Morality and religion in the assessment of academic youth from Subcarpathia Province in Poland

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Abstract

What is good and evil? This is probably one of the most frequently asked questions in the history of human kind. Moral decisions can be very hard in particularly when people are just starting their adventure with an adult life, that is, in their early 20's. This report shows the moral condition of academic youth from one of the most religious regions in Poland. Therefore, the focus of this study was to show the relationship between religion and morality of young Poles. This article presents the results of a survey study conducted among 139 students of the University of Rzeszow attending the 2006/2007 academic year. The results showed that the morality of surveyed students seems to depend in a high degree on circumstances of situations (i.e., moderate moral relativism) rather than absolute norms. Moreover, the comparison of the results of this study with previous questionnaire research conducted at the same institution in mid-90's show that religion has smaller impact on moral choices of academic youth from Subcarpathia province. Importantly, this study shows that more students reported overall weaker role of religion in their lives than it was observed previously.

Keywords: morality, religion, postmodernism, secularization, academic youth

Introduction

In the conditions of modernizing societies, many areas of everyday life of their members, including their religious and moral dimension, are changing. Many sociologists wonder whether these changes will lead Polish society to similar transformations that has been observable in highly pluralistic and modern societies (Borowik, Doktor 2001: 44-46, Mariański 2008:269-272). Namely, to the individualization of the social awareness of individuals, and thus to the privatization and rationalization of morality (Bauman 1996: 29-32). Also if those change will lead to the secularization and globalization of religion (Borowik, Doktor 2001:16-22), as well as to the break-up of a relationship between religion and morality (Mariański 2008:269).

Polish society, due to its belonging to the Western World, is becoming more similar to their modern Western neighbors. However, as Marek Ziółkowski (2006) emphasized, it has the characteristics of both traditional and modern society. For example, in some areas resembles commonly observed in Western societies: post-modern consumption (Ziółkowski 2006:154). The transformations of the traditional moral and religious values and norms has been also taking place in the Polish society. However, they do not progress as quickly and intensively as they have been doing in the West (Mariański 2002:483 and 2008:295). This situation is related to the high position of religion, and more precisely, Catholicism in the everyday life of Poles (Mariański 2002:483; Borowik 2003:52). It is enough to mention that in the research conducted by the Public Opinion Research Center (Polish abbreviation: CBOS), the vast majority of members of the Polish society declare themselves to be religious (69%), and over half (56%) practice at least once a week (CBOS Communicate {nr 191} December 2006). Importantly, as for 2015 the region in Poland with the

highest percentage (91 %) of people declaring themselves as believers and deep believers in religion is Subcarpathia province (GUS Report, 2017).

In view of the above, it is worth asking the following question: how morality and religiosity of the academic youth studying at the main university of the Subcarpathia province (University of Rzeszow) have been affected by those socio-cultural changes actually happening in post-modern Polish society? This article will try to answer this question by analyzing results of a survey research targeting attitudes of participants towards specific moral norms and values and the relationship between morality and religion. The first hypothesis for this project was proposing that: Participants would show attachment to general moral norms commonly accepted in Polish society, however, their moral behavior would be characterized by more moderate relativism than absolutism. The second hypothesis claimed that religion would have weaker influence on moral choices of Rzeszów's students than it had in previous years.

It should be pointed out that, in this paper the results of the current questionnaire study were compared with the results of other authors who investigated the morality and religiosity of Rzeszów students in the last twenty years. The first one was Paweł Grygiel, who conducted his research in the academic year 1998/1999 (Grygiel 2002), and the second one was Artur Grzesik, who studied students in the 1995/1996 academic year (Grzesik 2002). Both of them conducted their research at the Higher School of Education (Polish abbreviation: WSP) in Rzeszów, which in 2001 was transformed (together with the Institute of Sociology in Rzeszów and with other institutions and departments) into the University of Rzeszów.

The methodological remarks

The article will present selected results of the questionnaire survey, showing the moral and religious dimension of everyday life of academic youth from Podkarpacie region. The research took place at the turn of May and June 2007 at the University of Rzeszów.

