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Original Article

The Concept of Religious Experience According to Stanisław Głaz*

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Abstract

Subject and Purpose: This article draws on Stanisław Głaz's publications to examine his understanding of religious experience. The authors present an analysis of religious experience, including its understanding, structure, and progression. Furthermore, by analyzing religious experience, they demonstrate its benefits for the development of a person's religious life and personality. **Method:** To analyze the issue of religious experience, positive exposition and analytical-synthetic methods were used to demonstrate its scope, essence, and evolution as understood by Stanisław Głaz. **Conclusion:** In analyzing religious experience in Głaz's work, several ways of understanding it can be discerned (religious feeling, religious phenomenon). According to Głaz, religious experience is open and connected to universal human values. In particular, it reveals the truth about humanity and their world, as well as about the Absolute. The complexity and evolution of the understanding of religious experience in Głaz's publications indicate the need for a deeper analysis of this phenomenon and the refinement of research tools that will better illuminate its role in human life. Another important conclusion is Głaz's analysis of religious experience in relation to other religions, such as Hinduism. Given the religious pluralism of contemporary societies, this strand of his research on religious experience should be further explored.

Keywords: religious experience, religious feeling, phenomenon, values, truth, freedom, religious paradigm

Religious experience and related religious feelings have occurred in the lives of many people of various religious denominations, many of whom have described the sources, course, and effects of their own religious experience (Głaz, 1995, 1998). Philosophers, theologians, and psychologists have undertaken attempts to analyze these accounts. The research conducted so far indicates a lack of uniform opinion among scientists regarding the origin of religious experience and its understanding. For example, it is believed that the vision of St. Paul near Damascus was the result of dysfunction of the occipital lobe of the cerebral cortex (Montmorand, 1920), that religious experience is the result of a conflict between the id and the ego, that it is an oceanic feeling (Freud, 1990), that it can be induced by psychedelic substances (Grof, 1985; Smith, 1964) or by brain activity stimulated by external tools (neurotheology) (Newberg, 2010).

For other researchers, religious experience is a kind of communion with a force perceived as divine (Allport, 1950; James, 1908), a feeling of holiness and dependence at the same time (Otto, 1923). This is the experience of “something more,” i.e., the experience of a higher, divine reality (Jung, 1955), the experience and feeling of contact with a supernatural reality (Tatala et al., 2015). Clark (1958) and James (1908), analyzing the texts of those who had a religious experience, drew attention to its essential features. These include: inexpressibility – meaning the difficulty or impossibility of expressing the experienced states in words; passivity – the person feels captured by a higher power that surpasses them; brevity – although the effects of the experience are long-lasting, the intensity of the experience itself is short-lived. In a religious experience of a mystical nature, which is more intense, there is a feeling of delight, elation, revelation, and even ecstasy, and the relationship that is established between a person and Transcendence is deep (Hood et al., 1996).

According to some researchers, religious experience has positive effects. They concern personal and social reference, which is accompanied by spiritual and emotional states (Król, 2004; Tatala et al., 2015). Religious experience is cognitive in nature. It provides knowledge about the Absolute, oneself, and other people (Jung, 1955; Van Kaam, 1964). However, according to other scientists, it can lead to irreversible mental dysfunctions or personality changes (Grof, 1985; Snyder, 1986).

Stanisław Głaz is a scholar, researcher, and priest of the Jesuit order with clearly defined scientific interests, specializing in research in the field of philosophy of religion and psychology of religion, and sometimes also referring to theology (Głaz, 2011, 2016c). Among the issues explored by Głaz, religious experience holds a key place, as indicated by the titles of his monographic publications (Głaz, 1998, 2000, 2002). It can even be said that it is the main subject of his scientific exploration. The presence of broadly understood experience in Głaz’s research is completely understandable, but its presence in the philosophy of religion and the psychology of religion he practices deserves more attention.

Philosophy can be practiced in isolation from the experience of the world around us. However, the objection arises that this type of thinking becomes a closed-minded current of thought, doomed to slow intellectual ossification. Therefore, in contemporary philosophical reflection, it is crucial to develop this tradition, which draws on empiricism as one of the fundamental sources of human knowledge about the person and the world around them (Biela, 2019). Gład (2011) clearly refers to the aforementioned philosophical tradition, which, in his understanding, began with Aristotle and was continued in the modern era, among others, by John Locke. The issues related to religious experience are also present in the contemporary research achievements of other famous philosophers and religious psychologists. As the Polish philosopher of religion Henryk Machoń (2018) showed in his monograph, it is an important aspect of the scientific work of Rudolf Otto, William James, Carl G. Jung, and other researchers.

