

## The construction of the religious space in post-socialist Romania

**Abstract:** *Some of the post-socialist countries of Europe experienced after the fall of communism what some called a religious revival. Anthropologists and sociologists alike were sure that they discovered serious evidence against the case of secularization theory. What unfortunately most of them failed to observe was the particular shape and form of this religious growth and the structural changes of the religious mentalities occurred in the process of transition from a closed, ideologically monopolized society, to a pluralistic one. After more than half of a century of atheistic ideologization of the public sphere, Romania remains one of the most religious countries of both Eastern and Western Europe. The thesis of this article is that this fact is due to the lack of modernization of the Romanian social system both before and during the post-socialist period.*

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### 1. Introduction

In some recent studies Paul Froese, defending the supply-side theory of religion, argues that after the fall of the communist regimes, the post-socialist countries have shown an increasing interest toward religion, which reveals a so-called religious revival pattern that proves the secularization theory wrong (Froese 2001, 2003). Ignoring the serious methodological errors of his studies (the treatment of confessional belonging as an indicator of religiosity on one side, and the eluding of the communist active policy to weaken religion when evaluating the level of religion adherence on the other side) we have to stress the danger of confusing the temporal euphoria of religious freedom with the strong long term dependency of religious mentalities from the socio-anthropological backgrounds that make them possible (Todd, 2000).

Differentiating between secularization at the *societal, organizational* and *individual* level, Karel Dobbelaere operates a fruitful analytical distinction that has as a main goal a synthetic critical account of the main contemporary debates regarding the erosion of religion in societies that are at a different level of social and economical development and the testing of different hypothesis of secularization (Dobbelaere, 2002).

Dobbelaere brings conceptual and methodological clarity by underlining the errors of different secularization theories and by delimiting their area of applicability. Although his contribution manages to focalize and better circumscribe the existing secularization theories and brings convincing arguments that the process of secularization is not mechanical, one-directional, but an evolving process, he fails to highlight the multiple meanings that individual secularization can have. The distinction used by Dobbelaere aims at revealing the locus of the secularization process (macro, mezzo, micro) and so highlights only little of the impact this process has on the different spheres of life.

This is why for our analysis the multi-dimensionality of the secularization concept (through which Dobbelaere understands the intended level of social reality) means the different sub-dimensions of religion that are or can be affected by secularization.

We have to differentiate here among three such sub-dimensions. First, *religious beliefs* that can be traditional (having a historical institutionalized structure of plausibility), non-traditional (recently appeared on the religious market), syncretic, magical, and last but not least non-existent (a magical-religious worldview replaced by a technical-rational one). Most of the secularization studies limit the analysis at this level. A second dimension is represented by the *institutional expression* of these beliefs (going to church during childhood and at present time, attitudes towards the religious institutions and ecclesial policies, etc.) The strong debates regarding the privatization of religious experience and the emergence of a new social type of religiosity, that of *believing without belonging* (Davie, 2000), make necessary the corroboration of this second dimension with respect to religious beliefs. Finally, a third dimension heavily ignored by most of the studies, *the practical behavior*, or more precisely the moral values that are legitimized by a religious attitude. Therefore, we are able to refer to secularization as a demoralization process of the practical behavior (Wilson, 2000).

Therefore, we can easily note the different meanings that religiosity and non-religiosity can have. The coherent presence of all three dimensions of religiosity allows us to talk about a traditional type of religiosity, the denial of all three dimensions allows us to locate a complete secularized mentality. Situating analysis at the level of all three religious dimensions will make possible the revealing of all social types of religiosity that exist between the two above mentioned ideal-types.

Clifford Geertz's approach to religion as a cultural system pays in this case a lot of dividends (Geertz, 1973). His argumentation that the religious worldview is always defined in such a way that the ethos of a community appears as something presupposed and assumed and that the ethos is experienced as a direct consequence of the state of affairs that the worldview depicts (Geertz, 1973:127), has drawn attention to the socio-anthropological backgrounds that make the different typologies of religious mentalities possible.

The position taken within the religious field can be conceptually translated through the fusion between the objective structures (the objectified social field) and the incorporated structures or the religious dispositions (*habitus*). The circumscribed religious dispositions have a generative function that forms genuine categories of social perception and interpretation of the religious experience. This brings at the level of religious mentalities the underlined socio-anthropological frameworks that make these structures possible, but not in a determined and causal way, rather as reciprocally generated field, grounded in the relational properties of the religious structures.

This will allow us to see why the theories of secularization find in the post-socialist spaces an irrefutable confirmation of de-sacralization, an already strong developing process in Western Europe.

## 2. Secularization as de-objectivation of religious beliefs.

Most of the studies regarding the process of secularization are focused on the dynamics and morphology of religious beliefs. At this level secularization manifests itself as an erosion of the belief in the existence of a supernatural dimension (that takes different forms from one religion to another) or as de-objectivation of these beliefs, as a

direct consequence of the emergence of pluralism of plausibility structures within the social world (Berger, 1990). The direct consequence of this is a slow process of de-christianization, understood here either as mobility at the level of religious ideas towards alternative non-Christian religious beliefs (yoga, reincarnation, etc) or as renouncement of the specific religious beliefs in favor of more general and diffuse ones.

