

# BETWEEN THE ‘RELIGIOUS’ AND THE ‘SECULAR’ ATTITUDE. THE CONFLICT OVER THE RELOCATION OF THE CATHOLIC CHAPEL IN THE REGIONAL HOSPITAL IN PRZEWORSK

PRZEMYSŁAW GNYSZKA

INSTITUTE OF ETHNOLOGY AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY  
THE UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW

This article analyses the conflict over changing the location of the Catholic chapel in the Regional Hospital in Przeworsk. I conducted in-depth anthropological interviews with people declaring a variety of views on the relocation of the chapel, analysed official documents and materials published in the local press, and reflected on my own observations and experiences in order to define the reasons for the conflict. What measures were taken to prevent the relocation of the chapel and why were these steps chosen? What was the logic behind the specific narratives created by those involved in the dispute and what do they tell us about how these respondents perceive the function of the place of cult within the space of the hospital? To answer these questions I drew upon publications from the field of social anthropology and sociology of religion pertaining to the issues of secularisation, secularity and secularism. Transcending the “traditional” views on secularity and religiosity as separate, nonreducible spheres or “binary opposites”, the choice of literature permits a more careful consideration of the motivation of the actors, their diverse attitude towards the local and Church authorities, and their perception of hospital space and the chapel itself, without disregarding the context of the local politics and history.

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Niniejszy artykuł jest analizą konfliktu, dotyczącego zmiany lokalizacji katolickiej kaplicy w Szpitalu Rejonowym w Przeworsku. Przeprowadzając pogłębione wywiady etnograficzne z osobami wyrażającymi różny stosunek do idei przeniesienia kaplicy, analizując dokumenty urzędowe i materiały zawarte w lokalnej prasie, a także poddając refleksji własne obserwacje i doświadczenia, staram się udzielić odpowiedzi na pytania: jakie były przyczyny sporu? Jakie i dlaczego właśnie takie działania podjęto w celu zapobieżenia relokacji kaplicy? Co stoi za specyficznymi narracjami zaangażowanych w spór osób i co one mówią nam o postrzeganiu przez badanych kwestii funkcjonowania miejsca kultu w przestrzeni szpitala? W udzieleniu odpowiedzi na te pytania pomaga mi literatura z zakresu antropologii społecznej i socjologii religii, dotycząca zagadnień sekularyzacji, świeckości i sekularyzmu. Przekraczając obecne w „tradycyjnych” ujęciach postrzeganie świeckości i religijności jako odrębnych, nieredukowalnych sfer, „binarnych opozycji”, pozwala mi ona na głębszą refleksję dotyczącą motywacji aktorów, ich zróżnicowanego stosunku do władz kościelnych i samorządowych oraz sposobów postrzegania przez nich przestrzeni szpitala, jak i samej kaplicy, nie abstrahując jednocześnie od lokalnego, polityczno-historycznego kontekstu.

**K e y w o r d s:** secularity, religiosity, Catholicism, hospital, chapel, conflict

This article describes and analyses the narratives and practices of individuals connected with the chapel of the Our Lady of Sorrows in the Regional Hospital in Przeworsk in the context of the chapel's controversial relocation in 2015, however I concentrate mostly on my interlocutors' opinions and declarations about the relocation. I studied the case between August 2015 and October 2016 as a project for the ethnographic seminar entitled *Miracles, Pilgrim Practices and Embodied Religiosity in the Catholic Communities of the Rzeszów Region*, supervised by dr. Magdalena Lubańska from the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology of the University of Warsaw.

The analysis focuses on the aspects of the narrative and practices related to the conflict which I considered key. These are: (1) the spatial location of the chapel and the hospital area in general; (2) the negotiated categories of the "good of the patients" and "outsiders" in the hospital; (3) the connections which my interlocutors made between the chapel, the church and the related individuals, and the history of Przeworsk and Poland. This allows me to answer the following research questions: What were the reasons behind the conflict? What measures were taken to prevent the relocation of the chapel and why? What is the logic behind the specific narratives constructed by the people involved and what do these narratives reveal about my interlocutors' perception of the functioning of the place of cult within the space of a public hospital? The stances displayed by the persons involved in the conflict will be analysed using the categories of "religiosity" and "secularity". These terms, connected with the theory of secularisation, are presented in light of approaches currently dominant in social sciences; I demonstrate ambiguous nature of the terms, the blurring of the lines between them, as well as their dependency on the context. Such an approach facilitates a deeper investigation of the motivations of specific individuals and groups engaged in the dispute, without limiting them to the rigid framework of "ideal types".

Attitudes of individuals connected with the chapel's relocation could be described from other perspectives, for example: division between rational and irrational discourses. However, discourse of 'religious' and 'secular' and the process of secularization was part of *emic* way of seeing this conflict and demarcating its' active actors. For my interlocutors (those against the relocation) relocation was part of wider and complex phenomenon of undermining the role of Catholic Church. I believe, that this approach allowed me to grasp better my interlocutors' ways of thinking and acting in the conflict.