Therefore, as some researchers suggest (Biela, 2021; Drennan, 2000; Zarzycka, 2009), the concept of religious experience proposed by Gład should become the subject of philosophical, theological, and psychological debate. This article may be a contribution to this aim, as it critically analyzes his concept of religious experience.

Anthropological Premises of a Religious Act

According to Gład, the phenomenon of religiosity and the related religious experience are essential components of human existence. Therefore, it should be assumed that the concept of religious experience relates to the concept of man and has its source in it. Therefore, to establish the understanding of religious experience in the work of this scholar, it is necessary to familiarize oneself with the philosophical anthropology preferred by him and determine how he understands the human being and its essential features.

According to Gład, “a human being is, above all, a person, which constitutes his uniqueness and distinguishes him from other beings. A person, understood by him according to the classical definition, is an individual substance having a rational/rational nature or an individual rational substance, i.e., an individual and rational substantial being” (Gład, 2011, p. 120). In man, we can distinguish three integrated levels: physical, psychological, and spiritual, which “all together create a model of a personal subject” (Gład, 2011, p. 121). Gład – following Igor Caruso, Viktor Frankl, and Max Scheler – emphasizes the importance of the spiritual dimension in man. It is thanks to the spiritual dimension, which shows the uniqueness of man, that the human being gains unity. “This dimension of man – according to Gład – also includes all activities, experiences and actions [...], as well as relations of a personal – personal and personal – object nature” (Gład, 2011, p. 120).

A human person has certain important features, which Głaz calls “existentials”, and the most important of them, those “that characterize a human as a person, include, among others: dignity, freedom, free will, intentionality, responsibility, and meaning of life” (Głaz, 2011, pp. 123–124). A human being, being a person, also has a personality, which is shaped in relations with the material, social, and spiritual world. Personality is the result of a certain process in which the possibilities of a given person’s existence are revealed, especially those present in the psyche. It also constitutes a kind of “whole” of a variable nature, shaped throughout the life of a human being. Human personality is therefore seen by Głaz as a “specific whole”, as a dynamic unity focused on gaining experience of another person (Głaz, 2011).

An important problem for further consideration is to grasp the difference between a person and personality. Głaz (2016c) does not identify them, but points out that they differ from each other. It should be noted that the term “personality” is commonly used in psychology, while the concept of “person” is rather the domain of philosophy and the humanities. The difference between them should be sought in the definition of a person adopted by the Jesuit philosopher, an essential element of which is the concept of substance. Substance is an independent being, which has the source of its existence and is defined by its unchanging features. It constitutes a permanent basis for every being, including the human one. In this understanding, it is something more primary than human personality in the ontological order. Personality is therefore a dynamic structure conditioned by an individual and personal subject, even the constitutive components of which may change.

Also, the entry of personality into a relationship with reality, which we generally call experience, becomes possible thanks to the fact that a person is, above all, a person. Therefore, according to Głaz, “experience is an eminently personal act” (Głaz, 2011, p. 33). At this point, it is worth paying attention to a certain element of the classical definition of a person, according to which it is a rational nature. Nature in classical philosophy, e.g., in scholastic terminology, means the dynamic aspect of existence. Thus, the personality of a human individual as a dynamic structure is connected with the fundamental level of human existence, which is the source of its dynamics.

The Structure of Religious Experience

From the above analysis of the anthropology preferred by Głaz, it follows that the possibility of experience is deeply inscribed in human nature and constitutes one of its essential aspects. In a general sense, experience is a certain act of perception of a personal subject and can be external and internal in nature. In the first

type of experience, a person learns about things through the senses. On the other hand, the second type concerns knowing about yourself.

According to Głaz, “knowing yourself” as someone who exists through acts of sensory and intellectual learning is the primary and fundamental experience of the knowing of the subject. In experiencing oneself, “as an existing personal subject, a person is given the «I», as an existing subject, and at the same time, as the source from which everything that is «mine» originates. The «I» is experienced in the acts of «mine»; it is given in direct experience. A person directly experiences that he exists, that he is unique” (Głaz, 2011, pp. 33–34).