In many ways, this process of pluralization of life-worlds, which both in Western and Eastern Europe became synonymous to the process of modernization, was re-experienced and re-enacted with the fall of communism in the socialist states. The communist ideologies acted as an agent of conserving the social world, penetrating and controlling completely the public space and allowing no alternative plausibility structures. The transition which Eastern Europe is undergoing is only secondary an economic transition from state-planned economy to the free market economy; primarily, this transition goes from a unique social world, with an ever increasing level of plausibility structure and a total encompassing and monopolization of social reality, both at macro and micro levels, to a differentiation of social worlds and emergence of multiple competing structures of plausibility.

Although it will be wrong to assume that privatization and de-institutionalization of religion is due solely to the increasing pluralization of social-worlds in post-socialist countries, it is important to notice the two different logics of secularization underlying the two social systems: forced atheization through ideological constraints on the one side, pluralization of life-worlds and emergence of subsequent competing structures of plausibility, on the other side.

What strikes the most when we take a look at the religious data<sup>1</sup> available for the post-socialist society of Romania is the practical failure of the communist ideology to extinguish the religious mentality by a forced atheization of the population. This attempt that was carried out through an elaborate program imposed on all levels of society, church persecution, imprisonment of religious leaders and marginalization of those clinging to "obsolete" religious thinking, left apparently only a limited mark on the Romanian population, so that in spite of this, social scientists are able to speak now about Romania as one of the most religious societies in both Eastern and Western Europe. (Müller, 2004; Pollack, 2001, 2004)

Let us now inquire into the exact meaning of this state of things by analyzing the main structures of the religious representations. On a general level quite a large segment of the Romanian population state the belief in God, moral culpability understood in religious terms, and the power of religion to offer comfort and strength when needed. Each of these religious beliefs is shared by a very large part of the population (91 % for the belief in God, 83.51 % for the belief in sin and 79.84 % in religious strength). This large acceptance of religion is consistent with the self-perception of the Romanians: 80 % of them think of themselves as being religious people whereas only 1 % declare themselves atheists, and 14 % just plain unreligious people.

The context of post-socialist reality and the limited influence that the church has on the public opinion allows us to refute any type of social desirability towards a religious self-perception: popular culture tends to back up a pattern of personality constructed along lines of non-conformism, originality, independence and freedom understood as the abolition of all types of norms, limits and constraints. The enforcing of such interpretative schemes makes it hard to maintain a religious identity because religion on the level of mundane reasoning can become synonymous to the deprivation of liberty ("you do what the church tells you to do").

The paradox of this prominence of religious thinking lays not only in the fact that it goes against the direction set by the communist modernity, through the ideologization and reification of social life and through the massive process of industrialization and urbanization that took place at mid of the last century, but also against the Christian worldview that is still accustomed to the Romanian society, the religious system being almost completely dominated by the Orthodox Church and some important religious minorities (all Christian) belonging to the Catholic, Protestant and Neo-Protestant denominations.

This domination of the Christian Churches in the Romanian public sphere becomes obvious also by looking at the latest national census that took place in 2002, which reveals a complete domination of the Christian faith in the way people perceive their religious identity. If we count all the people that belong to a Christian confession (Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant and Neo-protestant)<sup>2</sup> we find that more than 99.01 % declare themselves Christian. *Why is this a paradox?* Because when we take a closer look at more confined religious structures that define the religious mentalities of today's Romania, we find a great deal of non-acceptance of Christianity at all levels: at the level of religious ideas, religious practice, and at the level of ethical values.

At the level of religious ideas, we find a striking and massive erosion of the Christian ecclesial worldview that acted as a sense giving meta-narrative, which conferred the believer a moral cartography to his life-world. This process affects a great deal of the Romanian population. Only 60.12 % of the Romanians still believe in Heaven, 56.72 % believe in Hell and 51.31 % believe in Life after Death. These religious ideas are articles of faith, important and longstanding doctrines to all the Christian confessions that inhabit the post-socialist religious space, and their less acceptance stands at odd with the wider acceptance of general religious ideas and with the declared religious identity.

We have now a strange situation that is very peculiar and unusual to the dominant and institutionalized Christian religious self-understanding: a great segment of Romanians think about themselves of being religious but do not accept the very Christian definition of what religion is; people believe in God and moral culpability understood in religious terms (sin), but do not believe in the Christian eschatology and in the main articles of faith, believe in religion as a source for spiritual comfort and strength but do not necessarily think of Christianity as being this very religion. Post-socialist Romania is experiencing at the level of religious mentality a great disparity between general religious ideas and specific Christian ones: the first set of beliefs have an acceptance among more than 85 % of the population whereas the second set of religious beliefs only 56 %, giving us almost a third of the population that finds itself in the situation described above.

In conclusion, the analysis of the realm of religious ideas and beliefs has to take into consideration at least two sub-dimensions: *general religious ideas* (that do not always represent a genuine indicator of religiosity, they can mean as well only the presence of a diffuse residue of religious representations) and *specific* and historical institutionalized *religious ideas* (in the case of Romania, the Christian religious ideas).