#### THE STUDIED AREA

Przeworsk is the capital of a county in the Subcarpathian Voivodeship, located 60 km away from the eastern border of Poland and 120 km away from the southern one. The town has ca. 16 thousand inhabitants. The Roman Catholic parishes of

Przeworsk (the city has none of other denominations) remain under the jurisdiction of the Przemyśl Archdiocese. These are: the parish of Christ the King, the parish of St. Barbara (managed by monks of the Bernardine Order), the parish of the Holy Ghost (administered by the Order of the Holy Sepulchre), as well as its chapels of ease: the chapel of Our Lady of the Snow used by the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, and the chapel of Our Lady of Sorrows in the Regional Hospital, named after dr. Henryk Jankowski. It is the latter that constituted the focal point of my research.

The history of the existing hospital can be traced to 1944, when an aid station was established in Przeworsk. It was managed by doctor Jankowski, who later became the patron of the present institution. The aid centre was transformed into a municipal hospital, which then grew to include six wards located in several buildings scattered throughout the city (Kunysz 1974). The existing hospital building, which brought all the wards under one roof, was built from 1976–1982 (Pelc 2016).

The hospital is only 2 km away from the city centre (the grounds on which it stands used to belong to the parish of the Holy Ghost). It stands in close vicinity to residential districts, including two blocks of flats constructed at the same time as the hospital. These buildings, nearest to the hospital, were initially used as social housing for the hospital staff but are now inhabited by different people, often with no professional connection to the hospital.

The location of the institution and the adjacent residential areas makes them seem somewhat secluded from the city proper. Many inhabitants found it inconveniently located for everyday activities, such as reaching commercial services or temples. At the same time, however, the remoteness of the hospital grounds and the small size of the residential areas had an impact on relations between its inhabitants. Almost all the residents know each other and are well-informed regarding their neighbours, which often proved very useful to me in acquiring new interlocutors and valuable data.

The hospital chapel of Our Lady of Sorrows was consecrated on 18<sup>th</sup> October 1983<sup>1</sup>. Its establishment was instigated by the prelate Adam Ablewicz, who was the parson of the parish of the Holy Ghost and the first official chaplain of the hospital. Initially the chapel was located on the first floor of the building, among administrative rooms. After a time, however, the hospital's administration was moved to a different wing and its place was taken by the Rehabilitation Ward. The chapel remained in its original location until 2015, when the decision was taken to move it, much to the displeasure of some local inhabitants, hospital staff and patients. Currently the chapel is situated on the lowest hospital floor, near spaces such as the conference room, the nurses' changing rooms, storerooms, laboratories and the mortuary.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.bazylika.przeworsk.pl/?page\\_id=180](http://www.bazylika.przeworsk.pl/?page_id=180), access: 12.II.2016

## RESEARCH METHODS AND INTERLOCUTORS

My field research in Przeworsk was conducted between August 2015 and October 2016, i.e. after the relocation of the chapel. This fact had considerable significance from the methodological point of view, since it made it possible for me to avoid siding with any faction of this conflict and allowed me to access official documents, a task which would have been undoubtedly more challenging if the research had been conducted when the dispute was at its most heated. This being said, it also prevented me from observing the events surrounding the relocation at first hand, as they unfolded.

The field material I acquired during the course of my study comes mostly from in-depth anthropological interviews, my own observations and experiences related to the functioning of the hospital chapel (both services held there and its 'everyday existence'), reports on the conflict published in the local press and online (found mostly on the internet sites of the periodicals "Super Nowości", "Gazeta Jarosławska", "Życie Podkarpackie", and "Fronda", as well as the website of Radio Maryja; some of these materials included quotes from interlocutors). I also had access to official correspondence, kindly provided to me by my respondents.

The people I talked to in my research all had a connection to the hospital chapel. The largest group comprised the inhabitants of the residential areas near the hospital; these were mostly persons of ca. 50–65 years of age, who used the chapel for a variety of reasons, were involved in its functioning in many different ways and – a fact of considerable importance – displayed diverse attitudes towards the relocation of the chapel and the entire dispute over it. Another important group of interlocutors were priests – three hospital chaplains – two of whom were in office at the time of my research (a new chaplain was appointed in September 2016). The third had used to work there many years previously. I also spoke to two city councillors who relayed the measures they had taken to prevent the chapel from being relocated (one of them served as my "doorman" and my main interlocutor), to nurses working at the Przeworsk hospital, and to the director of the institution. My aim was to offer as broad a presentation of the studied issue as possible and to give a detailed insight into the different attitudes towards the relocation of the hospital chapel.

