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**Janusz Mariański, *Peter Ludwig Berger (1929–2017).
Przejście od sekularyzacji do desekularyzacji* [Peter
Ludwig Berger (1929–2017). The Transition from
Secularization to Desecularization, University of Social
Sciences in Lublin], Lublin 2021, 216 pages**

“What are the classics of sociology and what role do they play?” Eva Barlösius in her study „*Klasyki w złotych ramach*”. *Przyczynek do socjologii klasyków* [Classics in a Golden Frames. Contribution to the Classics of Sociology] asks this rather important question. Her contribution to the classics of sociology is included in the Polish-language collection *Nowe perspektywy teorii socjologicznej* [New Perspectives of Sociological Theory] and is important for this discipline. Referring to Robert K. Merton, the researcher points to the numerous functions of the classics and their works. It would be, inter alia, a unique satisfaction that appears when a researcher (in this case not a classic) compares his research with the results of classical analyses, and feels that his achievements are confirmed by a previously presented outstanding mentality. The classics also set certain standards of taste, which can be considered a manifestation of their educational function.² In addition, thanks to them, new ideas may emerge based on reading what is truly classical.

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² Eva Barlösius, „*Klasyki w złotych ramach*”. *Przyczynek do socjologii klasyków*, [in:] *Nowe perspektywy teorii socjologicznej*, eds. Aleksander Manterys, Janusz Mucha, Zakład Wydawniczy NOMOS, Kraków 2009, p. 5.

It should not be assumed that Professor Janusz Mariański in his recently published monograph is guided by these determinants. His scientific achievements are somehow located in the realm of the classics, at least in the field of Polish sociology, and especially the sociology of religion. It is, however, of great value that the researcher, meritorious for his Polish scientific research and sociological thought, still points to unquestionable authorities and their thoughts. Thus, this confirms the belief that it cannot be abandoned or neglected, especially when we want science to be continuous, to continue to be developed and to be responsible for future generations of readers, social researchers, thinkers, and all those for whom the need to understand what is happening in the social reality is important, in this case, sociological and religious ideas. This is a constant challenge for people of science, with a constant readiness to shape the ethos of a scientific researcher, which I had the pleasure to convince about in the recently published project in the Scientific Publications of PWN.³

How does Janusz Mariański surprise us and what novelties does he bring to us in his monograph *Peter Ludwig Berger (1929–2017). Przejście od teorii sekularyzacji do desekularyzacji* [Peter Ludwig Berger (1929–2017). Moving from secularization to desecularization]? We will try briefly and only to some extent articulate this.

This five-chapter monograph, although it seems to be small in terms of its content, reveals the intensity and firmness of information, intuition and analysis. Although the author informs the reader that the book uses some of the materials found in earlier works, personally, I find many new, sometimes even very surprising, novelties in it. This study is of great value. Starting with a reminder of the relationship between sociology and religion perfectly introduces the subject of the entire project. Traditional and modern society does not eliminate religion and religiosity from one's personal and social life, as the author states in the second chapter.

The issue of secularization, which is quite often undertaken by sociologists of religion, especially nowadays, appears here as well. The author does not avoid the difficult issue of socio-cultural pluralism, referring it

³ Paweł Prüfer, *Idee kultury odpowiedzialności w pracy naukowej*, [in:] *Kultura (nie-) odpowiedzialności. Społeczne konteksty zaniechanej cnoty*, Małgorzata Bogunia Borowska (ed.), Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN SA, Warsaw 2021, p. 137–152.

to religiosity and morality. These relationships are still dynamic, as the next chapter will show. Finally, the reader can become acquainted with the well-elaborated problem of the desecularization theory, which, as you can see, is not retreating, but is actually on the offensive. All this is based on the achievements of Peter Ludwik Berger in this field, so important for the sociology of religion.

Is Transcendence, and thus religion, being “driven out” of society? Or maybe a “renaissance” and rebirth of “spiritual sensitivity in the post-modern world” is taking place (p. 6)? Maybe it is only a “market commodity,” where there are so many offers that it can consciously hide or be completely unconscious? The author does not give unambiguous, unjustified and only partial answers to questions that are primarily research dilemmas. The idea that the main protagonist of this monograph, Peter Ludwig Berger, formulated years ago, emerges quite clearly, convincing us of the emerging process of desecularization and the growing importance of religion in the reality in which we have recently lived and functioned.