Participants

The total sample was 139 students studying at two faculties of the University of Rzeszów, that is, Mathematics and Natural Sciences, and History and Sociology. The sample was divided into layers, the criterion for each of them was the year of study, faculty and gender.

Slightly more students in year IV (54.0%) than in year I (46.0%) and almost identical percentage of students studying at the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics (52.5%) and Socio-Historical (47.5%) were examined. In the case of gender, among the surveyed students there were more women (53.2%) than men (46.8%).

Moreover, in the analyzed sample the highest percentage was constituted by people from rural areas, i.e. 45.3%, followed by people from cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants - 23.0% (probably most of them were from Rzeszów). A similar percentage of people living in medium-sized and small towns was recorded (16.5% and 15.1% respectively). In total, there were 56.4% of people living permanently in cities.

The majority of respondents (56.1%) indicated that they were of working class origin, over a quarter (26.6%) chose intelligent origin, and almost one sixth (15.8%) decided to indicate peasant origin, two people did not answer. The respondents most often described the financial situation of the family as average (43.9%), fairly good (40.3%) and definitely good, only five students indicated a rather bad answer, and two very bad ones.

Questionnaire

The research tool was a survey entitled "Students and moral values", which consisted of 45 questions, including 8 metric questions. The issues related to the attitude of the respondents towards assessments, norms and moral values present in their everyday life were treated the most extensively. In addition, some questions focused on religious issues and the interrelationship between religions and morality. Most of them were closed or semi-closed questions.

Operational definitions of Morality, Religiosity, Norms and Values (Core and Personal)

Starting the research, a neutral definition of morality was used, which can be presented in the following way after Janusz Mariański: morality is "a certain set of norms and behaviors understood in terms of good and bad"(1989:130). In order to measure this phenomenon, parameters of moral norms and values (see below) were used.

When studying religiosity, the definition of Władysław Piwowski was used: " a set of institutional beliefs, values and symbols, as well as related behaviors, which result from the differentiation between empirical and non-empirical reality and from the assignment of matters of empirical reality to matters of empirical reality to non-empirical reality". (1996: 49).

Norms were understood as: "statements of duty (...) containing more or less general indications as to how to behave in certain situations". (Mariański 1989:65). In turn moral norms are such norms, which "indicate how a person should act towards other people and towards himself or herself". (Mariański 1989:144).

The idea of value was defined according to Hepp, as: "internalised standards of behaviour inherited by individuals in the process of socialization in the cultural context of a particular society. (Hepp quoted from Piwowski 1996:242). In that vein, the Core values meant "a greater or lesser

range of values accepted by all or at least most members of the community, on the basis of which they reach consensus, dialogue and cooperation for the common good" (Brewery 1996:243). On the other hand, the definition of the personal values focused on the individual needs of the members of a given community. Personal values include daily and final values. Daily values are "life goals and aspirations, mobilizing for everyday activity". (Mariański 1995:162). In turn, the final values "determine the final state of human aspirations, aspirations and actions". (Mariański 1995:161).

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Results

Main moral orientations

A pluralism of norms and values, moral attitudes can have a dual character. First of all, they can take on an absolutist dimension, i.e. the norms they follow and values are rigorously respected regardless of the situation. Secondly, the individual in moral choices leans towards relativism, i.e. depending on the circumstances he or she is guided by a given norm or trusts a given value. In other words, from the relativistic point of view, there is no single and always valid normative system. It is worth noting that this type of attitude, by many authors, is treated as characteristic of people living in the contemporary Western World (Mariański 2002:485; Bauman 1996:31). However, the two types of attitudes mentioned above may interfere with each other, and it is possible to encounter moderate and extreme absolutism or moderate and extreme relativism. In this section of the report there are questions investigating those four types of moral attitudes.