The diversity of human experiences also includes religious experience, which, according to Głaz, can occur in two varieties. The first of them – indirect (ordinary) – consists in the subject recognizing Transcendence, and especially the presence of a personal God. The second, on the other hand, is a mystical experience caused directly by an object, which is most often the Absolute. In religious experience, the object is important, which determines the specificity of this experience. It is an object from the supernatural sphere: a deity, a personal God, the Absolute, etc. It should be noted: the object of religious experience is not passive, because it is he who initiates the religious act, which, according to Głaz, takes place especially in a mystical experience (Głaz, 1998).

Religious Feeling and Religious Experience

Human religiosity is characterized by a wealth of attitudes, relationships, states, and experiences. The latter are not the only spheres in which a human being reveals himself as *homo religiosus*. The problem of the diversity of religious states of a human person is present and analyzed in Głaz’s scientific achievements, especially in the matter of the state he calls “religious feeling” (Głaz, 2016c), “which is a special internal experience [...]. The emotional-volitional dimension dominates it. The essence of religious feeling will include the bond between man and God. Religious feeling will constitute a certain kind of feeling of contact, unity with God. Religious feeling is an immanent experience of the transcendent God” (Głaz, 2016c, p. 94).

The scholar distinguishes it from the state of “religious feeling” and “religious sensation.” The first is a subjective feeling of a certain intensity of psychological processes in each subject, and the second is a reaction to a strong external factor (Głaz, 2011). It should be noted that the above specific definition of religious feeling is very similar to the concept of religious experience. Głaz states many times that religious feeling is associated with the experience of the supernatural sphere. Can we see any differences between them in the conceptual and real aspects? To

capture them, we need to pay attention to the similarities occurring in religious feeling and experience, because, as the Jesuit researcher writes, we can see a certain phase structure in them (Gład, 2016c), which consists in the occurrence of certain common stages of both processes. These are: the subject establishing contact with a personal God, the subject's personal involvement in the relationship with God, and showing reverence and respect to the Absolute through actions called religious acts. Therefore, essential features of religious experience also occur in the experience of the sacred, and so we can conclude that every religious experience is a religious feeling.

However, certain subtle differences between them indicate their distinctiveness. The basic difference is the significance of God emphasized by Gład – and a personal God – as a specific object of religious experience, as well as His activity in initiating relations with man in order to bring him closer to the reality of his own existence and the truth about him. The specificity of this influence of God is the personal nature of religious experience. Meanwhile, in religious feeling, a person does not have to meet God, because a religious feeling is also considered to be the state of absence of God or a deity, understood differently. Gład analyzes this aspect of religious feeling in the lives of outstanding Christian mystics (Gład, 2016c), their religious feeling related to the state of presence and absence of God, and even loss of contact with Him or departure, which reveals the dynamics and diversity of emotional and volitional states of a Christian seeking God.

It is precisely the activity of the emotional-volitional sphere in religious feeling that indicates its difference from religious experience. This sphere dominates in religious feeling, hence the limited role of the intellect and consciousness of the cognitive subject, whose cognitive functions are directed at himself. While the religious experience of the subject contributes to crossing the boundaries of his own existence, in religious feeling, man experiences primarily himself, his immanent religious states. Gład rightly points out that emotions present in religious feeling also have a cognitive aspect, and not only in relation to the subject itself, but also to objective reality. Emotions can direct the subject's action in feeling the absence of the Absolute towards the desire for contact with Him. In this type of religious feeling, "God is perceived by man as a value" (Gład, 2016c, p. 101).

A religious feeling can also be considered a religious crisis that manifests itself in the disintegration of the religious sphere of the subject, as well as the personality in the psychological sense. A religious crisis is a certain borderline situation for the subject, in which the previous mechanisms regulating mental and religious life fail. However, as in every crisis, positive psychological, intellectual, and emotional factors can be revealed in it, which support the subject in transforming his personality (Gład, 2011). Gład allocates a good deal of space to this religious feeling, which is frequent in our times – especially among young people – although

descriptions of such an experience can also be found in the writings of many mystics of Christianity and other religions, which is an important comparative material for exploring this issue.

The above analyses of religious feeling show that it encompasses a wider range of phenomena than religious experience. One might get the impression that religious feeling is a broader concept than religious experience due to the wealth of religious states to which it can be related. This problem was noticed by Głaz in his understanding of religious experience, which he understands as a religious feeling, which seems more adequate in research on contemporary religiosity, especially among young people. Summing up this part of the article, one can assume that the concept of religious experience has undergone a certain evolution towards religious experience. Both play a positive role in human life, as Głaz points out in his monographs (Głaz, 2011, 2016c).