## ANALYTICAL CATEGORIES

I describe the studied case using the categories of secularity and religiosity; the same terms are also employed in the analysis of the manner in which my interlocutors constructed their narratives. In social sciences these categories have primarily been connected with the theory of secularisation. I would like to emphasise that my percep-

tion of secularity and religiosity is not that of a binary opposition as with the *sacrum* and the *profanum*. Within the framework of my analysis, I regard these categories as stemming from different manners of perceiving and experiencing. These manners are reflected in the stories different individuals told me about the chapel and the activities related to its relocation. They are revealed, for instance, by my respondents' opinions on the location of the chapel and its aesthetics (see later sections).

The dichotomy of *sacrum/profanum*, originating from the period when religious studies became the fighting ground for Enlightenment and Romantic ideologies, "is connected with the drive towards the revaluation of the autonomy of religion" (Staszczak 1987, 323). Such a dichotomous perception of the religious and the secular sphere was consolidated in the public eye after Emil Durkheim isolated the category of *profanum*, i.e. that which is everyday and not sacred, the polar opposite of the *sacrum*, i.e. that which is separate and forbidden, as well as the sphere of beliefs and practices (Staszczak 1987). According to Durkheim, contact between religious and secular sphere is not possible in practice "unless the profane loses its specific features and becomes sacred to some extent. The two genera cannot be brought together and still maintain their separate natures" (Durkheim 2001,39). The two spheres are therefore qualitatively different.

Such a dichotomous perception of reality may, in my view, be connected with the so-called classical theory of secularisation, which stems from the works of Max Weber and Emile Durkheim. This theory associated western modernity with the decline of traditional forms of religiosity (Cannell 2010, 86–87). Within this framework, secularisation is both a symptom of modernity and its effect; it belongs to the historical process of modernisation.

Crucial elements of the theory of secularisation include the thesis of the privatisation of religion. It stipulates that social forms of religion have been supplanted with individual religiosity. This issue proves to be of paramount importance in the context of the dispute under analysis here – the conflict unfolded on several planes: in the contact between the inhabitants of the city and the people with some connection to the hospital, in relations between local government institutions and the local Church, in the discussion presented in regional and national media. The above-mentioned theory of the privatisation of religious expression is general in nature and constitutes an element of sociological analysis in the macro scale. Thus, I do not aim to prove or disprove it on the basis of the analysed case. The theory did, however, inspire me to reflect upon the differences in the justifications for the existence of the chapel in a public hospital, as well as the linguistic differences that polarised the manners in which my interlocutors spoke about the conflict, for instance in the media.

The works of Jürgen Habermas proved particularly inspiring in this respect. In his famous acceptance speech for the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade, published

under the title *Faith and Knowledge*, the German philosopher refers to the concept of a “post-secular society”, i.e. one which has to adjust itself “to the continued existence of religious communities within a continually secularized society”. In Habermas’s view, post-secularity refers to changes in people’s consciousness which stem from processes such as intensified migration, the coverage of global conflicts presented as religious, etc. (Habermas 2008a). Such a society rejects the perception of secularisation as a “zero-sum game between, on the one hand, the productive powers of science and technology harnessed by capitalism and, on the other, the tenacious powers of religion and the church”. A conflict presented in such a way is a war that may only end in one side being annihilated by the other (Habermas 2001, 3). As Habermas observes:

“After all, the liberal state has so far imposed only upon the believers among its citizens the requirement that they split their identity into public and private versions. That is, they must translate their religious convictions into a secular language before their arguments have the prospect of being accepted by a majority. Today’s Catholics and Protestants do this when they argue for the legal rights of fertilized ova outside the mother’s body, thus attempting (perhaps prematurely) to translate the “in the image of God” character of the human creature into the secular language of constitutional law.

But the search for reasons that aspire to general acceptance need not lead to an unfair exclusion of religion from public life, and secular society, for its part, need not cut itself off from the important resources of spiritual explanations, if only the secular side were to retain a feeling for the articulative power of religious discourse. The boundaries between secular and religious reasons are, after all, tenuous.” (Habermas 2001, 4–5).

The idea that religious beliefs need to be translated into secular ones pertains to the functioning of the citizens of liberal democracies within the public sphere constituted by the “collective reason”. Following this type of reason, consensus in communicative actions is reached:

“through concord on general issues, through rational arguments, and not through compromises between the interests of the parties involved; since upon engaging in communication aimed at cooperation and agreement, we set interests aside and focus solely on achieving mindful cooperation based on specified principles and values” (Buksiński 2011, 27).

The my analysis in this paper refers to Habermas’s concept of translating and juxtaposes it with the material obtained in the course of the field research. I am, however, of the opinion that this notion is not fully applicable to the language used to describe the conflict over the chapel – a language which has appeared in the public sphere as well. Analysing Habermas’s theory of the public sphere, Tadeusz Buksiński (2011, 33) notes that his image of communication within the public sphere leaves no room for conflicts of interests, which do, in fact, occur. Since such a conflict indubitably exists in the case under analysis, I assume the mentioned translations to be a kind of strategy employed to broaden the scope of the arguments’ impact.

