ASPECTS OF AUTONOMY AND RELIGION IN THE (POST)MODERN ENVIRNOMENT

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Abstract
In our opinion, the formation, preservation and defence of personal and collective identity are basic elements of both human rights and human life itself. We examine how individual and communal identity awareness is preserved within the framework of globalization. The emphasis is on practice, e.g. in a parallel way to how society organizes itself in the form of autonomous bodies, while we also attempt to analyse the essence, definition and possible interpretations of autonomy and discuss some of its actualisations.

Keywords: autonomy, religion, churches, globalization, secularization, personal and group identity

Globalization and the presentation of values

Through globalization, a new order or rather a chaos of new character (and characters) has appeared in politics (Szabó, 2000). In Michael Zürn's opinion, this has led to the extension of the structures of social operation over national frameworks. Besides economy, this also applies to the sphere of environment, communication or culture. If it can be included in the latter, this is also valid for the world of religion (Zürn, 1998: 73). Character autonomy in the global society is confronted not only with the state and institutional systems organized in a national context but also with the pluralistic systems of complex power centres. The emergence of globalism does not mean that the autonomous organizations and institutions which operate in national states will slink away to the background as, to a relatively high degree, globalization allows the possibility of their extension. The basis of this extension can be found in the fact that in the global social dimension, common people are able to identify with a common goal and a value system through their own autonomous decisions, with little energy input and few financial and bureaucratic restrictions Thus, a multicultural value discourse can be established, which relies primarily on intellectual capital. Globalization does not in the slightest degree entail the cessation of value conflicts, rather, it means the possibility of them becoming able to be discussed in a wider circle by utilizing modern informational technological devices as well (Albrow,

1998: 223). The aforementioned characteristics can increase the co-operational chances of the participants to value conflicts.

About autonomy in general; the definition of autonomy
Autonomy is a word of Greek origin where "auto" means "self" and "nomos" means "law". Its original Greek meaning implies "to live according to one's own laws"; in a wider context it means self-determination, self-reliance. (Gergely, 2006: 19-24) Autonomy can be possessed by: individuals, regional and local governments, social groups, churches and denominations, chambers, trade unions, non-profit institutions, nationalities, ethnic minorities, etc The common characteristics of these are that they are self-reliant, independent from anyone else; they create rules and laws for themselves, and consequently they are self-governing; they live and operate according to their self-governance.

Therefore, in the most comprehensive phrasing, autonomy can be a characteristic of a community of citizens, having been established by self-organization along some kind of a common aim, ability, interest, ideology or religion; these – considering their sources – must possess financial means that are only partially limiting. Possessing autonomy means being independent of all political and economic power, both morally and intellectually.

Autonomy is the ability of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to establish rules – mainly of legal nature – for the management of their own affairs. Under public law, autonomy translates as the capacity to establish objective, binding rules of law. The legislation of autonomy is limited by state legislation. Autonomies must not establish rights in contradiction with prevailing laws and rules of law. The realization of this condition is ensured by state approval, which exists as a condition of the operation of autonomies. State confirmation of autonomous legislation makes it possible to enlist the co-operation of the state for the purpose of enforcing these laws. Thus, autonomies do not question the competence of the sovereign state, the latter representing primarily the interests of society.

According to the approach of natural law, all communities have the right to realize their particular aims independently. With respect to the state, subsidiarity corresponds to this, regarded as a fundamental principle in the European Union, too. By subsidiarity we mean that decisions should be made at the place where the affected people live and by people who have interest in their implementation. What can be solved on a given level

should not be taken to a higher level; in the long run, the state should not make a claim to these.

The interpretation of autonomy
In relation to this issue, two approaches can be identified. According to the first, autonomy must be distinguished from public administration. In the end, the different regional levels of public administration are summarized in state management. The state relegates the public tasks which it finances only partially to the lower-level administrative units. Consequently, it provides some degree of autonomy for the local or regional administrative units, which we call self-governance. So in this case, administrative autonomy equals self-governance, which is essentially distinguished from other, various and diverse realizations of autonomy.