Religious Experience and Religious Phenomena

The religiosity of contemporary man, especially the young generation, is characterized by a high pace of change, which is expressed by contesting traditional forms of participation in the religious life of human society and traditional religious institutions, a good example of which is the Catholic Church in Poland. Despite this, contemporary man is largely interested in religion and seeks answers to existential questions that trouble him. This search is characterized by emphasizing his own individuality and the desire for new ways of experiencing *sacrum*. Hence, in research on the religiosity of contemporary man, there appeared a need to develop a new paradigm of religious experience, which would consider the specificity of modernity.

For the Jesuit scientist, this new paradigm is a religious feeling revealing the subjectivity of the religious experiences of the young generation, especially in the matter of God's presence and God's absence in human life or the broadly understood religious crisis in the individual dimension (Głaz, 2011). In other words, the religious reality of contemporary man has prompted researchers, including the Jesuit psychologist Głaz, to change the paradigm of religious experience in the direction discussed here. However, the dynamics of changes occurring in religions and religiosity of contemporary Polish society indicate that this process will not stop, which suggests the possibility of the emergence of new manifestations of religiosity, different from those known to us so far, even within religion and the Church itself. In this context, the question arises about the impact of the above changes on the way of thinking about experience and the religious feeling of contemporary man. This question also refers to the concept of religious experience

as understood by Głaz and the issue of the emergence of a new religious paradigm of a personal subject.

An important aspect of the discussed concepts of religious experience and feeling is the specific genesis of their creation. They emerged in the environment of the Christian religion, especially of Catholic provenance, which introduces certain limitations to them. Although they can be successfully applied to religious experiences occurring in Catholic and Polish society, it should be noted that there may be significant differences between religions and religious beliefs. Members of non-Christian religious communities have a different concept of religion, divinity, prayer, and contact with the sacred than in the circle of Christian culture (Głaz, 1998). An excellent example of this type of difference is the Christian concept of a personal God, which, for Głaz, is an important aspect of religious experience. If there is no concept of a person in a given religion, and the deity is understood as impersonal, can such a concept be applied to it, and the specificity of religiosity present in it be explained with its help?

A similar problem concerns the understanding of salvation, because in Christianity it is a necessary condition that the action of grace given by God in human life be cooperated with. Meanwhile, many contemporary religions and religious movements offer contemporary man the possibility of self-salvation, which is achieved through systematic work on the transformation of one's own life under the guidance of a spiritual guide, e.g., a Hindu guru (Głaz, 1995). In our times, new cults and religious movements of a syncretic nature appear, often in their rituals and doctrines, escaping the established research methods of religiosity in the integral development of youth. Also, in the Polish religiosity of the young generation, certain behaviors and views taken from other Christian denominations and religions sometimes appear (Marchwicki, 2000).

The above difficulties related to the distinctiveness of other religions were noticed by Głaz and analyzed from the perspective of religious experience. In his monograph, the researcher analyzed the issue of experiencing religious states in the main monotheistic religions: Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, as well as in Buddhism and Hinduism. He also pointed out that all types of religious experience have a specific, complex structure, specific only to them. At the same time, it should be noted that they have some common elements (Głaz, 1995). The difficulties related to the application of the above concepts indicate the need to rethink the understanding of the paradigm of experience and religious experience.

It seems advisable to use the terms "religious phenomenon" or "religious occurrence", which the Jesuit researcher often mentions. They have a more universal meaning and are devoid of associations with the terminology of Christian philosophy and theology. In his analysis, Głaz distinguishes "religious phenomenon" from "extraordinary religious phenomena." Extraordinary religious phenomena often

accompany religious feeling and concern visions, ecstasy, glossolalia (Głaz, 2014). Although it should be noted that a properly formulated paradigm of religious feeling, as a religious phenomenon, may contain all the features fundamental to its Christian understanding. The research work conducted by Głaz suggests the possibility of formulating such a paradigm of religious feeling, as indicated by his empirical research on religiosity in Poland (Głaz, 2011, 2016c).