In the first question the participants were faced with two theorems: **1** - "There are completely clear criteria for determining what is good and what is bad. They apply to everyone, regardless of their circumstances", and **2** - "There is no clear definition of what is good and what is bad and absolute criteria for determining what is good and what is bad. Good and evil depend on each other and to a large extent from the circumstances." They were then asked to choose the one that was closer to their views, and the students could either reject it or choose to answer it: "I can't say. The distribution of answers given to this question is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Relation to general moral standards

#	Proposed claims	Number	%
1	Claim 1	54	38,8
2	Claim 2	76	54,7
3	Neither 1 nor 2	3	2,2
4	I can't say	6	4,3
	Total	139	100,0

Source: Own research.

The second thesis is true for the majority of Rzeszów students. Thus, the relativistic attitude is closer to them. However, the respondents were not unambiguous in such an assessment, a substantial part of the surveyed students rigorously assessed their views on moral issues. In comparison to the research conducted by Paweł Grygiel in the end of the 90's (1998/99) the percentage of people approving the first thesis increased. The results of the comparison show that the percentage of support for the second statement decreased slightly (from 27.0% to 38.8% in 2007) and the percentage of support for the second statement decreased slightly (from 59.7% to 54.7%).

Continuing this topic of the survey, an attempt was made to expand the choice of the surveyed students. The respondents were asked to choose one of four types of attitudes:

Fundamental Attitude - one should have clear moral principles and never deviate from them;

Moderate Compromising Attitude - one should have clear moral principles, but in some situation, it is possible to deviate from them, however, those situations have to be exceptional.

Extremely Compromising Attitude - one must have certain moral principles, but there is nothing wrong with it when one departs from them in relation to the requirements of various life situations.

Purposeful Attitude – One should not have any clear moral principles, however, one should behave accordingly to a given situation. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Basic and purposeful attitudes

#	Types of attitudes	Number	%
1	Fundamental	24	17.3
2	Moderate compromising	66	47,5
3	Extremely compromising	35	25,2
4	Purposeful	14	10,1
	Total	139	100,0

Source: Own research.

As it can be observed, the students were most satisfied with the combination of absolutism and relativism (moderately compromise attitude). This means that for Subcarpathia youth it was important to be able to choose in the course of making decisions of a moral nature, but still there are certain limits that they do not want to cross. Compared to previous surveys, there are significant differences in opinions of students from the 21st century and those studying at the time when the surveys were conducted by Grzesik (2002) and Grygiel (2002). Table 3 illustrates this very well.

Table 3. Types of attitudes of Rzeszow' students across three studies

#	Types of attitudes	1995/1996	1998/1999	2006/2007
1	Fundamental	26,7%	22,6%	17,3%
2	Moderate compromise	36,5%	33,9%	47,5%
3	Compromise gauge	17,4%	19,0%	25,2%
4	Purposeful	18,6%	23,8%	10,1%
	Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: Own research and data from Grygiel (2002) and Grzesik (2002)

The differences between the referenced studies may be dictated by the socio-cultural and economic transformation, which have been influencing Polish society for past two decades. As Bauman pointed out living in a world of many options requires an individual to be creative in solving one's issues (Bauman 1996:32). In that situation, very strict moral norms may be useful or not, but certainly fewer and fewer people (in comparison to previous studies) believed that adherence to the rules will lead them to their goal. The clear increase in indications of a moderate, extreme compromise attitude, and the corresponding decrease in the participants' recognition of the fundamental attitude may lead to a conclusion that that also among Rzeszów students, the requirements of the situation often take priority over the challenged norms. On the other hand, a smaller percentage of indications for the purposeful attitude in 2007 may suggest that more people was aware that they need some moral principles.

Until now, the focus of this report has been on showing the basic moral preferences of the studied youth, however, the survey contained more detailed description of attitudes of the respondents towards specific moral issues. The surveyed students were presented with a list of 23 socially condemned behaviors, and then asked to respond to each of them individually. The respondents used a five-point Likert scale to answer this question, details of which can be found in Table 4.