If we run a factorial analysis at the level of each European country we manage to identify the same two latent factors: one saturated by variables as belief in God, strength and comfort from religion, moral culpability understood in religious terms (sin), the belief in the efficacy of prayer and meditation, the second saturated by variables as belief in heaven, belief in hell, belief in life after death, belief in purgatory, etc (specific Christian religious beliefs).

In all European countries we can notice a strong disparity between these two sets of beliefs, a disparity that grows bigger from a succeeding generation to another, an indisputable sign of an ongoing process of secularization. A growing segment of the European population abandons traditional religiosity for a more general and diffuse one, which does not mean that this will necessarily lead to a complete abandonment of religion as a capable form of meaningful structuring of social reality.

### 3. Secularization as de-institutionalization of religious experience

Another structural effect of the above-described process regards the de-institutionalization of religious experience. If we either refer to an “invisible religion” (Luckmann) or to “believing without belonging” (Davie), the process we have in mind is one that diminishes the function of social integration of the institutionalized religion: the religious community is not so important an element anymore for the enfolding religious experience, and the church tends to play a decreasing role in regulating the existing religiosity.

This leads to the appearance of new structural forms of religion allowing an individualization and privatization of religious experience: both the possibility of a religion “a la carte”, and of an “orthodoxy” that refuses to give an institutionalized expression of this belief represent a direct consequence of this process.

Seeing the memory of society as foundation of the communitarian dimension of religion, Grace Davie analyzes the shift in the way societies memorize as cause of the decline of institutionalized religion (Davie, 2000:30). This is a consequence not of an interior process of rationalization, as Peter Berger argued, but of the structural impossibility of the contemporary societies to articulate a collective memory which leads to the emergence of a new social type of religiosity (believing without belonging).

This is the reason why Davie pleads for a weak theory of secularization: at individual level, societies are as religious as ever, but at collective level they tend to be amnesic. We will find both high levels of religious beliefs and a significant decline in the institutionalization of these beliefs (going to Church is a classic indicator). This discrepancy, argues Davie, should not be interpreted as a sign of secularization of society, but as a shift in the way collective memory operates.

Systematically modern societies fail to ground social mechanisms that are necessary to sustain collective memory. At the societal level, religion loses its significance because it does not succeed in finding collective support for the religious experience which is par excellence an act of collective remembrance (Durkheim's influence can here be easily noticed). This is why the social form of the religion specific to these societies is one that lacks an institutional integration, or in Davie's terms of believing without belonging.

Davie's thesis is that because of this structural process, the European societies will rather develop a private religiosity, but will keep a close relation with the institutionalized religious forms because of the mobilizing potential they have in times of uncertainties. The relationship between believers that belong and those that do not is realized through a special form of memory, namely the vicarious memory.

If Davie's approach to the issue of secularization succeeds to capture conceptually an important aspect of the modern social condition of religion, empirically her approach has some inadequacies and shortcomings. The category of those that belong but do not believe is obtained by subtracting the segment of churchgoers from the per-



centage of those with nominal belonging to a religious confession or another. Nominal belonging is seen here as a minimal indicator of a presupposed religiosity and so loses sight of the degree to which this belonging overlaps with the level and the types of religious beliefs existing in society.

We could this way easily see that religious belonging is a very weak indicator of religiosity: it acts as a means of affirming a cultural identity (Catholic versus Protestant in North Ireland, Orthodox versus Greek-Catholic in Romania, etc.) or simply the religious origin of the parents. Moreover, religious belonging does not overlap with what we have called general religious beliefs and even more with the specific religious beliefs.

This is why we have to pose the question of why should there be a need for a person who only manifests a general, diffuse religiosity, not a specific Christian one, to give an institutional expression of this belief within Christian settings (going to Church)? Believing without belonging is a valid category only for the case of those that manifest a specific Christian worldview. This is why the segment of those who believe but do not belong has to be looked for within this segment of the population.

The de-christianization on the level of religious beliefs has its correlative on the level of religious practice, which can be best put into light by revealing the attending rates of religious service. This indicator, a very privileged one by most of the social scientists who try to depict the secularization process undergone by a country, has in our framework of analyses just a limited power of prediction.

This is mainly for two important reasons: first of all, the pluralization of life-worlds and its effects on the structures of plausibility of religious worlds make it hard for every cognitive minority to give a coherent expression through objectified institutionalized meanings (and hence, the large process of privatization of religious experience), and secondly, because the de-christianization of religious mentalities which takes place in Romanian society makes way for alternative non-Christian world-views.

Church attendance gains its significance only within a specific Christian worldview, and what becomes evident by looking at this, is the growing numbers of those that do not understand to give a specific institutionalized expression of their religious faith by going to church: 53.10 % of the population never or almost never attends religious services whereas 46 % go regularly to church. This strong polarization gives us an idea of the massiveness of both still active Christian mentalities on one hand, and the unleashing of a large religious segment by disconnecting religion from a specific Christian worldview on the other hand.

We are able to conclude that the church loses its privileged position of housing the religious experience and that the process of de-institutionalization of religious experience leads to structural changes to the locus of the church in society. This becomes evident also when we analyze the legitimating of different roles of the church within Romanian contemporary society by the different demographical segments. At the general level of the Romanian society there is a growing tendency to limit the involvement of the church to strictly spiritual issues and to decline its competence regarding moral, family-related, social and political matters.