This is not only the thesis of a professional sociologist of religion or a theologian, because Berger is also recognized and valued as a sociologist of knowledge, education, economy and politics. Janusz Mariański, however, clearly marks the “operating field” when preparing his book. He simply focuses on the achievements of Berger in the field of sociology of religion, not understood comprehensively, but only fragmentarily, making a certain selection from the whole (p. 10). All of Berger’s *oeuvre* is truly enormous and impressive.

Religion, religiosity, sociology, and sociology of religion, all of these elements, unique yet creating specific categories of social and human reality, as well as being a “way” to analyze the social world and its various components, make Janusz Mariański the subject of his considerations. When a sociologist examines a religious experience, he treats it as a form of man’s natural relationship to God, and not as an imperceptible and unrecognizable factor in his nature. Religious facts and ideas are at the heart of sociological reflection.

Therefore, religion can be understood both substantially and functionally. “Religion [...] is associated with the process of creating social reality as a human enterprise, establishing a sacred cosmos, and places

man in an ultimately significant order” (p. 18). This is what the author of the monograph would say after Berger, adding that “religion (a religious system) legitimizes (validates) the social reality, relating it to the divine order, [...] giving it a universal, extraterrestrial and eternal status, it is sanctified” (p. 25). If we indicate the changes that, especially recently, are taking place in the world and the areas of religion, it will be primarily “the diminishing circles of people who identify with the church and the development of non-church identities” (p. 29).

Something additionally valuable in Janusz Mariański’s analyzes is that he points to the presence of extensive and restrictive definitions concerning religion, which will make it difficult to precisely define what religion is. When, in extensive definitions, religion is treated as all constructions of images through which a person tries to impose meaning on his everyday practices, then, through restrictive definitions, religion is made more precise as products of meaning in life, strictly referring to the systems of reference and symbols contained in the tradition of historical religions (p. 30). Based on the diagnosis of the way both definitions approach it, Professor Mariański concludes that Berger adopted a more extensive definition of religion in his research than the latter definition.

It is no surprise that sociologists of religion see changes in religion and religiosity when considering the existence of traditional and modern societies. The former was marked by established social institutions and a kind of homogenization of people’s mentality. Thus, religion was a carrier of a specific order of values and norms, embracing the entire social life, permeating and normalizing the social structure, sometimes giving a transcendent meaning to both institutions and the lives of individual people (p. 35). What was the nature of religion and religiosity at this stage of society’s development and the formation of human identity? It was most definitely churchlike, “the result of institutionalized processes of church socialization” (p. 36).

Although the author does not elaborate on this topic in detail, at least in this book, it is clear that socialization is a kind of “investment” made by institutions and various entities that want to build and maintain axio-normative systems recognized as correct, which also often contain religious and transcendent elements. In one of my publications, I devoted a lot of space to the analysis of this phenomenon of socialization,

considering it to be a process extended in time and oriented towards the future, which includes some altruism and concern for the social world in its perspective structure. "Socialization, which took place just as strongly in the past (although its nature may have been slightly different from that of today), definitely possesses the trait of being future-oriented. Thus, it is "altruistic," because the present generation in the distant future will no longer directly and personally benefit from the quality of the trained generations."⁴

A modern society, which is also a pluralistic society, as Janusz Mariański emphasizes many times, is a transition from a society of *fate* to a society of *choice*. Selectivity, individualization, detraditionalization, secularization, and deinstitutionalization – these are elements present in society as such and the religious dimension of reality.

This Polish sociologist of religion, faithful to the sociological tradition concerning religion, also takes up, once again in his research challenges, issues concerning secularization. All areas of life are being liberated from the control and influence of religious organizations, thus becoming independent of both religious and *strictly* church institutions (p. 61). An important topic is recalled, which has appeared many times in the social sciences, as well as in the common thinking that secularization is closely related to social modernization. However, as history shows, this thesis is not unequivocal and must be proven every time. Sometimes the matter seems to be the opposite.

The disappearance of religion under the influence of industrialization, urbanization, social differentiation, mobility, science, rationalization (p. 68) are the main arguments that point to the actual existence of this process. Yet, as Berger himself points out, secularization incorporates the entire cultural life as well as man's consciousness. It can be recognized in the socio-institutional dimensions, and although it is a global phenomenon, its intensity does not emerge evenly in all societies and within them (p. 77). This and many other themes, which Janusz Mariański takes up with particular care, allow a sociologist to finally state that "we do not

⁴ Paweł Prüfer, *Metamorfoza społeczeństwa. Zarys teorii maturacjonizmu linearno-cyklicznego*, Oficyna Wydawnicza ASPRA w koedycji z Oficyną Wydawniczą von Velke, Warsaw 2020, p. 81.

live in a secularized world, but in a “re-enchanted” world, with a reviving religiosity on a global scale” (p. 87).