Table 4. Condemning morally reprehensible acts (data in %)

#		Defin . Yes	Rather Yes	Not sure	Rather Not	Defin. Not	No Answer	Total
1	Alcohol abuse	30,9	42,4	7,9	15,8	2,9	-	100,0
2	Expression of dissenting opinions for personal gain	33,8	40,3	3,6	17,3	4,3	0,7	100,0
3	Marital infidelity	68,3	23,7	0,7	4,3	2,2	0,7	100,0
4	Suicide	38,1	23,0	20,1	12,2	6,5	-	100,0
5	Poor performance of duties at work or university	5,0	32,4	11,5	37,4	12,9	0,7	100,0
6	Lies in self-defense or in defense of another person	3,6	20,9	15,8	43,2	16,5	-	100,0
7	Departure from faith	10,1	7,9	26,6	34,5	20,9	-	100,0
8	Use of contraceptives	4,3	12,2	10,8	26,6	46,0	-	100,0
9	Religious intolerance	40,3	29,5	7,2	9,4	13,7	-	100,0
10	Not going to church	5,8	14,4	17,3	35,3	27,3	-	100,0
11	Termination of pregnancy	52,5	18,7	13,9	5,0	6,5	-	100,0
12	Perjury	33,8	52,5	7,9	2,9	2,2	0,7	100,0
13	Working on Sundays and public holidays	5,0	27,3	12,2	33,1	22,3	-	100,0
14	Neglect of older parents	49,6	41,0	3,6	3,6	2,2	-	100,0
15	Acceptance of bribes	50,4	34,5	7,2	5,0	1,4	1,4	100,0
16	Getting a divorce	15,1	27,3	17,3	27,3	12,9	-	100,0
17	Denunciation	43,9	41,7	5,8	7,9	0,7	-	100,0
18	Use of your position for your own benefit	43,2	38,8	5,8	10,1	2,2	-	100,0
19	Illegal drug use	53,2	28,1	7,9	8,6	2,2	-	100,0
20	Homosexual relations	32,4	17,3	20,1	14,4	15,1	-	100,0
21	Euthanasia	43,2	20,9	19,4	9,4	7,2	-	100,0
22	Knowingly buying stolen goods	20,9	42,4	15,8	17,3	3,6	-	100,0
23	Non-compliance of promises	19,4	50,4	18,0	9,4	1,4	1,4	100,0

Source: Own research.

After prioritizing the acts listed in Table 4 in the order from least to most reprehensible, the "use of contraceptives" comes first. - 16.5% (sum of responses: "definitely yes" and "rather yes"), and then there's the "departure from the faith." (18.0%), "not going to church" (20.2%), "a lie in defense of oneself or another human being" (24.0%), "work on Sundays and public holidays" (32.3%), "inaccurate performance of duties at work or at university". (37.4%), "divorce" (42.4%), "homosexual relations" (42.4%). (49.7%), "suicide" (61.1%), "conscious buying of stolen goods"

(63.3%), "euthanasia" (64.1%), "not keeping our promises." (69.8%), "religious intolerance" (69.8%), "abortion" (69.8%), "abortion" (69.8%). (71.2%), "alcohol abuse" (73.3%), "expressing views contrary to one's own beliefs for personal gain". (74.1%), "drug use" (81.3%), "use of the official post for own benefit" (81.3%), 'use of the official post for own benefit (82.0%), "accepting bribes" (84.9%), "denunciation" (85.6%), "perjury" (86.0%), "neglect of older parents" (90.6%), "Marital infidelity" (92,0%).

The surveyed students in the least degree condemned moral problems related to with religious life, the best example of which is the high percentage of answers "rather not" and "definitely not" for condemnation of not going to church (62.6%) and departing from faith (55.4%). Moreover, the ban on using contraceptives does not induce any significant repulsion among the respondents. On the contrary, the majority of respondents indicated the answer "rather not" and "definitely not" when assessing the act as immoral (the sum of these two answers is - 72.6%). The issue of homosexual relations, which for less than half of the respondents (49.7%) is an immoral act, also deserves attention. Behavior affecting private and public life of the respondents was marked by the highest degree of condemnation. For the vast majority of the surveyed young people, the family deserved the greatest respect and behaviors detrimental to their existence are most often condemned.