The concepts of secularisation and religion play a key role in the above-mentioned approaches. However, much less scientific care is given to the issue of secularity, which proves important in the context of the present analysis. As José Casanova observes,

“the secular has become a central modern category – theological-philosophical, legal-political, and cultural-anthropological – to construct, codify, grasp and experience a realm of reality differentiated from the ‘religious’” (Casanova 2011, 54).

Casanova considers it possible to phenomenologically explore different types of “secularities”, which may be experienced, institutionalised and codified in various ways, depending on the context. One may also study the related transformations of “religiosity” or “spirituality”. As far as social studies are concerned, much has been said about religiosity, yet the “task of developing a reflexive anthropology and sociology of the secular is only now beginning” (Casanova 2011, 54).

Another crucial element of the contemporary study of secularism involves rejecting the perception of this term as forming continuity with “religiosity”. In his book *A Secular Age*, Charles Taylor offers a critical view the approaches linking secularity with the departure from religion, labelling them as “subtraction theories” (Taylor 2007, 22). In his own estimation, secularism may be understood in three ways: (1) as the disappearance from the structures of the state and various social spheres; (2) as the disappearance of religiosity as such; (3) as a mindset for understanding the world, the conditions in which modern people acknowledge faith (Taylor 2007, 2–3).

In the field of anthropology, the issue of secularity has mainly been discussed by Talal Asad. According to Fenella Cannell (2010, 90): Asad “has defined much of the recent anthropological discussion of the secular”. In his *Formations of the Secular. Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (2003) Asad posed the question of the connection between secularity (understood as an epistemic category) with secularism as a political doctrine and pondered on whether these categories could be anthropologically studied (Asad 2003, 1).

Similarly to Taylor and Casanova, Asad does not perceive “secularity” as a part of a continuum linked with “religiosity”. It is neither a stage in the development of societies, in which religion would precede secularism, nor an abrupt departure from religiosity. Rather, Asad sees the secular as “a concept that brings together certain behaviors, knowledges, and sensibilities in modern life” (Asad 2003, 25). In his view, “secularity” defined in such a way precedes the political doctrine of secularism, meaning that “over time a variety of concepts, practices and sensibilities have come together to form ‘the secular’” (Asad 2003, 16). Once again, secularity is not the binary opposition to religiosity, but a collection of dispositions, which ought to be studied as a separate category (that, naturally, remains in a reciprocal relation). In *Formations of the Secular*, Asad analyses the evolution of concepts such as a myth, agency, suffering, as well as the notions of human rights, minority and nationalism. He investigates how the changes



in the historical processes related to these concepts influenced the development of the notions of secularism and secularity. He employs such a method

“(…) because the secular is so much a part of our modern life, it is not easy to grasp it directly. I think it is best pursued through its shadows, as it were” (Asad 2003, 16).<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the present study, the terms “secular” and “religious” are used in relation to the narratives and actions related to the relocation of the chapel. My aim is to demonstrate that, despite their seemingly contradictory nature, these categories are not binary opposites or a pair of concepts in which “the secular” would be equivalent to “non-religious” or “anti-religious”. The benchmark by which I assign specific narratives to given categories is their relation to the doctrine of secularism. Following Casanova, I define secularism as a kind of ideology, or a collection thereof, constituting the public sphere of a modern state, which seeks to eliminate religion or treats it as non-rational discourse (Casanova 2011, 66–67).

#### PROTEST

The initiative to resist the relocation of the chapel was started by two city councillors, who had known of the plan to move the place of worship since February 2015, having learnt of it from local residents and hospital staff. The councillors’ efforts focused on two spheres: on the institutional level and on mobilising the local community. They appealed to the mayor of Przeworsk and to the county head (*starosta*) and sent official letters to the management of the hospital requesting that the situation be clarified – in response they were assured that the new site for the chapel would be fully appropriate. The councillors also contacted members of the clergy – the parson of the parish of the Holy Ghost and the Metropolitan of Przemyśl, archbishop Józef Michalik. My interlocutors were very disappointed with the attitude of the priests to whom they appealed. The local parson sided with the hospital management, whereas the archbishop – having declared that the councillors’ concern for the fate of the chapel was greatly appreciated – promised to send an envoy to investigate the matter. However, he did so only far too

<sup>2</sup> In the first chapter of the book quoted above Asad attempts to define the course of research in the anthropology of secularity. He writes:

“An anthropology of secularism should thus start with a curiosity about the doctrine and practice of secularism regardless of where they have originated, and it would ask: How do attitudes to the human body (to pain, physical damage, decay and death, to physical integrity, bodily growth, and sexual enjoyment) differ in various forms of life? What structures of the senses – hearing, seeing, touching – do these attitudes depend on? In what ways does the law define and regulate practices and doctrines on the grounds that they are ‘truly human’? What discursive spaces does this work of definition and regulation open up for grammars of ‘the secular’ and ‘the religious’? How do all these sensibilities, attitudes, assumptions and behaviors come together to support or undermine the doctrine of secularism?” (Asad 2003, 17).



late, when the future of the chapel had already been decided. In order to mobilise the Przeworsk community, the councillors made statements in the local press which was reporting on the dispute; they also spoke privately to the inhabitants of the city (some of whom also became my interlocutors). One of the councillors even left leaflets on the staircases of the blocks of flats neighbouring the hospital, informing the residents that the chapel would be moved to, as he himself admitted, “unbefitting” conditions. Another person of authority involved in the dispute was the sculptor who had made the interior decoration of the chapel. Having been informed of the ongoing conflict, she wrote an official letter to the hospital management, protesting against the change which would “nullify her entire artistic concept and damages elements of the decoration”.

