barwy codzienności. Analiza socjologiczna*, ed. M. Bogunia-Borowska, Warszawa 2009.

⁵⁷ See J. Orzelska, *W stronę pedagogiki istotnej egzystencjalnie. Życie i jego trudności z energią duchową jako wyzwanie pedagogiczne rezyduów tożsamości*, Kraków 2014.

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Abstract:

In the article the question of religious experience combined with the problem of pragmatic philosophy of William James has been undertaken. The aim of the article is the attempt of (re)cognition of pragmatics and consequences of religious experience for the practice of everyday life of postmodern societies. The arguments and final conclusions presented in the text have been formulated on the basis of the chosen features of religious individualities, which characterize those who experience religiously. In the conclusion it has been assessed that religious experiences are pragmatic because of consequences which they exert on the feeling of those who experience religiously. Two types of consequences of believing in a deity have been distinguished – the dysfunctional and the functional. Conclusions have been formulated for religious upbringing and pedagogy of everyday life.

Keywords:

pedagogy of everyday life, postmodern society, pragmatism, religious experience

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