The way the roles of the church are perceived in society constitutes a genuine sign of societal secularization. The more the population legitimizes the involvement of the church in the different spheres of life, the less the differentiation between the religious and the secular sphere and so the less societal secularized a society.

We can easily note from the table below the structural changes occurring in the past twenty years in this area (differences between age groups). The younger generation

tends to legitimize less and less the involvement of the church in social issues and limit its competence to strictly spiritual issues. The legitimate roles that a church can play are shrinking with younger generations. There are significant differences at the inter-generational level in regards to the way the church is perceived, leading to gradual erosion to the legitimating of church involvement in the different spheres of life.

Table 1. Legitimizing the involvement of the church

	18 - 34	35 - 54	55 - 70+
Church and spirituality	86.4 %	88.7 %	91.5 %
Church and morality	75.2 %	79.6 %	87.0 %
Church and family	71.8 %	76.6 %	86.8 %
Church and society	38.1 %	52 %	66.2 %

#### 4. Secularization as de-moralization

Another important aspect of secularization is related to the impact this process has on the practical sphere of life. The disconnecting of the religious meta-narrative from the social system has as a consequence the growing difficulty of the system to assure an efficient integration of society. At religious system level this leads not only to a de-institutionalization of religious experience (as we have seen above) but also to a large scale process of de-moralization. The community, as Durkheim has shown, represents both a factor of objective condition of salvation (by fusing a world-view with an ethos, the religious experience is legitimated by the belonging social structure) and a generative force of functional norms that aims at a coherent and harmonious social integration of a community (norms that have a religious grounding).

The concept of de-moralization captures the correlative effect at the practical level of crisis in modern societies to generate norms by which legitimacy is shared by the majority of the social body and of its incapacity to supply a nomic meaningful social universe.

Bryan Wilson notices in his attempt to define this process of de-moralization: "*the secularized salvation of modern times surrenders the community: the survivor becomes the self*" (Wilson, 2000:46). The new soteriologies of modernity will insist not only on the structural possibility of a private religiosity (as opposed to the traditional one that legislated the religious community as the only "true" medium of pursuing salvation) but also on the abolishing of all the norms of the community as a consubstantial part of the religious experience, operating this way one of the most important scission of post-modern religiosity: between the spiritual and the moral.

This scission, translated at practical level through a genuine process of de-moralization, can be traced not only to the level of religious beliefs (by identifying a religiosity without any relevance for the moral conduct) but also through a radical transformation of the way religious institutions are perceived as well: the degree of competence that contemporary society assigns to the religious institution is limited strictly to a spiritual role, the social, political and moral role falling out of its legitimacy.

One of the idioms of the secularization theory is thus the decline of moral order. The roots of the process of de-moralization have to be sought within the structural devel-

opments of the economic sphere. Wilson traces the genealogy of this process to the hyper-technicization of work and to the reduction of moral competences specific to each profession, to simple technical procedures that led to a de-personalization of work order (a genuine weberian argument: the primordial locus of secularization were the social segments drawn first in the industrial revolution).

With modernity, social life is immersed and organized not locally as in the traditional communities, but in a societal way, the agent of this transformation being the nation-state (Wilson 2000:184). Because of the great expansion of the economic system and the development of an impetuous bureaucratic administration, and the increasing urban agglomeration (making Weber depict modernity as a hyper-rationalization of the life-world), we are witnessing a decrease of integrated and strongly related communities and so implicitly of religion and traditional forms of morality.

The modern social system functions not by providing an all encompassing moral order, but by elaborating and efficiently using the rational means of determination and control of conduct, and by a prescription of an exact role within the economic system. The main effect of this process on the values system is represented by the replacement of substantial values with procedural ones (Wilson 200:191) and the emergence of a process of ethic rationalization.

In socialist countries, where modernity came very late into being, and the process of urbanization and industrialization were extensively planned by the communist authorities, the moral structures were less eroded and the traditional forms of marriages were further perpetuated (Rotariu 2003:217). By imposing a “socialist morality” against the “decadent bourgeois culture”, the communist state employed an extensive cultural hegemony, promoting traditional moral values (especially the values related to the family), and legitimizing them through the enactment of secular order. Moral transgression became now anti-national sins (Kligman 2000:53).

What Daniel Bell designates as “ideological prescribed social order” (Bell 2001:270) includes not only the legitimized political attitudes, but also the different moral institutionalizations meant to create the “new man” and the mechanisms of a social reality that reproduces a moral order drawn from the guardianship of the church (which becomes now either “imperialistic” or “retrograde”) and legitimized by a communist ideology<sup>3</sup>.

This explains why for many of the post-socialist states the new era of freedom meant on one side religious freedom (and so an intensification of the religious activities in most post-socialist countries, including Romania) and on the other side the liberty to abolish all constraining social norms (adultery ceasing to be a crime punished by the penal code, for example).

With the help of a factorial analysis we can reduce the complexity of data regarding the diverse axiological options of the respondents to their latent dimension. The solution obtained after the factorial extraction shows the existence of four factors (dimensions of morality) and the way the different variables saturate this factor facilitates the identification of the meaning of each dimension<sup>4</sup>.