It is worth noting that in comparison to Grygiel's research (2002), who asked about the attitude towards similar norms (with the exceptions for homosexuality and euthanasia questions), there are important changes in the hierarchy of moral contaminated acts. The greatest differences were noted in the case of accepting bribes (in 1998/99 it was indicated by 75.8% and in 2006/07 by 84.9%), neglect of older parents (in 1998/99 - 95.6% and in 2006/07 - 90.6%), marital infidelity (according to the above mentioned order 86.5% and 92.0%) and extortion of opinions contrary to

one's beliefs (81.5% and 74.1%). Particularly important seems to be the clear "leap" in the case of "marital infidelity". This fact can be explained by the willingness of young people to create a partnership model of marriage, where betrayal is something unacceptable for both sides. However, the appearance of "bribery" in the top five acts deserving of condemnation may be the result of the period of this study, because from the late 1990s to the first months of 2007, many corruption crimes were discovered on the highest levels of governmental power such as: The "Starachowicka affair", the "Rywin affair" or the "Land affair". Confronting other moral assessments, there are no great differences, both studies show that behaviors, which violate religious and sexual life, are the least condemned and most often Rzeszów students negatively assess behaviors that violate the world of human and family relations.

The presented part of the study on general moral orientations confirmed the author's assumptions about the dominance of a moderately relativistic view of reality among Rzeszów students. However, the last of the presented questions showed that for young people, although the relative view of reality is important, there are behaviors that should be condemned especially when they affect family life.

Religion and its influence on morality of Rzeszów students

Religion has been considered as one of the most important factors shaping morality in society (Mariański 1989:201). Its value as a "guardian" of morality was particularly evident in the traditional society (Ossowska 1986:110). Maria Ossowska listed five types of relations between religion and morality. The first one has a genetic character, i.e. a being considered as God is simultaneously a codifier of moral norms. The second is a logical relationship - moral rules result from dogmas of faith. The third is a psychological dependence, which is created in consciousness

from an early childhood, when you are raised in faith in the relationship between religion and morality. Fourthly, moral norms are subject to the influence of religious thought. The last relationship is the relationship between religiousness and the moral level, a strong religious faith increases the motivation not to break moral norms (1986:110-111).

However, the influence of religion on morality is no longer as strong as in the past. Nowadays, when faced with moral dilemmas one often uses non-religious justifications for one's behavior, often completely contrary to the declared religious faith (Mariański 2008:269). This part of the report will focus on understating the place of religion in the moral awareness of Rzeszów students. It should be emphasized that prior to the research it was assumed that the majority of the surveyed students were Roman Catholics. In 1999, in a survey conducted by Paweł Grygiel, 94.8% of respondents confirmed their membership in the Roman Catholic Church in a group of over 500 Rzeszów students (see, Grygiel 2002:108).

One of the first questions in the survey regarding the role of religion in lives of Rzeszow students was a question looking at the self-declaration of faith of the surveyed youth. To be more precise, the respondents were asked the following question: "What is your attitude to faith? Respondents chose between five options presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Declared relationship to faith

#	Options:	Number	%
1	Deep believer	12	8,6
2	Believer	103	74,1
3	Undecided but attached to religious tradition	10	7,2
4	Indifferent	9	6,5
5	Not-believer	5	3,6
	Total	139	100,0

Source: Own research.

As can be seen in Table 5 non-religious or faith indifferent attitudes are rare, the students surveyed are in the vast majority (82.8%) religious persons (believers and deeply believing). However, the confrontation of the results with those obtained by Grzesik and Grygiel provides interesting observations. There is a decrease in the percentage of respondents declaring themselves to be deeply believers (from 15.2% in 1995 and 10.5% in 1998 to 8.6% in 2007). On the other hand, there are more believers (69.0%, 71.4% and 74.1% respectively). Comparing the other categories, it can be seen that the percentage of respondents declaring indecisiveness in relation to their faith decreased (from 11.3% and 14.3% to 7.2%), while the percentage of indifferent (from 1.75%, 1.6% to 6.8%) and non-believers (from 1.8% and 2.2% to 3.6%) increased. Therefore, it seems that the results of this survey showed a decrease in the intensity of the declared faith (Grygiel 2002: 118; Grzesik 2002: 94). This pattern observed here is following the results of Grygiel (2002), who assessed this state of affairs in the following way: "among academic youth from Rzeszów, there is a slight trend towards religious indifference, which at the same time does not mean a clearly defined lack of faith". (Grygiel 2002:121).