By conducting research on religiosity among various social groups, Głaz thus analyzes certain elements of religious experience in their lives, which can be considered phenomena, such as the feeling of God's presence, the feeling of God's absence, abandonment by God, the sense of religious community, etc. The phenomena listed have a certain structure, the elements of which can be examined using an appropriate questionnaire. The empirical material collected by Głaz constitutes a good starting point for developing a paradigm of religious experience as a religious phenomenon. It should also be noted that the term "phenomenon" itself appears in Głaz's publications in reference to the religious crisis (Głaz, 1996, 2011).

In another monograph, the researcher writes: "The study of religious phenomena should be carried out on three parallel planes: empirical, ontological, and supernatural" (Głaz, 1995, p. 15). Then he adds (writing in the third person). "In the description of the religious phenomenon, which is religious experience, the author used these methods descriptively and synthetically, taking into account the historicity of the phenomenon itself, as well as the individuals who experience it" (1995, p. 15).

The researcher, therefore, formulated a paradigm of religious experience as a phenomenon of religiosity and indicated essential elements of the method for its exploration, which was an important step in the development of his understanding of religious experience. Głaz's scientific achievements are distinguished by a special concern for the empirical aspect, which translates into his development of a questionnaire and scale for research on the state of specific religious attitudes. Among them, the "Questionnaire for Research on the Structure of Religious Experience" (Głaz, 1996) and the "Scale of Religious Experience" (Głaz, 1996) are worth noting. Their advantage is the general nature of the questions and statements contained therein, which can also be understood by adepts of religion from non-Christian groups. The first of the above-mentioned questionnaires, defining religious feeling as a phenomenon, deserves special attention. However, it seems that the terms in the questionnaires that have clear connotations with Catholic theology should be changed, as stated above. The versions of these tools were the beginning of further work on the issue of religious experience.

The researcher, analyzing the religious life of mystics, developed a tool for examining the experience of God's presence and the experience of God's absence (see *Psychological Analysis of Religious Experience: The Construction of the Intensity*

of *Religious Experience Scale*, Głaz, 2020), as well as a tool for examining the experience of abandonment by God (see *Psychological Analysis of Religiosity and Spirituality: Construction of the Scale of Abandonment*, Głaz, 2021). These tools are more universal in nature. The content of the statements placed goes beyond the reach of the Christian religion. At the same time, they indicate the positive role of these experiences in the personality and religious life of man. To date, no other such research tools have been created, and therefore, Głaz's undertaking should be considered an important contribution. These tools can be used for empirical research in both theology and psychology.

Religious Experience and Truth

As mentioned above, religious experience in all its varieties is a certain cognitive act. However, it is common knowledge that human perception can be, and even is, exposed to cognitive errors, and no type of human cognition is free from them. This statement also applies to cognitive acts relating to the supernatural sphere. It is worth mentioning here that in the literature on religious experience, a good deal of space is devoted to the issue of its truthfulness. It is known that many religious experiences may not only be burdened with cognitive errors, but they may also be cognitive illusions or delusions (Argyle, 2000; Machoń, 2009).

In other words, the most important problem related to religious experience is the question of its truthfulness, i.e., its reference to truth. According to Głaz, such a reference is not only possible, but also real, because thanks to religious experience, "philosophy can read the truth about both man and transcendent reality," and is even a „rational acceptance of the truth about the Absolute” (Głaz, 2011, p. 45). The scholar is aware of the possibility of an erroneous assessment of a religious act by the subject, but he sees its cause in the reductionist concepts of religious experience, which are present in certain psychological trends or philosophical trends such as Marxism, atheism, and various varieties of naturalism (Głaz, 2011). Although they accept the fact of the existence of religious phenomena in individual and collective life, they explain them by referring to psychological, social, economic, and other conditions (Freud, 1989; Snyder, 1986).

Also in this context, the position of the Jesuit researcher raises certain questions, because the model of religious experience preferred by him is acceptable on the condition of accepting certain assumptions, which he has not sufficiently articulated. The first reservation refers to the transcendent reality, the existence of which must be either justified or assumed. The second concerns the assumption that a person correctly interprets their religious acts, in other words, has a criterion for their truth. Otherwise, the concept of religious experience adopted in this way

and the possibility of discovering the truth about man and Transcendence in it becomes controversial, especially in the case of the classical definition of truth, which, due to the definition of a person adopted by the Jesuit scholar, is certainly close to him.