According to the second approach, self-governance is a generic term which has one important characteristic and realization, namely the legislation in its own right. In this sense, self-management is an essential element of autonomy. So autonomy is primarily the self-governing of people/institutions possessing autonomy: self-governance is autonomous legislation plus implementation, i.e. operation.

The content and the outward form of autonomy and its scope for action vary from time to time and from country to country; they depend on the social structure and national culture of the given country and they evolve throughout the country's history.

As to the aspect of the legitimation of autonomy, there are two kinds of approaches. One involves that communities are originally entitled to autonomy, in their own right, meaning that autonomy is not defined by the state, it does not originate from the state.

According to the other theory, the source of autonomy is always a higher (papal, princely, public) power. Autonomy exists only if, and only to the extent to which, the state relegates its power to it.

In our opinion, neither approach is entirely valid. Namely, there are autonomies where the former, so-called "originarian" theory applies in the case of local denominational governments, except the Catholic one. In the Catholic Church the ecclesiastical bodies' right to self-determination is limited by the legislation of the universal church and the particular

churches, and only within this framework do autonomous bodies have legislative and executive power.

Clearly, it is the second, the so-called derivative theory which applies to administrative autonomies (local governments) or chambers, whose foundation was originally governed by statute law.

Considering their general regulation and framework, autonomies can be defined and placed according to the hierarchy of the organization of society. In this regard, we differentiate three levels: the macro-level (or macro-sphere), the micro-level (or micro-sphere) and the intermediary level (or mezzo-sphere).

The macro-sphere incorporates politics and the level of the state including legislation and government (executive power). This sphere performs legislative, executive and controlling activities. The micro-sphere is the level of individual citizens; in a wider sense it contains employees and small enterprises. The mezzo-sphere is an "intermediary" between macro- and micro-sphere; it is made of institutions and representative organs and it encompasses the whole of society or at least some of its strata and groups. The first two spheres can be considered as primary levels, while the institutions, organizations and activity of the mezzo-sphere, the intermediary sphere, are secondary. The macro- and micro-sphere exist and operate by their own conditions; they both have their own structure. The organizations and institutions of the mezzo-sphere are established in the space determined by the macro- and/or micro-sphere, in order to perform the tasks defined by them. Autonomies are located in the intermediary institutional system of the mezzo-sphere. Their connection to the other two spheres can be of various types: subordination or superiority, unilateral or multilateral dependence, parallelism or partnership. According to their effect-mechanism, this connection can be directed upwards downwards, or both directions at the same time.

Further significant questions arising in connection with autonomy are the following:

1. What tasks, licences does autonomy take over or obtain from the state, namely, what is granted to it and what does it achieve? The division of functions between the state and autonomies greatly depends on the nature of the state power in question. The democratic state is interested in this division of labour; it intends to pass down as many functions as possible.

However, dictatorial and totalitarian systems do not require autonomies; moreover, they do not tolerate them, or if they still exist, then – under the strict supervision and control of the state – what they primarily realize is not the interests of the people living in autonomy but those of the state.

2. How do autonomies relate to the economy, more precisely, what financial means do they possess, and where do these means come from? Autonomies aspire to independence from power – mainly from a financial point of view – just as civil society aspires to independence from the state. The instrument for this is the financial contribution of the members of the autonomy and the access to its own (or at least own administration of the) resources. However, this aspiration can never become complete, as autonomies have always had to rely on the financial support of the state to some extent.

3. Is there a forced membership in the autonomy-organization or does it organize itself on a voluntary basis? Can the fact of belonging to a denomination or the permanent residence in the direct or indirect participation (by elections) in the local government be considered as forced membership in the ecclesiastical autonomy? In some cases the membership is indeed a compulsion, if it is imposed by statute law (in the case of chambers), while membership is clearly voluntary, for example, for academies or universities.