Most certainly, many researchers would argue against this thesis, but the adopted sincere point of view and dialogues with many different observers of social and religious life make it possible to consider such a thesis as being justified. It can be especially documented when the phenomenon is analyzed not “from behind the researcher’s desk,” but by, for example, adopting the strategy of a “methodological monism” of the involved researcher. The pluralism in social life, including religious pluralism, reveals the peculiarity of the phenomenon, not its disappearance or some kind of total withering away. For obvious reasons, this pluralism also translates into the morality of modern people. “The changes taking place in the world of values and norms could be described as a shift from the ethics of prohibitions and prescriptions to the ethics of permissions, from restrictions to freedom” (p. 115). It is not surprising then that religion is also one of many aspects that a person can simply choose (p. 131) and properly “metabolize” in his biography.

It seems that the most important goal that the author has undertaken and rather achieved is to justify Berger’s thesis that religion, religiosity, faith and everything related to these should be considered from the perspective of the transition from the theory of secularization to the theory of desecularization. For many years, Berger himself was a supporter of the secularization theory (p. 137). However, it was sociology that allowed him to change his position, which may seem extremely surprising. It is not theology that supports such a transition, but sociology. From this perspective, there is a visible massive religious explosion. Modernity does not bring religion down with it. Religion shows many signs of recovery, and if it is not entirely clear, the process of its petrification is becoming evident (p. 150).

Religion now shows its social influence once again, returning even to the public space and being present in some cultural subsystems. The idea of the concept of religion as a dispersed reality and the propensity of religion to diffusion are still justified, and Roberto Cipriani still talks about this with great commitment (pp. 154–155). As Piotr Sztompka emphasizes in the recently published re-edition of a textbook on sociology, this time entitled *Socjologia. Wykłady o społeczeństwie* [Sociology.

Lectures about Society], religion is still “an extremely important form of social bonding.”⁵

In my modest sociological analysis, entitled *Rekonstrukcja jakości życia. Teoretyczno-praktyczne atuty socjologii* [Reconstruction of the Quality of Life. Theoretical and Practical Advantages of Sociology], published in the same year as the monograph reviewed here by Janusz Mariański, I allowed myself to include the following topic: “The presence of religious references and what is understood as a reference to the *sacrum* is prominent in sociology. [...] The great sociological tradition was and is related to transcendent issues, although, as sociologists usually emphasize, it is not the discipline’s domain of grasping the inner aspect of faith, prayer, *sacrum*, but only penetrating the external and social aspects of religion.”⁶ Janusz Mariański is faithful to the idea that emerged over many decades of the tradition of the sociology of religion. It is the conviction of the need for modesty and humility, which every social researcher should show if he intends to undertake the exploration of the phenomenon of religion and religiosity.

The author of the monograph, which is strictly based on the achievements and scientific merits of Peter Ludwig Berger, would have justified reasons to present his theses radically, decisively, without necessarily being careful to justify everything he claims. Janusz Mariański leaves other researchers and readers the opportunity to interpret and make their observations, encouraging (or at least allowing) the use of wide and varied hermeneutic possibilities. It is good that such a sociological undertaking has appeared recently, because it also confirms the desecularization thesis, since religion as such still mobilizes social researchers and sociologists so intensely as to penetrate its internal and external world.

Let us recall once again what sociologists of religion emphasize with conviction: religion can be studied in a sociological prism as a social phenomenon, as an element of the human world in which the individual relates to the transcendent dimensions. At the same time, this dimension marks the boundaries of such professional searches and diagnoses. Yet,

⁵ Piotr Sztompka, *Socjologia. Wykłady z socjologii*, Znak Horyzont, Kraków 2021, p. 187.

⁶ Paweł Prüfer, *Rekonstrukcja jakości życia. Teoretyczno-praktyczne atuty socjologii*, Wydawnictwo Edukacyjne AKAPIT, Toruń 2021, p. 135.

this very researcher of religious phenomena must be aware that there is another, much deeper dimension to it, that religious experience is located at completely different poles of reality than a scientific, even very sophisticated analysis. Was William James wrong, who in his book *The Varieties of Religious Experience* years ago remarked: "I believe that feeling is the deeper source of religion and that philosophical and theological formulas are secondary products, reminiscent of translating a text into a foreign language"?⁷

⁷ William James, *Doświadczenia religijne*, transl. Jan Hempel, Książka i Wiedza, Warsaw 1958, p. 391.