The first factor is saturated by variables that measure the different aspects of sexual conduct (homosexuality, adultery, casual sex, divorce and abortion) and circumscribes in the field of moral behavior those ethical values that are legitimized and encouraged by the church. This factor of family conduct morality is strongly correlated with the religious practice, and in the segment of the population that attributes the church not only a spiritual function but also a moral and a social one, we find the highest factorial scores.



The second factor is saturated by the variable of divorce and abortion. In all other European countries these variable saturates the first described factor. At least two reasons can be identified for this: a) the majority of the European populations that was included in the factorial analysis is catholic, and the catholic ecclesial practice is extremely intransigent regarding divorce in comparison with the orthodox one (Ghitulescu, 2004); b) the public attitude towards abortion in Romania, in spite of the strong opposition of the orthodox church, has experienced an important liberalization in post-socialist times, and is still marked by the memory of repression of abortion and the enforcement of reproduction imposed by the communist authorities (Kligman, 2000).

The third factor is saturated by variables that measure the ethical attitudes towards the institutions of the state (to claim benefits from the state when not entitled, not to pay taxes, commercial transactions, lying when one has a personal interest). This factor of fiscal morality has its genealogy in the construction of spirits by the state, in what Bourdieu calls the “formative action of lasting dispositions” of the State (1999:92, 80-82) and its capacity to legitimize its own objectivation as a principle of vision and division of cognitive structures (“the acts of subordinations are cognitive acts”- Bourdieu 1999:91) that operate at the level of collective mentalities.

The forth factor sums up variables that specify a civic conduct, understood not in its political sense but as the care for public goods: to throw litter in public spaces, to drive under the influence of alcohol, to exceed the limited speed and to joyride. If the other two dimensions of morality have their specific institutional field (the Church, and the State) the factor of public conduct morality can be harder institutionally circumscribed. We consider this type of morality as having its support in the existence of a civic community and we are able to find it at those people interested in the well functioning of the local community and its security.

Out of all these factors only the factor of sexual and familial conduct is strongly correlated with the variable of religious practice and the importance of God in life, therefore in the elaboration of the fundamental structures of religiosity we will use only this last factor. As we can notice in the table below all the dimensions of morality are significantly declining at an intergenerational level<sup>5</sup>, a fact that indicates a strong structural mutation in the last twenty years at the level of the practical sphere of life.

**Table 2. The erosion of moral values**

	18 - 34	35 - 54	55 - 70+
Sexual moral conduct	-.4806	.0961	.4103
Familial moral conduct	-.2021	-.0501	.2741
Civic moral conduct	-.4576	.0743	.3649
Fiscal moral conduct	-.4271	.0449	.3649

## 5. The religious space in post-socialist Romania

With the help of cluster analysis we are able to group the four<sup>6</sup> dimensions of religion into typologies of religiosity, and then with the help of homogeneity analysis we will outline the socio-anthropological profile of these religious typologies. The main goal of this approach is to identify the main religious mentalities typologies existing within the post-socialist religious space and the socio-anthropological structures that condition these mentalities.

The obtained result shows the existence of five main typologies, and the analysis of the mean values of the five identified clusters allows us to conceptually define them.

The five obtained clusters can be defined as: *traditional religious mentality* -40% (the acceptance of all four religious dimensions), *liberal religious mentality* -19% (the acceptance of general religious beliefs and the specific Christian ones, medium church attendance but non-acceptance of the moral dimension), *non-belonging religious mentality* -14% (believing without belonging, no church attendance), *non-traditional religious mentality* -19% (the acceptance of general religious beliefs but not the specific Christian ones) and *secularized mentality* -8%<sup>7</sup>.

Situating the analysis at the level of the identified typologies of mentalities we can outline the complexity of religious phenomena and we can settle the secularization debate not in two steps (the religious moment and the secularized moment), avoiding

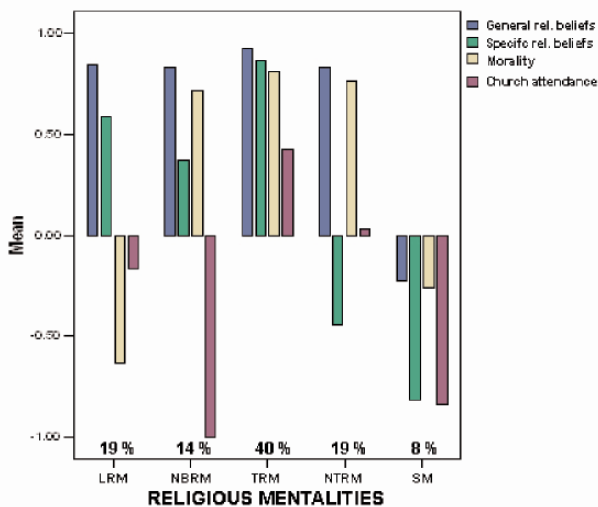


Figure 1. Cluster analysis of main structures of religion

practice) we can notice several critical variations from the ideal type of traditional religiosity (understood here as the absence of a differentiation process of the formal concept of the subjective, social and external world<sup>8</sup> and therefore as a presence of a religious interpretation of the different social sub-systems).