4. Autonomies can also be differentiated from each other according to their extent. There are autonomies comprising a significant part of society and autonomies which affect only a smaller group of society.

Thus, for example, various levels of administrative autonomies involve the whole of society, since everybody lives somewhere and has an administrative suffrage. The extent of ecclesiastical autonomies is also significant, especially when the majority of society is religious or at least (formally) belongs to a church or to a denomination. The headcount of chambers can be very different; in this case, it is about the autonomous clout of a particular branch or profession. Finally, the autonomy of certain specific institutions and bodies – universities, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences – applies only to the employees working in the given institution, to its students or its members.

5. Lastly, according to their nature, autonomies can be defensive or offensive. They are defensive if the autonomy is self-defensive, i.e. it protects the interests and rights of people living in the autonomy against factors outside the autonomy. The autonomy is offensive if it efficiently enforces and perhaps expands and extends its licences outwards. In this case, autonomy also functions as an efficient clout organization.

The role of religion, denominations and churches in relation to autonomy
If we interpret the role of religion in relation to autonomy, we can mention its task to provide moral support for the individual in the context of the continuously changing of ideas.

Moreover, since in our current circumstances in the developed world, self-interest motivated by the desire of individual welfare happens to be the a significant factor, religion – if it addresses aims and values superior to this – is able to prevent the individual from becoming an egoist.

Religion is present "in social relations, in the establishment of structures, in the definition of social differences and similarities, in conflicts and resolutions, i.e. in the public, economic and political sphere" (Beckford 1986). In order to better understand this sphere, we must examine the content characteristics of religious self-identity consciousness (Daniel and Durham 1996).

In short, this means the feeling of belonging (or not belonging) to a religious community. It is not simply a self-definition; it is the experience of a social bond. Religion also constitutes the basis of loyalty-structures in society. This is also true for highly plural structures. One of the most evident social functions of religious identity awareness is its effect which strengthens the social bond. Religious identity awareness is of importance in making individual and community life meaningful. At the same time, it helps autonomous religious communities to function as intermediary structures (mezzo-sphere) between greater structures of the individual and the society.

At the same time, religion as an institution which functions as an autonomous organization (church) can initiate people into the practice of representing autonomous individual and communal life and values.

In order to get closer to the interpretation of the possible role of church autonomies, we have to consider the influence which modernization exercised on religiousness. In brief, this can be best described by the concept of *secularization.* In its broad sense, this concept means the decrease of religiousness in modern societies. The opinions on this phenomenon are rather contradictory in our day and age. On the one hand, secularization is connected with the sweep of scientism and mechanization; on the other hand, it is connected with a loosening of moral values, the impoverishment of our social and human nature.

We can scan through the historical steps of secularization in Europe. In Europe, religion (Christianity) was a symbol of unity until the 16th century (in truth, this was more or less true in (Roman) Catholic countries only after the schism of 1055). During and after the Reformation, religion was the source of conflicts: "My religion (Christianity) is the only true one!" It means a relativisation of truth! Many truths were existing in parallel with each other. Thus Church (Roman Catholic and Protestant) and religion became separated. In the era of Enlightenment there emerged the idea of separation of public and private spheres. Therefore, religion was excluded from public life, thus becoming merely part of the private life. Finally, Marxism claimed that "religion will become extinct sooner or later!"

As a practical outcome in France, we can see radical laicites (laicism). However, different types of separation can be found in Western countries: full separation in France means no religion and church influence in public sphere called "laicite" (laicism); partial separation between state and church: eg. protestant state-churches in England or in Northern Europe; consensual separation: full separation, but religion plays a positive role in society (USA):cooperation: after World War 2, in the Christian democratic states like Germany-separation is complete, but there is a strong cooperation with the (historical) churches in social life and in managing social problems.

According to one of the main tendencies, the essence of secularization is the gradual withdrawal of religion and religiousness from the macro-social into the private sphere. In Bryan Wilson's approach, the privatization of religion can be described by the decrease of social importance of religious mentality, religious practice and religious institutions (Wilson1966).