An important aspect in the discussion about religious experience and its truth is to draw attention to the many assumptions and concepts in which it is entangled, similarly to the general human experience of the world. A person can perceive the reality surrounding them and the ways of experiencing it from four different points of view: the so-called common sense, morality, religion, or even aesthetics. These aspects can overlap, and in the practice of everyday life, a human being usually has no problem separating them. However, in religious experience, the lack of their separation can lead to different interpretations, depending on the position taken (Gutowski, 2018). When we speak about religious experience, it should be clearly distinguished from knowledge about religion and God, from the search for God or the desire to meet Him, and from consciously experiencing the Absolute in individual existence.

Piotr Gutowski's observation is probably correct that we can only talk about religious experience in the latter sense. Therefore, religious experience itself is quite narrow in relation to other religious concepts. It should also be noted that religious experience understood in this way can be applied to the Christian religion, especially in the Catholic version, in which the concept of a personal God appears. Thus, it is worth considering the issue of the universality of religious experience understood in this way – how can it be applied to religions in which there is no concept of a personal deity, or to non-theistic religious experiences (Dworkin, 2014).

A similarly important issue is explaining the nature of mystical experience. In other words, can the mystical experience of God be explained by referring to the states of the human brain and searching, as many researchers do (Grof, 1985; Snyder, 1986), for those areas of it that are responsible for the emergence of mystical experiences? The dispute mainly concerns the naturalistic interpretation of religious experience, in which the opponents cite arguments derived from neuroscience.

Referring to Gładz's position in the above dispute, it should be stated that he does not address this issue directly, but certain aspects of his concept of religious experience may help understand the sources of this controversy. First of all, the Jesuit psychologist and philosopher, in the description of religious experience, considers the freedom of the personal subject to be significant, among various "existentials" (Gładz, 2011). Human freedom is present in mystical experience and gives it a dynamic that is difficult to describe or capture in scientific exploration. And in it should be seen the source of the diversity of mystical states of believers, and thus

the difficulties in assessing the truth of this religious experience. The freedom of the individual, so clearly present in religious experience, makes it unique and difficult to capture in psychological research (Głaz, 2011).

Contemporary discussion on the possibility of religious experience and its truth is dominated by typically theoretical considerations, in which it is often forgotten that it refers to a specific human life. For a specific believer, religious experience is integrated into their life situations, everyday existential problems, joys, and pains. As Głaz claims: “religious experience and the religious feeling associated with it [...] contain a pragmatic aspect, a person acquires the appropriate references for their psychological needs, it also has an inspiring character for human action” (Głaz, 2011, p. 226).

It is the pragmatic aspect, i.e., action, that indicates the real possibility of the existence of religious experience at least in the understanding of the Christian religion, and in accordance with the scholastic principle of St. Thomas Aquinas – *agere sequitur esse*, it indicates the ontic structure thanks to which it can exist. Therefore, the view about the possibility of religious experience in the understanding of Głaz is acceptable, which also indicates the cognitive possibilities of the Christian religion in discovering the truth about the spiritual and transcendent reality, the basis of which is the personal Absolute (Gutowski, 2018).

Religious Experience and Values

The above sentence clearly suggests the connection between religious experience and the cognitive functions of the subject. Although this is a feature of every experience, religious experience reveals a certain epistemic ability, thanks to which a person opens up primarily to supernatural values. Such a value is in the first place, God himself, who is the carrier of other religious values, such as faith, hope, and love (Głaz, 2016c). The presence of theological values in religious experience is something obvious, but surveys conducted by Głaz on a group of Polish academic youth indicate the presence of other values in their religious experience. These are: salvation, wisdom, friendship, loyalty, love, peace in the world, self-respect, life success, life satisfaction, pleasure, comfortable life, inner peace, and social recognition (Głaz, 2016a).

Among them, in addition to the typically religious value of salvation, there is a large group of universal human values, also valued by religiously indifferent people or even non-believers. This indicates a certain important aspect of religious experience, which is the subject's openness to the sphere of values accepted by all people. This fact also reveals another important feature of the religious experience of the people studied, which is their relationship with the world of other people.

Therefore, assuming at least a sufficient level of maturity of the youth studied, it should be assumed that their mode of experiencing religious experience does not lead to alienation – detachment from the social environment and its positive values.

It should also be noted that theological and universal human values do not have to be opposed to each other but can create a single and coherent hierarchy of values in the religious experience of even a young person (Głaz, 2016b). However, when talking about values present in the religious experience of a young person especially, but also in the universal human experience, attention should be paid to the problem of the objectivity of the values. In religious experience, certain mental states may appear that express subjective desires and expectations, and a person may treat them as “values” (Szmyd, 2017).