The debates regarding the secularization process tend to be settled by taking into consideration only one dimension of religion or when multiple dimension are taken into consideration they are analyzed successively, without keeping in mind that these dimensions are part of a complex structure of religiosity grounded in a socio-anthropological setting and situated in a specific religious field (Bourdieu). Some of the methodological errors of the different theories regarding religious change have their origin here.

The belief in divinity represents in the majority of studies the most important indicator when operationalizing the dimension of religiosity. The implicit assumption of this equivalence is the identification of the secularization process with a specific ideology, atheism (that in the socialist countries became the official ideology of the State) to which another ideology is a methodological counterpoint, that of religious belief (most of the time undifferentiated morphologically).

Using as a tool of analysis the religious mentalities grounded in the fundamental

thus the assumption of a nonlinear and deterministic process. Our approach will try to identify the multiple mutations that were produced within the religious field itself by outlining the mobility from the traditional religious mentality to a non-traditional religious mentality and by the other possible trajectories.

Graphic 1 reproduces the frequency distribution of the five identified mentalities. It is now easy to see the multiple meaning that the term religiosity and non-religiosity can have: taking into consideration the specific dimension of religion (religious belief, religious morality and religious

structures of religion it is easy to notice the specific meaning that the belief in a divinity has. The prediction value of the fact that 91.6% of the Romanian population believes in God is limited by the unknowing of what type of religiosity circumscribes this belief and so the religious meaning that the belief in God has.

We can this way find out that almost 40% of the Romanian society believe in God (and in the other general religious beliefs) concomitantly with the belief in a Christian form of this religion (specific religious beliefs), express this faith in an institutional setting (church attendance), and manifest a religious structured morality.

Almost 19 % of those that believe in God no longer accept the Christian world-view as a genuine expression of their faith and do not legitimize anymore the Christian pastoral as the authority that regulates the practical sphere of their life and the institutional forms within which their faith can express itself. This segment of the population is looking for alternative forms of religiosity.

Only 8% of the Romanian society has a non-religious (*secularized mentality*); a percent rather small taking into consideration the fact that the communist ideology acted as an agent of conserving the social world, not allowing its supremacy of controlling the public sphere to be contested by any other structure of plausibility that was trying to supply an alternative definition of reality. We can notice the practical failure of the communist ideology to eradicate the religious mentality through forced atheization. We will see in the next section this segment of population that does not share a religious world-view.

The two other types of religiosity represent a significant modification of the traditional Christian religious mentality: at the level of the institutionalized religious expression (as a consequence of the privatization of religious experience) on one side, and at the level of practical behavior (as a consequence of the de-moralization process) on the other side.

The *non-belonging religious mentality* represents a modification resulted directly from the process of the privatization of religious experience. As we have shown above, the de-monopolization of religious tradition throws the individual conscience into the new reality of co-existence of multiple worldviews and so in the situation of socio-religious pluralism.

Because of increased difficulties in legitimizing and maintaining their own religious worldview we witness the tendency of religion to lose the capacity of structuring social-reality in a meaningful way. Religion maintains its subjective plausibility but loses its social objectivity (Berger) and so it starts being an important part of the private and individual experience, but not of the public one.

For Grace Davie this process of privatization of religious experience means firstly the emergence of a new type of religiosity: that of believing without belonging and of a specific type of memory, the vicarious memory, that delegates the right of representation to a small minority (the clergy and those who believe and belong, i.e. traditional religious mentality).

The *liberal religious mentality* represents a second important modification of the traditional religious mentality and it manifests itself as a rejection of the church authority to regulate the moral practical sphere of life.

It will be an error to state that the religious experience of this segment of the population is a superficial one. It represents the direct product of contemporary society and it is strongly impregnated with its values. This type of religious mentality mirrors best the internal religious tension of the present and the structural changes of Romanian society in the process of transition from a closed society to an open one that is struggling

to find its own identity.

Our thesis is that a specific trait of post-socialism in Christian countries is the emergence of exactly this type of religiosity. This is a result of religious recoil after the constant communist censorship in regards to non-materialistic definitions of reality on one side, and the disappearance of the communist state that exerted a moralizing guardianship on the son of the nation, on the other side.

What most of the analysts of religious change in post-socialist countries have identified as a genuine process of de-secularization passes in our analysis as a case of secularization of the practical sphere of life at the moment of the religious quest itself<sup>9</sup>.

The five types of mentalities above identified and described with the help of a cluster analysis represent five types of fundamental positions taken within the religious field that are a direct result of the fusion of the objective structures (social field) and the incorporated religious dispositions (habitus). The religious disposition has a generative function that forms a genuine social perception and interpretation of religious experience.

These (non)-religious dispositions use interpretative resources available in a common stock of knowledge with whose help the entire social reality is rendered meaningful. We can this way notice different grades of “enchantment” and “disenchantment” of the world and the legitimizing mechanism of the more or less coherent structures of plausibility, and so we can observe the profound mutation taking place in a society in which the “opium of the masses” had to disappear once the nationalizing of the means of production has taken place.