David Martin explains that the decrease in the number of churchgoers who attend traditional religious ceremonies does not necessarily imply a decreasing role of institutional religiousness – on the contrary, institutional religiousness can also be enhanced by it. In addition to this, he also raises the issue that, through the decrease of the role of traditional religious institutions, the position of religiousness in a wider sense can become strengthened in modern societies (Martin 1977).

The interpretation of Thomas Luckmann sharply differs from the above mentioned approach. According to him, secularization is only an illusion. The reduction in the social articulation of religiousness does not mean that the social relevance of religious values would also decrease. What we can witness is a change and not reduction. The point of this is that the place of the traditional forms of religiousness is taken over by new forms of religiousness. These new forms can be of various kinds; thus, privatization, mystification, individual ways of experiencing faith can come into the foreground, and the different forms of hidden religiousness can also be strengthened and appear in the public sphere (Luckmann 1967).

What could be the role of religion for individual identities?(Gauchet 1999)[1] Religion is the source of the acknowledgement that: "I am not the only creator of myself!" This is based on a very important point of European culture, mythology namely that"we and the world were created from outside!" Culture is the process to transferring things from the outside to the "within". Religion was and can be a major element of this process. Human beings can never create themselves, but they are constituted by someone else. We deserved nothing – everything (anything) is given as a gift. The most important elements of our identity are gifts (eg.: being a man or a woman, being Romanian or Hungarian etc.) By recognizing this, we can be aware of being a member of a collectivity with group identities.

The Aufbruch programme, which was a practical research, can be connected to this aforementioned interpretation of secularization. This programme was co-ordinated by Paul M. Zulehner, a Viennese professor of

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[1] We are especially grateful to Prof. Bart Raymeakers who allowed us to use here some thoughts from his „Politics and Religion in the European Union", a yet unpublished lecture of his, held on April 14, 2011 at the Károli Gáspár University in Budapest. In this, he analysed the role of religion with regard to the self-interpretation of today's individuum.

pastoral theology and András Máté-Tóth, Head of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Szeged (Máté-Tóth and Sarnyai 2008). One of the important elements of the work in the ten former socialist countries was the public opinion poll, the aim of which was the definition of the so-called complex religiousness-index. The questions dealt with the relationship of the data providers in the given countries with the eight basic doctrines of the Christian Church. Of these doctrines, God, Hell, Heaven, Death, Resurrection and last, but not least, the trust in the Church as an institution must be highlighted. By defining and applying the complex religiousness-index, our primary aim was to use a more detailed and complex tool for measuring religiousness, instead of former indicators such as the frequency of partaking in the sacraments.

As a result of our research, we could state that the discussed countries can be divided into three groups, according to the religious dimension of their cultures. There are cultures which are religious according to the traditional criteria: these are the so-called clerically religious cultures, where culture is strongly influenced by religion, both historically and at the time of the research. These countries include Poland, Romania and Slovakia, although this latter is at the boundary between the first and the following one, the so-called culture-religious group. In the countries belonging to the culture-religious group, the ratio of people who consider themselves rather religious or very strongly religious and people who consider themselves hardly or not at all religious, is more balanced than in the countries of traditional, clerically religious cultures, where religious issues divide society. These countries include Hungary, Slovenia and the Ukraine. We can experience a polarized nature in Hungary for example, when it comes to any kind of debate between the Church and the state, or a social debate on a political issue concerning religious freedom. In this case, society is divided into two parties, which can produce about the same number of pro and contra representatives. Finally, we can mention atheist cultures, where the "greatest denomination" is that of the unbelievers. These include the former Eastern Germany or the Czech Republic. In these countries, society is not deeply divided by political issues concerning religion. This is also valid for the countries of the first category, precisely because of the strong religious saturation prevalent in both society and culture.