The majority of my interlocutors were people with no official functions, and who did not actively participate in the conflict. Our conversations revealed diverse attitudes towards the activists’ initiatives, which had ultimately ended in failure. These ranged from a kind of aversion (one of my respondents described the councillors’ actions as “bigotry”) to full support. A notable exception comes from my interview with a female inhabitant of the residential area near the hospital, who on a daily basis helped the chaplain prepare religious services. She had chosen to voice her displeasure during the mass of consecration celebrated in the new chapel.

“The protest was like this, before the holy mass, when the bishop, Adam Szal is his name I think, and the parson came, then before the mass I sang *There was no room for you*<sup>3</sup>. But the parson priest just came up to me then and, well... so that I would stop singing, yes?” (woman, ca. 55 years old).

#### A PLACE HALLOWED BY PRAYER

The narratives opposing the relocation of the chapel were based primarily on the valuation of the hospital space, i.e. on the relocation of the chapel from the first floor to the level beneath ground floor. Most of my interlocutors, not only those who were against the relocation, referred to the new site as “a basement”. Many of them considered the very fact of placing the chapel below ground level as unacceptable:

“Because you don’t move a place hallowed by prayer, you don’t move it to basements, because right now the chapel is in the basement. Is this a fitting place? I think not. Because the Most Blessed Sacrament, like a king, deserves a place that is befitting. The king is not receiving in basements. And it is so according to me” (the Vice Chair of the City Council, 63 years old).

“And that they have moved it – there were different voices in protest that it was being moved down. That it shouldn’t be so, that it should be the other way round, the chapel should be elevated to some dignity, that it should be in reverse, from the basements up, not to the basements!” (woman, ca. 60 years old)

<sup>3</sup> *There was no room for you* is a religious song referring to the story recounted in the Gospel of Luke, in which the Holy Family could not find lodgings in any inn in Bethlehem.

It should be noted that the very term “basement” has never been used by the director of the hospital or other people who saw nothing wrong in relocating the chapel. It was an element of the narrative constructed by the “defenders of the chapel” (as they sometimes dubbed themselves) as well as by people who displayed an ambivalent attitude towards the issue. The term always carried a rather negative meaning – my interlocutors described the location of the chapel (using the word “basement”) through negative associations.

One of the dominant issues discussed when the old chapel was compared with the new was light. The dimness of the chapel invoked the general association with a “basement” to which the chapel had supposedly been “pushed down”.

“By the way, for Easter, on Good Friday you could easily make the dark tomb down there. All it takes is to turn the light off... So, I feel there like in a tomb all the time” (woman, ca. 60 years old).

As mentioned above, this assessment was not shared by all of my interlocutors. One woman made the following statement about the chapel:

“It is very nice inside, the only thing is that it’s dark, (...), but you just turn the lights and it’s alright” (woman, ca. 50 years old).

This discrepancy may be regarded as proof that the perception of the chapel and the manner of its description depended on the interlocutors’ attitude towards the central event of the chapel’s relocation and the related dispute. Some of my respondents shared a negative opinion on various elements of the new place of worship by comparing them to the old chapel – if they had opposed the relocation itself, they had a negative view of the new site. Individuals who saw the necessity for the chapel’s relocation, in turn, perceived some aspects, such as the lack of natural light, as a difficulty or inconvenience that is not impossible to overcome.

Another important objection to the new location of the chapel was the resentment related to its proximity to the mortuary. My interlocutors assessed the state of affairs as “unpleasant”. Using one of our conversations, the chaplain noted that the proximity evoked the association that the chapel was only used for the last rites. Sometime after the relocation of the chapel, the hospital management decided to move the mortuary as well. The proximity to that space amplified the negative associations evoked by the location “in the basement”. This may be one of the reasons why the management avoided that term. Phrases such as “level minus one” and “lower ground floor” were used instead (e.g. in the notice in the hospital informing of the chapel’s relocation). Narratives constructed by persons who saw the need to move the chapel (the director, some of the staff and, significantly, also the parson priest) did not mention the relation between the chapel’s location and the need to ensure “befitting conditions” for worship. The relocation was discussed mostly in terms of functionality, convenience or safety, and most of all the need for modernising the hospital, whereas the presence of the chapel and the chaplain was mentioned in the context of the treatment of patients:

“Well, it had been a problem before, when the chapel was located inside a ward, for sanitary and epidemiological reasons, among other things, it had to be moved, so now there already are patient rooms where it used to be. It was a lot of trouble, I mean some of the locals, for the sake of convenience, treat this as their district church, the chapel that is. At the moment the location is, well... The patients do not seem to mind” (the director of the hospital, 64 years old).