## 6. Religious mentalities and socio-anthropological backgrounds

With the help of homogeneity analysis we will try in the following section to group the five typologies of mentalities in regards to their socio-demographical structure. The purpose of this approach is to outline the way in which these typologies are structured by the anthropological backgrounds that make them possible, the underlined thesis of this approach being the existence of a dependency between these backgrounds and the religious mentalities that saturate them.

In our analysis we will use three important variables for the religious phenomena: the residence locus: urban / rural, (the process of societalization contributed to the dislocation of the traditional forms of morality that needed first the support of a community), the age (important to determine the period of socialization: before the war, the communist period, the post-communist period), the level of education (a high degree of education offers a high potential of contesting the moral norms).

The representation of the categories of these four variables in bi-dimensional space succeeds in explaining 80 % inertia. From the way they are grouped we can easily sketch the socio-demographical profile of these religious typologies.

The traditional religious mentality is mostly a rural phenomenon, with a low educational capital and with an aged demographical profile. The persons that share such a religious typology are mainly persons that were religiously socialized within families that attended often the church, and therefore manifested an intense religious participation during their childhood. If we accept the thesis that religious values are crystallized and stabilized at an adult age, then at an inter-generational level we can see that the generation born before the second world-war manifest prevalently a traditional religious mentality and so a very conservative attitude towards issues related to family, church and state.

The low educational level of this people explains the absence of a religious rationalization that becomes manifest when affirming a traditional image of the divinity in which they believe (a personal being rather than a spirit or life force) and the belief in some magical elements. The rural area impregnates this religious mentality with a traditional profile manifested through a moral normativization and a religiously grounded morality on one side, and a strong social control that aims at the reduction of social anomy on the other side.

It may be easily seen that as we ascend the temporal axis the generation do not become less religiously (because of the fact that the generations that grew up in the post-socialist period manifest an intense interest towards religion) but share only a different type of religiosity that structures in a different way the different spheres of life.

At the opposite pole *the secularized mentality*, as was expected, represents an urban phenomenon, with a highest educational capital and with a medium age. Mostly this mentality is encountered in people who were born and grew up in the socialist period. If at the level of religious ideas, atheism can be analytically substituted to the secularized mentality, then Romania distinguishes itself alongside Poland and Malta as one of the least secularized countries both within Eastern and Western Europe.

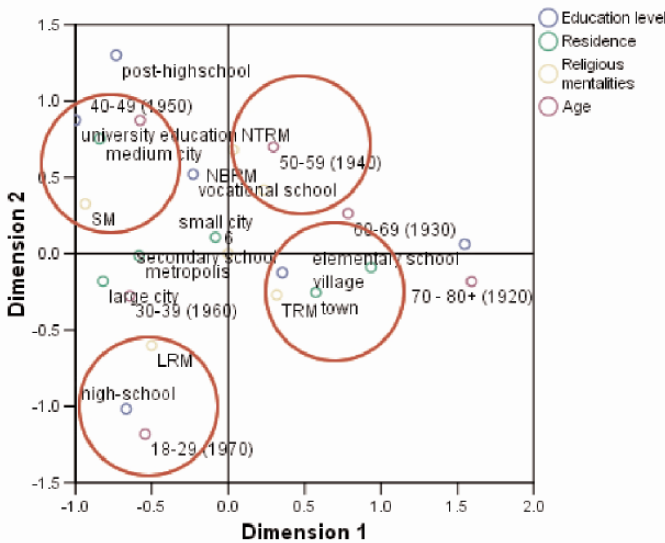


Figure 2. Religious mentalities and the socio-anthropological backgrounds

Unlike Poland where the Catholic Church played an important role in the forming of an anti-communist resistance and where the secular forces were counteracted by a religious interpretation of life and social world, the Romanian social system did not offer such an alternative.

At the level of public sphere such a religious counter-ideology was not able to form itself and the religious system was able to survive only as long as it did not manifest any critical attitude towards communist ideology. This weakens the religious communication within a society and contributes to the emergence of secularized mentality.

We still have to ask the question of why in Romania, unlike in other communist countries like East Germany, Estonia, and the Check Republic (where the secularized mentality has a share of 40-50%) the communist regime did not manage to secularize the social system more, in spite of the ideological authority that backed up its policy.

We think that the answer to this question lies precisely in the socio-anthropological background active at the level of a country, namely the level of modernization that a country has. Romania continues to be in the post-socialist period one of the less mod-



ernized countries in Europe, with a low level of educational capital and a high rural sector.

Religious mentalities are more dependent on the structures of daily life than on the ideology and propaganda of the state. The rationalization of life-world has as its correlative the emergence of a post-conventional moral representation and a scientific image of the world; therefore the absence of a state enforced atheist ideology, but the presence of a modernization process has as a consequence a stronger rationalization of the spheres of life and so a stronger secularization. Western Europe has a higher degree of secularization than Eastern Europe in spite of more than half of a century of forced secularization and the methodical attempt at the eradication of the "opium of masses".

The *non-traditional religious mentality* has a socio-demographical structure similar to the secularized mentality: an urban setting, a socializing period after the second world war and a medium educational level. The non-traditional religious mentality experiences strongly the impact of modernization at the level of religious beliefs (manifested through the rejection of the Christian representations) and at the practical level as well. This type of social mentality keeps only a diffuse religious perspective on the life-world and is looking for alternative forms of religiosity.