At the time of the data survey, in 1997-1998, these groups of countries corresponded more or less to the modernization-al or culture-regional

division. The criterion of modernization in religiousness is the gradual loss of importance of traditional or clerical religiousness.

We reprise the aforementioned survey more than a decade later, with an extension to further countries with mainly Orthodox religious traditions, like Bulgaria or Moldova. One of the main questions of the recently started Aufbruch 2 programme is, whether or not, more than fifteen years after the turning point, the decrease of clerical religiousness characterizes the given country/region. In other words, whether through the influences of modernization, a process of becoming more homogeneous (in terms of religious aspects) has started, or on the contrary, the survival or possible strengthening of the clerical aspects represent an increasing withdrawal that rejects these influences of modernization.

By approaching the analysis of the autonomy of churches and denominations – compared to the other mentioned autonomies – the relatively great independence of the autonomy of the churches and denominations from politics was made possible by the fact that these transcendental organizations represented the religious and ethico-religious interests of their members, who have been and still are independent from the world of politics. Ecclesiastical autonomies welcomed everybody whose political views were not inconsistent with the teachings and moral norms of the given church or denomination. At the same time, they made efforts to ensure that the autonomous institutions and the local church governments would not become a sort of "clerical political parties".

Economic independence was partially ensured by the fact that, in most cases, only those who fulfilled their financial contribution duty (the church rate, set out in the relevant canon to provide for the maintenance of the ecclesiastical local government) were considered to be fully qualified members of it.

In the case of established denominations, the state also often co-operates in the collection of the church rate. Thus, the great number of people paying church rate proved to be a considerable financial source in certain countries. The possible wealth of the Churches, derived mainly from their ownership of real estates, can contribute to financial independence. Although it is true that church property is partially a trust, partially resources with limited trade, and that only the churchmen in question could benefit from the profit of it, they can unrestrictedly use the profit.

However, as for the financial condition, there were/are significant differences among the particular churches and denominations.

Ecclesiastical and denominational autonomies were primarily established by the theological, scriptural system of the church in question. The structure of this system followed the system of the relevant church or denomination. The state or public administration did not intervene in this; canons were confirmed by the sovereign ruler, the head of the state, therefore, their effect bound not only the members of the autonomy, but public and administrative organs also had to hold them in respect. The state's paramount right of control made it possible that no passages or terms could get into the church constitutions which violated the prevailing statute laws or rules of law.

Religious organizations are also gradually getting into the relation-system of globalization, although to different degrees. This change raises issues which are both new and problematic, only in a different way. It is possible that the mobilization of personal and financial resources is globally centralized within the given movement, as in the case of Moon or Krishna cults; yet, the co-ordination between autonomies built on a national or collective basis is also possible.

In connection with the external-internal relations and the operation of non-governmental organizations existing (also) in the global dimension, Michael Zürn voices the demand for a criteria-system which defines the fundamental norms (Zürn 1998, 310). However, we connect his thoughts to this part because some elements of his thoughts can be compared to previous sections about autonomy in general and about its relations to denominations. Also, they can be extended to the existence of religious organizations with global dimensions.

The key element of the norm-system would be a regulated entrance mechanism in which the people involved would prove their concern in the given case. The guarantee for the autonomy of organizations operating (also) within global frameworks could be the transparency of their internal system. On the one hand, transparency is based on the fact that membership is open and free of discrimination; on the other hand, the members of the organization elect the leaders freely and equally.

Finally, we briefly mention the horizon of opportunities and problems which the position and situation of religion(s) bring about in virtual reality, the so-called "second-life". Second life is a virtual simulation which, in many respects, exceeds the limits of the classical means of globalization as well as of Internet communication.

Traditionally oriented religious groups, i.e. Buddhist, Christian, found a stable position here.