The above-cited examples illustrate the juxtaposition of incongruent categories. Two main narratives can be distinguished and labelled as the secular (e.g. the statements of the hospital director and the parson) and the religious (“the defenders of the chapel”). The differences between these two manners of discussing the chapel consist mainly in the choice of the points of reference – the “defenders” described the entire process from the perspective of a “hallowed site” which had been moved, whereas the individuals following the secular argumentation presented it from the perspective of the patients or the function of the hospital – i.e. providing treatment. As the director put it, faith does help in the process of recovery, yet it is only supplementary. The two approaches have far-reaching consequences, as they categorise the manners of perceiving the chapel and the hospital space as a whole.

It must, however, be remembered that the secular and the religious are interwoven in the sphere of narration. The boundary between them is fluid, because – as emphasised above – secularity is not a residual category describing “the absence of religion”. The delimitation of the categories refers to (as noted by Asad) to their relation to the political doctrine of secularism.

The reciprocal relation of these categories is apparent e.g. in the letter from the hospital director to the sculptor who designed the interior of the chapel. One of the paragraphs contains a rather macabre description of a hypothetical evacuation of the hospital in a scenario in which the chapel would still be located in the Rehabilitation Ward. It contains a reference to the concept of sin:

“And what if there’s a fire? Who will take it upon their conscience, all these people trampled in panic, blistered and burned to death? (...) Should we patiently wait until disaster strikes? *I s t h i s n o t t h e g r a v e s i n o f n e g l i g e n c e ?*” (doc.1).

The arguments used by the other party, in turn, included numerous allusions to the economic aspect of running the hospital – the relocation of the chapel was presented as an indication of mismanagement on the director’s part, a waste of money:

“The chapel existed, there was no need to build one. And now they had to renovate... (...) apparently it cost more than thirty thousand. And the nurses are saying: ‘well, sir, we got no raises’” (the Vice Chair of the City Council, 63 years old).

I believe that the intermingling of standards may be regarded as a specific kind of “translating” religious arguments to the secular and vice versa. Jürgen Habermas stressed the need for religious persons to accept that on the state’s institutional level of functioning “only secular reasons count” (Habermas 2008b, 131). This type of translation

from religious language into a secular one is therefore necessary in order for religious individuals to be able to partake in public debates on the same terms as non-religious ones. In Habermas's view, however, religious modes of expression should be allowed on the level of informal public sphere (e.g. in media discourse).

It may be argued that, in a situation of conflict, the above-presented examples of translation (as well as, for instance, the practice of mentioning the chapel in the context of the history of the city) were means to a slightly different end: they aimed at broadening the scope of impact of the given narrative standard in order to achieve victory in the dispute. It should also be noted that the phenomenon of translation was reciprocal, if only to a very small degree (the statement of the hospital director referring to "the grave sin of negligence"). This observation highlights the fact that Habermas's postulate as to the coexistence of people with different religious views within the society is not universal. It pertains to communities in which the secular view constitutes the majority; the situation is different if a community is composed mostly of religious persons, who nevertheless differ in their individual views.

José Casanova wrote that the Western European, dualistic, perception of reality in terms of the religious/the secular has spread throughout the globe. This poses a significant question that has been hotly debated in almost every corner of the world: how, where and by whom should the boundaries between the secular and the religious be defined? (Casanova 2011, 63) There exist many forms of secularisation and many versions of the so-called fundamentalist movements, which are a response to processes of secularisation. This being said, the mentioned movements are not only reactionary, but to some extent creative as well, since they attempt to redefine these boundaries anew (Casanova 2011, 63).

In my estimation, the label of a "fundamentalist movement" does not fit well in the context of the "defenders of the chapel", even though the conflict itself does reflect the process described by Casanova perfectly, albeit on a much smaller scale. The behaviour of the protesters, the specific categories they employed "in defence of the chapel", were therefore a response to the secular attitude displayed by the director, the Starosta and also the parson (who, in a way, "washed his hands of the matter" and clearly named the director the manager of the hospital, legitimising the relocation of the chapel as justifiable). They reacted to perceiving the chapel through the lens of its location as a part of the hospital, i.e. a place which should primarily serve the patients and facilitate their treatment, as well as to the use of specific language referring to economic management. The relocation of the chapel was also presented as a stage in the hospital's modernisation, a move towards providing the best possible conditions for the patients – enlarging the wards, creating more space. The very phrase "defending the chapel" may testify to the fact that the movement was a reaction to decisions rooted in a very different line of thinking. My interlocutors offered an interesting observation regarding the religious attitude (i.e. emphasising the sacred nature of the

place and the need to place it in a befitting space) of those opposing the relocation of the chapel. In their narratives they frequently compared moving the chapel to “the basement” to the process of “eliminating” religion, linking the director’s actions with a kind of a long-term objective. Interestingly, the same interlocutors emphasised the high status of religion and the unwavering faith of the people in the region (i.e. Subcarpathia). Actions which some of my respondents regarded as anti-religious were therefore perceived as external, “non-Subcarpathian”.