The discovery of the world of values, according to Głaz, takes place in a religious experience through conscience, which for a personal subject is also a way of knowing the reality of God, the world, and oneself (Głaz, 2011). Conscience is, above all, a way of self-understanding of a religious experience and its content. It has an immanent and transcendent dimension. It is not the superego as Freud assumed (1989). It can be present as a kind of intuition that reveals the axiological aspect of experience to the personal subject. According to the scholar, the world of values is also discovered through conscious action. Głaz assumes here, following Frankl (2020), three possibilities: the first is the transformation of oneself in relation to the environment according to a given value, the second consists of the interiorization of values and integrating them into the structure of one’s own personality, the third way is living values in a situation of one’s own suffering, illness, and life failures.

Discovering values and their interiorization contributes to the development of the subject’s personality because it exceeds its biological and emotional limitations. Thus, religious experience is a chance for a person to open up to the world of other people and their way of experiencing reality. It should be noted that this process does not lead to the depreciation of the human psychological sphere by negating their corporeality, psyche, and drives resulting from human nature, but their integration with the sphere of religious and universal human values takes place here. Frankl expressed that man is driven by drives, but he is directed by values (Frankl, 2020). It should also be added, following Scheler (1987), that values are factors in religious experience that create a human person, and they become a being in which values are realized. Moreover, in the works of this German philosopher and outstanding representative of contemporary phenomenology, there is a concept of the intentional nature of human consciousness. In other words, the consciousness of a subject involved in a religious experience is always consciousness of something, i.e., it refers to some object, e.g., an objective value. This view reinforces Głaz’s (2016a) thesis about the objective nature of values present in religious experience.

A religious act, which is the experience of the *sacrum* sphere by a human being, reveals the pragmatic aspect of human nature. By establishing a relationship with Transcendence, a human being is confirmed in the reality surrounding them and creates their own personal world from it. The material of this world – specific human existence is objective values discovered in religious experience. Human nature is purposeful in its actions, and its fundamental goal is to integrate human actions, i.e., to give them a certain meaning (Głaz, 1998b). This, in turn, is constituted by the physical, mental, and intellectual actions of the individual, into which the values learned in religious experience are incorporated. Meaning is an action that integrates the natural possibilities of human existence with supernatural values, such as God, the sanctity of life, and salvation. Supernatural values are timeless and thus give human existence a new quality – eternal existence. This aspect of experiencing supernatural values is very important in searching for and building the meaning of a human being, because, like every being, it strives to maintain its own existence, and the above-mentioned values can ensure this (Głaz, 2002).

Experience of Sacred and Individual Freedom

In reference to the first section, which discussed the problem of the relationship between values and religious experience, attention should also be paid to one of the most important values – freedom, so much preferred by contemporary societies and especially by the young generation. The presence of freedom in the life of an individual and human society is universal and cannot be limited to only one sphere of the life of modern man. Therefore, the problem of freedom in this part will not be limited only to religious experience, or religious feeling, or selected religious phenomena. Therefore, it will be considered in relation to various types of broadly understood experience of the sacred, in Głaz's work. The issue of individual freedom was noticed and discussed by him in several publications (Głaz & Leżoń, 2008; Lulek & Głaz, 2009).

So, what is freedom according to Głaz? It should be noted that he does not prefer one definition of it, as he is fully aware of the complexity of the problem of human freedom and its multifaceted nature. Therefore, he adopts the definition of freedom, which can be considered a kind of descriptive "definition." Freedom, according to him, permeates the entire personality of a person, because it occurs already at the level of his desires, to give his life a dream and value. It is both the goal of the individual and the condition of his actions. Already at the stage of the desire for freedom, its subjective and objective aspects can be distinguished.

The first of them is expressed through the internal freedom of the individual, which has its source in the spiritual nature of the individual, and it is expressed

through the states of spirit that a person can achieve. Internal freedom understood in this way also considers the somatic structure of a person, because it accepts the sphere of natural (corporeal) needs and instincts, which also give dynamics to human actions. But they do not constitute their goals, because freedom seeks values and enables their actualization in human action and life. Man is driven by instincts but is attracted by values. Following Głaz, we can state that human freedom is also dynamized by needs and instincts, but its goals are values.