Chris Helland distinguishes between the concepts of "religion online" and online religion. The first applies to the case where the Internet is an information providing opportunity for churches, without interactivity, while the meaning of online religion is "an interactive religious environment that considers the Internet as a valid participative and involvement opportunity" (Helland, 2005). Inasmuch as we define the Internet technology as a secular entity, religious institutions distance themselves from its effects. However, the Internet can also be described in this regard as "created by God", a part of the Logos of God. With such an approach in mind, man is to cultivate it. Considering the Internet along those lines, the religious use of it is not only acceptable, but even authorized. The latter interpretation can be connected to the sacred space concept of Mircea Eliade. (Eliade 1957, 26) According to him, space is not homogenous for people, but is divided a sacred and a profane dimension. Due to the immaterial nature of the Internet and cyberspace, they can be especially suitable for humans projecting their spiritual desires onto it (Campbell 2005).

Jennifer Cobb, in her paper "Cybergrace," attempts to present the "theology of cyberspace." (Cobb 1998) In her opinion, four main orientations can be distinguished as to the discourses on the Internet usage of traditional religious groups.

The first is discussing the Internet as facilitating spiritual experience; thus it can be viewed as a "Spiritual medium". The computer is a mediator of the sacred: cyberspace enables society to reconnect and unite the spheres of science and religion, thus facilitating spiritual healing. From this perspective, it is an important milestone of human spiritual evolution.

According to the so-called "Sacramental medium" theory and in contrast to the previous approach, the Internet is not a sacred space by default, but can become such. The religious, sublime dimension of technology is not self-

evident, but it is possible to form and maintain it. This narrative is characteristic to such producers and members of religious communities whose effort is to create an "online sacred environment". Through this, they strive for the online transformation of traditional features. Such sacred environments can mean cyber-churches/shrines, cyber-rituals and cyber-masses.

There is a discourse that regards the Internet as a neutral technological "Tool", in this case the emphasis being on motivation. In other words, what its uses are depends on the motivation and ideas of the user. These motivations may include religious ones. With a given motivation, the Internet can be used to search religious information and to create a new scene of religious acts, too. According to Walther Wilson, the Internet can thus become an ideal (spanning through social and cultural dividing lines) channel for believers and seekers alike.

From the viewpoint of religion, the Internet can be handled as an "Affirming" medium. In this interpretation, the Internet is a medium that creates a forum to empower the users' religious identity. Also, in everyday life, it is a way of organization, communication and discourse for religious communities. Affirming religious identity can be realized through sharing their beliefs and convictions. In this case, one can focus on how cyberspace connects people with the same religion within a different culture or social status.

The particular demands of religious communities transcend discussion boards and chat rooms, but in the environment of Second life they can be satisfied to a great extent. From this perspective, modern religious neologism, i.e. technopagan groups have found a stable position.

Finally, it must be mentioned that cyberspace can appear not only as a tool for religious practice but also as an entity that is elevated to a sacred level. (Wertheim 2001)

Virtual religious activity will possibly start to fulfil various kinds of needs and can act as a functional supplement for those "religious seekers" who are likely to be more in tune with the processes of late modernity. For us, however, it seems that highlighting the active religious dimensions of cyberspace makes an interesting attempt to compensate for our intuitive

selves made insecure by the demystification and secularization of everyday life.

Conclusion

To sum it up, we think that we have one personal and several different group identities. One might notice that even personal identity is not based fully on you himself or herself, but on group identities as well. It could be regarded as a different kind of personal autonomy. Religion could be a source of keeping individuals open towards collectivities, collective values, and communities.

The operation of autonomous bodies according to their aims can function as a crucial pledge of the self-realization of citizens and of the wider or narrower communities of citizens in the globalizing world. Therefore, autonomies can be important elements of the organic operation of society, and as such they can assist or – in certain subfields and subtasks – substitute the state. Compared to the sovereign state, autonomy can only be of secondary importance, since the state is the common "autonomous (sovereign) body" of all citizens, while autonomies are self-organizations that want and are able to represent the special interests of certain groups of citizens.

Finally, to return to the initial question: how can you preserve your individual and community identity awareness within the framework of globalization? We believe that autonomies can function as effective institutions and pledges of this respect.

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