

# Highlighted Figures of Political Instrumentalization of Religion / Church - Contribution to the Issue of Its Nature and Internal Differentiation

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**Abstract:** The political instrumentalization of religion / Church is - it seems - a fact. However, if any doubts arise in this respect, they can be dealt with by articulating what is constant / variable in the content of the idea (i.e. the idea of political instrumentalization of a religion / church) in terms characteristic of phenomenology, and then by reconstructing, analyzing and discussion of dimensions used for characterization: all politics-religion / state-church relations, political instrumentalization as a specific form of these relations and its internal differentiation (typology). All this must be preceded by reflection on the perspectives and limitations of unambiguous identification of the actual presence of instrumentalization and its form. This is done by recalling unclear, ambiguous cases (Pascal's bet and the authentic statement of the mother of a Jewish child...). In this context, heuristically particularly valuable are two forms of political instrumentalization of religion / church - self-instrumentalization and religiously motivated "black" PR of political opponents - and the attempts to use them together. These phenomena are illustrated by the reinterpretation of cases of political instrumentalization of religion / church present in the literature on the subject.

**Keywords:** Highlighted Figures of Instrumentalization, Idea Content - Constant and Variable, Political Instrumentalization, Religion/Church, Strong/Weak Form of Instrumentalization, Typology of Political Instrumentalization

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## 1. Introduction

These considerations constitute a fragment of the theoretical approach to the political instrumentalization of religion and the Church in Poland in the last decade of the last century and the first decade of the current century. They refer to the first sample of typology, developed on the basis of a preliminary analysis of one part of the collected empirical material. They were undertaken with the intention of checking the validity of the adopted criteria, enabling the "differential diagnosis" on at least two levels of generality/specificity. First, it is a question of determining whether or not within a given political activity instrumentalization takes place at all, and if the answer to this question is affirmative, it is about answering the next question about what type of instrumentalization it is. However, this does not exclude the possibility of conducting analyzes at even lower levels.

It is obvious that this type of analysis must be based on Edmund Husserl's science of the content of ideas and his method of varying this content [7] (pp. 337-341) and focusing on its constants and variables. Due to the correspondence between an individual object and the idea that comprises it [8] (p. 98), it is possible to grasp any individual instance of instrumentalization and determine whether, objectively speaking, it is instrumentalized or not.

It seems, however, that another form of such analysis is possible, geared more not to the objective state of affairs, but to its subjective cognitive representation, which is articulated by Eleanor Rosch in terms of the conceptual core, what is outside of it in this representation, its plasticity and readiness to bear any changes in this regard [17]. There is no doubt that the concept of instrumentalization is a natural concept, not a matrix one, and that it may "look" different in the perpetrator of the instrumentalization, than in its subject, if it is a human being - an

individual or a collective, or even an institution. These two forms of analysis and their results can always be juxtaposed or even confronted; although the “really” regulatory power is still present in cognitive representations, unless the cognizing subjects are painfully convinced of their inadequacy and the need to change. A similar idea, expressed in slightly different terms, is contained in David Fishelov's [2] concept of a hard center-soft periphery.

It seems right to precede further analyzes concerning the political instrumentalization of the religion/Church with short introductory remarks on the subject of instrumentalization in general. These remarks will constitute the content of the first fragment, entitled *Constant and variable content of the instrumentalization idea - Husserl's method of variation*. On the one hand, they will make it possible to become sensitive to the “political quality” and “religiousness” of instrumentalization (which is the proper subject of these considerations), and on the other hand, they will not exclude the possibility that this “political quality” and “religiousness” will shed significant light on the instrumentalization in general. The next section, entitled Political instrumentalization of religion/Church, will provide a brief outline of the natural broader context of the political instrumentalization of religion/Church, which are the relations between religion-politics and the state-Church as a whole. The political instrumentalization of religion/Church can be treated both as a distinguished form of these relations, as well as a part of their whole, possible for effective (and not only abstract) distinction. The next two fragments will contain specific analyzes of non-randomly selected examples of the phenomenon in question. First, there will be two cases and at the same time two forms not entirely clear as to their “instrumental” nature and for this very reason analyzed here - in the section entitled Actual or merely alleged forms of instrumentalization? - and then three figures of political instrumentalization of religion, each of which has been distinguished for very individual characteristics - in an excerpt entitled Special figures of political instrumentalization of religion. The whole of considerations will be concluded with a commentary on the results of the conducted analyzes along with a signal of the perspectives they open up in the Summary.

## 2. Constant and Variable Content of the Instrumentalization Idea – Husserl's Method of Variation

For a precise approach to instrumentalization, the following distinctions should be used:

1. the distinction of its two sides, derived from Roman Ingarden's formal ontology of the process, i.e. the sequence of phases (this is the first side) and their product, understood as an object which, at the end of the last phase, is completed in its properties and ceases to exist (this is the other side) [8];
2. the same author's, but also using elements of the material ontology of various processes, the distinction between the ontological basis and the subject of action;

3. by Kazimierz Twardowski [18], a commonly known and used distinction between activities and (their) products;
4. also the commonly known and used in the English language differentiation of doings and happenings, ie intentionally undertaken actions and self-occurring processes or events taking place; it is interesting that some doings can turn into happenings [21] as a result of the automation process.