The *non-belonging religious mentality* (believing without belonging) represents from the point of view of the socio-demographical structures the closest one to the traditional religious mentality. The people that share such a religious mentality have a higher educational level than the one that share a traditional religious mentality, but the average hardly exceeds the level of eight years of education. As a generational profile, the people that share such a religious mentality have an aged demographical profile, most of them living in the rural part of Romania.

Sharing the same habitus within the social space as the traditional religious mentality, the non-belonging mentality represents a significant structural modification of the former: not at the level of the practical sphere or at the level of religious ideas but as regards the necessity of an institutional expression of their faith. This has as its correlative the tendency to limit the church role to only moral and spiritual matters, and to decline its competence in matters regarding social and political life.

The persons that share such a religious mentality continue to religiously legitimize the practical sphere of life without considering the church an important medium for the expression of their faith. This type of people has a strong social religious socialization, the decline of church attendance occurring only at a later stage.

The *liberal religious mentality* represents a relatively recent phenomenon, with a high educational level, an urban setting and a young demographical profile. This type of people manifest an intense interest in religious matters but the position expressed in the field of religiosity represents a double negation: on one side that of the traditional religious mentality because of its moral conservatism, and on the other side that of the secular mentality for its lack of interest in matters regarding spiritual aspects.

The liberal religious mentality represents a hybrid of the Romanian post-socialist world that reflects both the structural modifications at the level of secularization of the practical sphere of life and that of a growing interest in spiritual matters. The people that share such a religious mentality are most of all people that are in search of a spirituality and find in the institution of church not so much a moral regulator but a supplier of a way (among other ways) to get closer to a perceived transcendence.

## 7. Final remarks

Some of the post-socialist countries of Europe experienced after the fall of communism what some called a religious revival. Both anthropologists and sociologists alike were sure that they discovered serious evidence against the case of the secularization theory. What unfortunately most of them failed to observe was the particular shape and form of this religious growth and the structural changes of religious representations triggered by the post-communist period.

On one side this religious growth meant moving away from traditional religious expressions towards new religious forms: oriental beliefs, especially yoga and new age movements, and on the other side a strong rejection of any institutionalized religious authority. For example for the young generation that grew up in the new post-socialist world this meant both a religious quest on one side, and freedom from any kind of bonds that tended to restrict their liberty at the moral-practical level on the other side. Religion became spirituality and established orthodox religious identities were questioned with new cultural means.

On a general level Romania is one of the most religious countries of both Eastern and Western Europe, in spite of more than half of a century of forced atheization and ideologization of the public sphere. But, as we have shown above, the religious mentalities are strongly dependent of a specific socio-anthropological background: one that has a strong lack of modernization, i.e. a high rural sector, low educational capital, weak industrialization. Romania is one of the most religious countries in Europe precisely because it has one of the least modernized social systems on the old continent.

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### Note:

1 All the data that I am using in this article is provided by a research carried out in Romania in 2000 by the European Value Survey.

2 In spite of major differences, all of them share a basically similar Christian worldview, the only thing important in the logic of the argument unfolded here.

3 We have shown elsewhere (*Patterns of morality in Europe*, Studia, forthcoming) why this is the reason of the existence of stronger conservative values in ex-communist countries by comparison with Western Europe.

4 The factorial scores have been obtained with the Bartlett method. For the advantage of this method see Culic 204: 115. I have used the principal axis factoring and the original solution was rotated with the help of the "direct oblim" method. A solution with four factors explains 54.79% of the variance, the KMO index is .849.

5 The difference for each two averages is significant at the probability level of  $p=0.000$  (the Bonferroni test).

6 For the cluster analysis the following variables were used: factorial scores for the general religious ideas (believe in god, religious person, comfort and strength from religion), factorial scores for specific religious ideas (believe in hell, heaven and life after death), factorial scores for the sexual moral conduct (see above) and church attendance. The grouping of cases has been realized in two steps: first with the help of a hierarchical agglomerative method (Ward method and squared Euclidian distances) we have identified the number and the centroids of the clusters and then with an iterative method we have managed to obtain the final clusters. The stability of clusters has been tested by dividing the sample into two random parts and by repeating the above steps.

7 We will use the following abbreviations: *traditional religious mentality* (TRM), *liberal religious mentality* (LRM) *non-belonging religious mentality* (NBRM) *non-traditional religious mentality* (NTRM) *secularized mentality* (SM).

8 HABERMAS, Jurgen (1986). *The theory of communicative action, vol. 1 - Reason and the rationalization of society*; Cambridge, Polity Press.

9 C.C. affirms alongside other people of her age the constant need of religion and

the permanence of religious quest within mainstream Christianity, church attendance and the belonging to fellowship groups within the church. Doing this, she affirms within our focus-group the most religious position, very clearly differentiated from the affirmed secularized position and the invisible religion position of others. But she insists to add that when it comes to the moral values although she disagrees with abortion and pro-choice advocates she is not at all agreeing with the Church attempt to control her intimate life, especially with having sex before marriage. Other agrees as well with this de-moralized spirituality.