In order to learn more about the general characteristics of religiousness of the studied youth, the examined students were asked a question about the intensity of practicing. Proposed answers and distribution of results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Self-declarations of religious practices

#	Options:	Number	%
1	Every Sunday and sometimes weekdays	37	26,6
2	Every Sunday	52	37,4
3	Two, three times a month	28	20,1
4	At least several times a year	12	8,6
5	I do not practice at all	9	6,5
6	No response	1	0,7
	Total	139	100,0

Source: Own research.

According to the data presented in Table 6, the majority of responders (64.0%: the sum of the first and second options) are regular practitioners, that is, they either go to their church every Sunday or every Sunday and sometimes more often. 28.9% responders (the sum of 3 and 4 answers) attend their church rather irregularly (either few times per month or per year). Only - 6.5% of the surveyed youth do not practice at all.

Comparing the results with those from the studies of previous academic it seems that the percentage of respondents practicing more than once per week (option #1) is systematically decreasing. From 47.3% in 1995/96 and 37.1% in 1998/99 to 26.6% in 2007. In contrast, the percentage of those attending the Church only on Sundays increases from 29.7% and 31.9% to 37.4%, and twice, three times a month from 9.8% and 14.5% to 20.1%. There was also a slight increase in the number of no practitioners in general from 4.6% and 5.6% to 6.5%. The percentage of practitioners practicing several times a year remains more or less stable (respectively: 8,6% and 11.1% and 8.6%).

This section of the results shows that more Rzeszów students in comparison with previous studies prefer a moderate way of attending their church. The total percentage of regular visitors to temples ("once a week and sometimes on weekdays" and "once a week") decreases from 77% in 1995 and 69% in 1998 to 64% (Grygiel 2002:286; Grzesik 2002:96). Although those numbers may sound alarming it should not be expected the academic youth of Rzeszów will completely disappear from their temples in the future. Nowadays, there are more options of spending free time on the weekends and therefore spending this time for religious practices may be not that frequent as in the late 20th century.

The next questions of the survey was trying to verify if religion is moving away from morality (or vice versa) of Subcarpathia' students. The first stage of its examination was to ask the

respondents about the instances deciding what is good and what is bad, the respondents had following options to choose: God's law, society and human. The obtained results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Institutions deciding about good and evil

A - GOD	Number	%
I definitely agree	20	14,4
I agree with	61	43,9
I neither agree nor disagree	27	19,4
I disagree	10	7,2
I strongly disagree with	12	8,6
It's hard to say	8	5,8
Total	139	100,0
B - SOCIETY		
I definitely agree	3	2,2
I agree with	32	23,0
I neither agree nor disagree	38	27,3
I disagree	46	33,1
I strongly disagree with	7	5,0
It's hard to say	13	9,4
Total	139	100,0
C - HUMAN		
No response	1	0,7
I definitely agree	22	15,8
I agree with	56	40,3
I neither agree nor disagree	23	16,5
I disagree	22	15,8
I strongly disagree with	5	3,6
It's hard to say	10	7,2
Total	139	100,0

Source: Own research.

It seems that, God's laws are on the first place on the second place and on the last place on the individual and on the social level. The same rank of arrangement was observed in the research conducted by Paweł Grygiel at the then WSP in Rzeszów in the academic year 1998/99 and slightly earlier (1995/96) in the research conducted at the same university by Artur Grzesik (Grygiel 2002:377; Grzesik 2002:126). It should also be noted that in other studies conducted by Janusz

Mariański among high school graduates from six cities, the first place was taken by individual criteria before religious and social criteria, only young people from Tarnów had the same hierarchical structure as in this study (Mariański 1995:114). Therefore, it can be repeated, following Paweł Grygel, that young people from south-eastern Poland are specifically oriented towards religious justification of moral truths (Grygiel 2002:383).