#### THE GOOD OF THE PATIENTS

“The good of the patients” was one of the most common arguments appearing in the material from my field research. For both sides of the dispute, it was inseparably linked with the location of the chapel. Both proponents and opponents of the move named the benefit of the patients as *the* issue they cared about – yet they differed greatly in their ideas on how to ensure it.

The director of the hospital made frequent references to the presence of “outsiders” in the hospital, by which he mainly meant the inhabitants of the blocks in the vicinity. The official letter written to the mayor of Przeworsk reads:

“The masses and celebratory services held in the chapel are attended (...) also by the local residents from the blocks of flats near the hospital, which makes it impossible to keep the sanitary regimen at the Rehabilitation Ward and disturbs the peace of its patients” (doc.2).

The notice put up at the parish church also included the information about outsiders coming to the chapel and the fact that their presence could pose “a danger to the patients”. Thus, according to the director of the hospital and the parson priest “the good of the patients” consisted in raising the degree of their isolation from the “outsiders” entering the hospital to attend mass. The defenders of the chapel saw the arguments regarding the threat posed by “the outsiders” and references to matters of sanitation and epidemiology as excuses used by the director; in their view the threat was exaggerated.

In his book *The Birth of the Clinic*, Michel Foucault analyses the historical circumstances of the evolution of medical discourse, aiming to define “the conditions of medical experience in modern times (Foucault 2003, xxvii). One of the elements in the development of the modern discourse about illness which Foucault identifies as significant is “tertiary spatialisation”, meaning “all the gestures by which, in a given society, disease is circumscribed, medically invested, isolated, divided up into closed, privileged regions or distributed throughout cure centres” (Foucault 2003,17). The idea of a hospital as such a space has, as Foucault demonstrates, been born in the discussion whether it would not be better to leave disease in the social surroundings focused on family.

All of my interlocutors emphasised the essential need of having a chapel inside a hospital. The conflict revolved more around the question of the chapel’s intended

users. Who and was allowed to utilise it and why? – was in just for patients and hospital staff, or for all the faithful? Thus, some of my interlocutors questioned the idea of a hospital as a place of isolation, but did so for a very specific reason, i.e. the existence of a chapel within hospital grounds. The place of worship was what legitimised (at least for the interlocutors in question) the presence of “outsiders” in hospital space. The chapel created a kind of a breach in that space – some respondents stressed the fact that attending church service in a hospital ward was, in a way “awkward” (I have experienced this “awkwardness” myself while participating in a service of the Stations of the Cross around the hospital) – yet the existence of the chapel meant that they did not feel “out of place” when coming to the Rehabilitation Ward. This may be seen as one of the more important reason why these people rejected the director’s and parson’s narrative regarding the “isolating” spatialisation of the hospital. This example highlights one of the most prominent differences leading to the conflict over the chapel, a discrepancy evident both on the level of discourse an practice.

#### THE CHAPEL LIKE THE GDAŃSK SHIPYARD

One last aspect of the narrative which merits a mention is the reference to the foundation of the chapel in the Przeworsk hospital and placing its beginnings in a broader historical context, i.e. the history of the city, the history of Poland, the times of communist rule and martial law. This significant topic was taken up by the actors involved in the dispute, but also by individuals who played no active role in the conflict.

As mentioned above, the hospital in Przeworsk was built in 1976–1982. The final years of its construction, and its opening coincided with the period of martial law, a detail often noted by my interlocutors. They considered it meaningful, since this group of interlocutors saw that period in history as particularly difficult for the Church. In reality, however, it was the time when the Catholic Church in Poland was granted the largest number of permissions to build temples and chapels, due to the changes in the law instituted shortly before the introduction of the martial law. It was also related to the Church’s tendency to cooperate with the state. The latter resulted from the “mediation syndrome” into which the Polish Church had fallen, trying to act as the bridge between the repressed society and the oppressive state apparatus (Casanova 2005, 184).

One of the articles relating the conflict over the chapel contains the following information: “[the vice-chair of the City Council] emphasised that the site is as historical to the city as the shipyard is to Gdańsk” (Krakowska 2015).

The feat of establishing the hospital chapel in Przeworsk in spite of the “hard times for the Church” is usually ascribed to two people, who had already passed on: priest Adam Ablewicz, who was then the local parson, and Wojciech Pawłowski, the director of the hospital. These two were referred to as “the good managers”:

"I suppose that if Mr. Pawłowski was still – which is impossible – and father Ablewicz, I don't know, in such a situation, wouldn't they just build something on that meadow [next to the hospital] and wouldn't the chapel be there, because these two had amazing ideas, both of them, they were such managers that, that... incidentally, under father Ablewicz, Przeworsk held the title of Master of Rational Management, it was said that it was thanks to father Ablewicz" (man, ca. 60 years old).