Values, according to Głaz, condition the humanity of an individual, because, as he writes, to be a human being, to be free as a human being, means to be rooted in the world of values that by their very existence call for realization (Głaz, 2002). The statement of the Jesuit psychologist of religion is therefore correct, that values motivate an individual to make choices through their freedom, that is, to prefer everything that is beneficial for the individual and represents a certain value in itself. This last aspect of human freedom opens up the individual to the outside world. Thus, the freedom of the individual manifests itself in the real world; it is the freedom of so-called resolutions, that is, decisions that are made in the absence of external obstacles.

The above concept of freedom is close to Frankl's views, which Głaz often cites in his publications (Głaz, 2002; Lulek & Głaz, 2009). And especially by emphasizing the personal nature of freedom, because only a person can experience freedom in all its aspects, whereby a person should be understood as a being who refers to values in his actions. In other words, a person is a synthesis of acts that realize a given value, e.g., the dignity of an individual, or refer to them, and only such acts of a human individual can be called personal.

However, a certain question can be directed to the concept of freedom in Głaz's understanding of its distinctiveness from the views of Frankl and other thinkers. Considering the entirety of Głaz's literary output, it should be noted that his research on how an individual experiences and contacts the sacred is primarily empirical, not theoretical. Therefore, he will focus mainly on the reality of everyday experiencing and realizing freedom by specific individuals, which is achieved using appropriate research tools. This conclusion about the originality of Głaz's understanding of freedom is confirmed by his research on the concepts of freedom in other thinkers, e.g., Józef Tischner, which, in his opinion, are of an eminently theoretical nature and constitute an analysis of the views of other thinkers (Głaz & Leżoń, 2008).

Conclusion

In Głaz's scientific achievements, religious experience is one of the key concepts due to its significance for the religiosity of contemporary man. Głaz developed this

concept in relation to research on the religiosity of the young generation of Poles, who almost entirely have Christian (Catholic) roots and confessionally belong to this religion. Hence, it is understandable that the paradigm of religious experience preferred by him contains such components as: a personal cognizant subject, a personal God as the object of experience, and values (natural and supernatural). In addition, the characteristic features are also the subject's awareness of experiencing God and the activity of the Absolute, which very often initiates a religious act.

However, the analysis of Gład's works also indicates an alternative understanding of the paradigm of religious experience as a religious feeling and a religious phenomenon. For him, feeling is something very similar to religious experience, and sometimes even identified with it. However, there is a different understanding of the experienced object, which may be impersonal in nature or even absent (awareness of the lack of contact with God). The emphasis in the experience is shifted to the subject's own experiences (emotions, states of mind, etc.). Therefore, religious feeling should be considered a different religious act from religious experience. Although religious experience is included in the religious feeling thus understood, not every religious experience is automatically a religious feeling, as Gład suggests. Therefore, it should be considered a modified version of the initial religious paradigm – religious experience.

Another way of understanding religious experience is the religious phenomenon, in which we have components of a religious act also present in other religions. This version is consistent with the concept of religious experience and religious feeling, but it exceeds them and is the most generalized version of a religious act present in Gład's work. Therefore, in the research of the Jesuit philosopher and psychologist of religion, we have various approaches to understanding religious experience: in the Christian understanding, religious experience and religious phenomenon. Despite Gład's preference for the first understanding, his research's openness to the specificity of the religious act is visible, which is manifested in the concepts of religious experience and phenomenon. A characteristic feature of his paradigm of religious experience is the presentation of its positive role in human life, as well as the possibility of introducing changes in its understanding by adding new elements and modifying the current ones.

The fundamental question that arises in the analysis of religious experience in Gład's work concerns the further evolution of this important concept in his research on religion and religiosity. This scholar is open to new religious phenomena emerging in the contemporary world and in Polish society. Given the changes occurring in Polish Catholic religiosity, especially among the younger generation whose religiosity Gład has been researching for years, it seems that the most anticipated direction of evolution of the concept of religious experience is precisely the religious phenomenon, which can also be studied using appropriate

empirical tools, as is already the case in his works. This would, in the future, involve understanding the deeper and broader function of religious experience in human life, its structures, and its sources.

Another direction of development of his religious paradigm is also possible, related to the difficulties in describing religious phenomena. Perhaps a better methodological solution would be to adopt not one universal paradigm of religious behavior of contemporary man, but several paradigms of complementary nature. Głaz's views may therefore evolve towards developing a set of patterns of religious experiences, which will be used depending on research needs.

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