The next stage of the survey of students' opinions on the relationship between religion and morality was to learn the answers to the following question: "There are many different views on the mutual relationship between religion and morality. Which one is closest to your own views? Respondents chose one of the four options given in Table 8.

Table 8: Evaluation of the mutual relationship between religion and morality

#	Responses	Number	%
1	Only religion can justify legitimate moral imperatives	20	14,4
2	For me, religion justifies my moral rules, but I think it can be justified without it	69	49,6
3	I do not feel the need to justify morality by religion, my own conscience is sufficient	37	26,6
4	I am not interested in this case	13	9,4
	Total	139	100,0

Source: Own research.

From the presented data so far, it can be seen that almost a half of the respondents recognize religions as a translator of moral principles, at the same time believing that it can be done without it. The second most frequently indicated answer was the third option, which puts one's own conscience above that of religions. Third place was taken by the first option, strictly religious. It can be seen that the majority of respondents declare religious morality (the sum of the first and second answers), but the fact remains that almost half of them are tolerant of other world views and ideas.

It is interesting to compare the obtained results with those from the research conducted by Paweł Grygiel and Artur Grzesik. There is a clear decrease in persons declaring their morality dependent on religion (from 24.0% in Artur Grzesik's studies and 21.2% in Paweł Grygiel's studies to 14.4% in this study) and an increase in persons preferring the second option (from 45.5% and 45.8% to 49.6%). On the other hand, the percentage of respondents choosing the third answer (24.2%, 28.4% and 26.6%) was similar and there was a clear increase in the number of people not interested in the relationship between religion and morality (from 5.8% and 4.4% to 9.4%) (Grygiel 2002:374, Grzesik 2002:157). Therefore, religious morality, although still dominant among Podkarpackie students, the absolute belief that it dominates over other world views is gaining less and less supporters and it is rather difficult to believe that this state of affairs may change in the future.

In order to clarify the above subject, academic youth were asked about their attitude towards moral norms of a particular religion, or more precisely Catholicism. The obtained distribution of answers is shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Attitudes towards moral principles of the Catholic religion

#	List of Answers	Number	%
1	The moral principles of Catholicism are the best and sufficient morality	18	12,9
2	All the principles of Catholicism are legitimate, but in view of the complexity of life they must be supplemented by some other principles	49	35,3
3	Most of the moral principles of Catholicism are right, but I do not agree with all of them, and moreover, those which are right are certainly not enough for man	58	41,7
4	Religious morality is alien to me, but I consider some of the moral principles of Catholicism to be correct	12	8,6
5	The moral principles of Catholicism are completely alien to me	2	1,4
	No response	18	12,9
	Total	139	100,0

Source: Own research.

After summing up the answers of the second and third answers from Table 9, it turns out that the majority of the respondents only partially accept the moral rules of Catholicism (77%). Therefore, in the opinion of the participants: the moral rules of Catholicism are correct but they should be supplemented with other rules according to the requirements of everyday life. Only one tenth of respondents believe that the morality of Catholicism is sufficient and the best morality, and a similar number of respondents believe that the morality of Catholicism is partially or completely alien to them.

Comparing the results to those of Grzesik (2002) and Grygiel (2002) research, we can see that the percentage of people who approve of the first thesis, which is fully conducive to Catholic principles, is decreasing from 24.8% in 1995/96 and 20.2% in 1998/99 to 12.9%. Moreover, the percentage of respondents indicating second and third answers (meaning partial acceptance of Catholic principles) increased from 70.7% and 72.8% to 77% and the percentage of respondents approaching the moral norms of Catholicism with disapproval increased from 4.4% and 5.8% to 10% (cf. Grygiel 2002:394; Grzesik 2002:155). These results seems to show that the surveyed students do not want their moral norms to be governed buy the most conservative beliefs.