This belief, and the notions regarding the functioning of the chapel and its ownership (my interlocutors presented it as co-administered by the hospital management and the parson of the parish of the Holy Ghost), point to the existence of a certain ideal of cooperation between secular and religious authorities. Interestingly, in the minds of my interlocutors, this ideal was achieved in communist times, i.e. during a period "of opposing the Church". The entire period of communist rule was spoken of in rather positive terms; this positive valuation was evident at least in those elements of the narrative that were tied to locality, the event taking place in Przeworsk and occurrences of individual nature. Negative valuation was, in turn, focused on the more "remote" and general aspects, for instance when discussing the communist system and its relations with the Catholic Church. These observations are fully in accord with the conclusions presented in the article *Nostalgia za PRL-em. Próba analizy* by Marcin Brocki (2011). The tales of Przeworsk's past fit one more conclusion drawn by Brocki, namely that the discourse on the topic of the People's Republic of Poland is organised around the binary opposition of the categories of activeness and passivity. Father Ablewicz, the industrious parson priest from Przeworsk (who had indeed been a prominent figure in the history of the city) was portrayed as active, as were the director of the hospital, Pawłowski, and the communist authorities of the city, which "could be reasoned with". The actions of the current director were not presented in this manner by the opponents of the chapel's relocation. They saw him only as bringing destruction or choosing easy solutions, and as not being engaged in the efforts to provide a fitting space for the chapel.

#### SUMMARY

The conflict around the relocation of the Chapel of Our Lady of Sorrows in the Regional Hospital in Przeworsk undoubtedly left a mark on how this site was perceived by people associated with it, for whom the chapel constituted one of the cornerstones of religious experience. In a sense, the dispute reported in the local media categorised my interlocutors' narratives pertaining to the chapel, opinions on its aesthetic value and even the assessment of the level of involvement in church services (which sometimes differed from my own experience).

The conflict resulted from differences in how its actors perceived the chapel and hospital space, as well as larger phenomena related to religion and the public sphere. These discrepancies, in turn, stemmed from dissimilar personal experiences influencing the valuation of space, the interpretation of the historical context for the chapel's



foundation and its functioning. My interlocutors presented diverse opinions regarding the new location – the very negative evaluation expressed with the term “basement” was rejected by the director of the hospital, who referred to the new location as “lower ground floor”. Differing opinions were also expressed regarding the surroundings of the new chapel, namely its proximity to the mortuary and storage areas. Recounting these narratives, I attempted to present the mentioned differences in terms of tensions between the religious and the secular attitude, accentuating the complementary nature of these concepts – since the secular approach is not tantamount to an “anti-religious” one, just as the religious attitude is not equivalent to “anti-secular”. An observation which proved significant was the reciprocity of relations between the sphere of narratives and my interlocutors’ image of the hospital chapel and the hospital itself. On the one hand, different narratives stemmed from different experiences, and on the other – shaped them. The analysis of the conflict in Przeworsk also revealed important aspects of perceiving the recent history of the city, and indeed the country as a whole; demonstrating the attitudes towards the communist system, described as anti-religious, yet at the same time – due to its very anti-religious nature – allowing for active involvement in the religious sphere through “fighting for” churches and chapels.

The conflict is analysed using the categories of secularity and religiosity, but understood differently than traditional approaches associated with the theory of secularisation. Referring to the emic categories utilised in the dispute, I made an attempt to demonstrate that these categories do not definitionally derive from one another. Their scope pertains rather to their relation to the idea of secularism, and what we call religious or secular depends on the particular context.

The aim of this chapter was to indicate that the “anthropology of secularity” introduced by Asad may be developed towards analysing such conflicts, which are still underrepresented in social sciences. In this respect, I am fully in accord with Jeanne Favret-Saada (2016), who made the following observation in the context of conflicts with blasphemy in the background: “Unfortunately, this abstention [of social sciences – P.G.] comes at a cost: if we merely rehash the clichés of the media on religious controversies without putting them under scrutiny, if we give in to the media’s strategy of progressive polarization of public opinion, we all become idiots, ethnologists and others alike” (Favret-Saada 2016,32).

*Translated by Julita Mastalerz*

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- Doc. 1 – The hospital director's reply to an open letter by the author of the chapel's interior decoration (Przeworsk, 21.05.2015).
- Doc. 2 – A notice regarding the relocation of the hospital chapel put up in the Basilica of the Holy Ghost in Przeworsk.

Author's address:

Przemysław Gnyszka  
 Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology  
 The University of Warsaw  
 ul. Żurawia 4, 00-503 Warsaw, POLAND  
 e-mail: przemyslawgnyszka@gmail.com  
 ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4394-0890>