To sum up the data presented so far, it seems that most of the respondents acknowledge the roles of religious norms in deciding what is right and wrong. They do not think that religion clearly dominates over morality. Moreover, despite the fact that religion is still important in solving moral issues for the surveyed youth, its value weakened in comparison to previous years (Grygiel 2002; Grzesik 2002).

The above examples of changes in the perception of religion in the lives of the studied students encourage to check whether the religiousness of Subcarpathia youth is in fact going through a crisis. To this end, the students were asked to finish the following part of the sentence:

"Your attitude towards religion in recent years...". The respondents could choose one answer from several answers in table 10.

Table 10: Changes in attitudes towards religion

#	My attitude to religion:	Number	%
1	Did not change	54	38,8
2	Was in a temporary crisis	9	6,5
3	It changed to a lesser religiousness	53	38,1
4	It changed to a greater religiousness	10	7,2
5	It changed decisively from religious to non-religious	4	2,9
6	It changed decisively from non-religious to religious	1	0,7
7	Currently in crisis	6	4,3
8	Something else	2	1,4
	Total	139	100,0

Source: Own research.

The results presented in Table 10 confirm the second hypothesis of this study that religion is playing a weaker role in the lives of the Rzeszów students. The results of this survey research were compared with the findings of Paweł Grygiel (2002) in Figure 1. The first striking difference in the percentage of student who believe that their attitude towards religion did not change, 51.0% of Grygiel's responders believed that in 1999 but only 38.8% in 2007. The next big change can be observed in the percentage of young people whose attitude towards religion has changed towards less religiousness (from 18.8% to 38.1%).

Figure 1: Changes in attitudes towards religion in the academic year of 1998/1999 and 2006/2007. The responders were asked if their attitude to religion changed:

Source: Own research and doctoral dissertation by Paweł Grygiel (2002:151)

The results showed in the Figure 1 show that Rzeszów students in 2007 experienced deeper reflections about their religious beliefs than in 1999. As Katarzyna Leszczyńska pointed out, this type of phenomenon can be observed among the majority of young Poles (2003:68). It is difficult to judge whether it is a proof of secularization among students from Subcarpathia mainly because of a relatively small sample of examined persons, but the data presented above encourage to conduct further research on the relationship between morality and religion and religiousness itself.

Conclusion

The results of this survey study show that the moral choices of the academic youth of Subcarpathia province are characterized by moderate relativism rather than total absolutism or permissiveness. Most of the respondents are convinced that there is no absolutely right moral system and moral choices are influenced by circumstances coming from certain situations.

Compared to earlier studies by Paweł Grygiel (2002) and Artur Grzesik (2002), the most interesting situation is the decreasing role of religion in the lives of the Rzeszów's students. Responders in the academic year 2006/2007 show a lesser degree of approval for religion as an instance justifying moral choices, and more than a third of the respondents believe that in recent years their religiousness has been weakening. The observed process may have signs of individualization of religion. Therefore, young people, although they define themselves as believers, decide independently and individually which religious norms they accept and which they reject. This trend of individualization of religion has been more and more clearly visible in Polish society and among Western European societies. According to Mirosław Marody: "In the case of beliefs, the process of their individualization (also often referred to as privatization) was clearly marked, which was reflected both in the selectivity of religious beliefs in relation to the binding church dogmas, as well as in their coexistence with beliefs that are part of the non-Christian belief system." (2003:146). The results of this research confirms this claim. Particularly, it seems important to ask about the legitimacy of Catholic moral principles, on which the following opinion prevails among the respondents: most of the principles of Catholicism are legitimacy, but they need to be supplemented about other things. Nevertheless, for the youth of Subcarpathia region religion remains an important experience in everyday life, which is best confirmed by high rates of self-declaration of faith and practice. In addition, the surveyed students do not show a definite desire to separate what is moral from what is religious. Thus, it should be emphasized that for Subcarpathia academic youth of the XXI century religion remains an important value and an important factor influencing the judgement of what is good and what is bad.

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