Thanks to these distinctions, it is possible to precisely capture both the structure of the instrumentalization process in terms of phases and components of a different nature, as well as the extremely complex relationships between the instrumentalization itself and its subject, i.e. the perpetrator. A signal of this complexity is also the usefulness and (at least sometimes) the need to use, in the case of legal instrumentalization, the distinction between executive and managerial agency. At this point, the thread of “technology”, or even “technique” of instrumentalization, could be developed, but due to its specific nature, it will be completely omitted. However, one more distinction cannot be ignored - the subject and the object of the instrumentalization. However, it would be better to speak not about the object of instrumentalization, but about its target object. The point is that in some cases this object of instrumentalization has the ontic status of a personal subject (individual or collective) and then the instrumentalization treated most generally as a degradation of the ontic status and axiological position of the target object of instrumentalization appears as objectification or, even more, reification of this object. Therefore, it is not only a matter of individual preference for linguistic articulation, but a matter of the specificity of the subject of analysis - its importance or significance [11] (pp. 209-210).

At this point, it is necessary to raise the (seemingly trivial) issue of treating instrumentalization as a special procedure - one of the theoretically and practically possible ways and means of achieving the intended goal, but for many significant reasons the even distinguished method. Consequently, such a procedure (as the preferred means of achieving a goal) can be analyzed primarily in terms of the suitability of the methods and means of achieving the goal and the goal itself, and this suitability can be further characterized in two dimensions: rationality and efficiency. However, one should bear in mind the complexity of their mutual relations. It is possible to make efficiency characterized on lower-order dimensions (e.g. economy, ease, riskiness) into a measure of rationality. However, it is also possible to “measure” rationality, taking into account not only efficiency understood in this way, that is, treating it as a functional value, but also other values “at stake”, for example related to the personal status of the object of instrumentalization. Failure to respect them would be an effect and an expression of irrationality.

In order to be able to consider both vague and questionable and specific forms of political instrumentalization of religion/Church and to capture their internal differentiation, it seems worthwhile to construct and treat as a reference a list (it is obvious that incomplete) of such figures or cases of

instrumentalization as such which seem unchallenged because their nature corresponds to the constant content of the idea. Here is this list: pimping, slavery, cannon fodder, voting machine, combat reconnaissance, useful idiot, substitute subject, etc. It seems that in each of these cases there is an unquestionable degradation of ontic status and axiological position. The preparing of an (open) list of canonical cases of instrumentalization seems to confirm the validity of the above arguments.

### 3. Political Instrumentalization of Religion/Church

Following the extensive literature on the subject, as well as observing the special "career" of the category of instrumentalization itself in public discourse, one can get the impression that almost everything [15] (pp. 211-212) can be instrumentalized - from God, starting with concepts. Similarly, it would be difficult to exhaust the list of areas or domains within which instrumentalization is carried out to achieve their respective goals.

As a result of these two (perhaps only seemingly) trivial statements, instrumentalization can be treated as a completely unique type of relationship, for many different, but always significant, reasons, linking two domains - the domain of instrumentalized objects and the domain of goals which it serves and allow to happen the same type of relationship in both directions. This means that in the case of these considerations, apart from the political instrumentalization of religion, also the religious instrumentalization of politics will have to be distinguished. In terms of the latter, it is possible, and perhaps even necessary, to reinterpret the phenomenon treated as a political self-instrumentalization of religion/church (discussed in the penultimate fragment).

The most important of the above-mentioned reasons, determining the special position of instrumentalization as a unique type of relationship, linking the field of instrumentalised objects with the field of goals that it serves, is the "sinful" nature of instrumentalization, articulated variously in terms of "perfidious and conscious abuse" [1](p. 43), or simply "Evil and dirty". Being a degradation of the ontic status and axiological position of an instrumentalized object, it is a "thought, speech, deed and neglect" committed against the truth of its being [6]. Other considerations include the ubiquity and universality of instrumentalization, its complex structure, and the consequences of its implementation not only for the object of instrumentalization, but also for external observers, and (contrary to appearances) even for the perpetrator.

There is another thread that should be developed as part of the analysis of the broader natural context of instrumentalization. It concerns the possibility of a purely theoretical separation from one another in the instrumentalization of two moments: the use of an instrumentalized object in a function not specific to it, and the degradation of the ontic status and axiological position. It

seems that it is possible to use the object without making this degradation – in case of stepping on the shoulders of another person in order to be able to climb a tree or break a fence, there is not a deprivation of the status of a person. This separation makes it possible to distinguish two forms of instrumentalization - weak and strong. A weak character can even be creative if it meets two conditions - meaningfulness and originality. This distinction can be found in the result of a comparative analysis of two texts by Martin Heidegger, one of which - entitled *The Question of Technique* [5]- concerns poorly understood instrumentalization, and the other - entitled *What are poets for?* [5] - presents strongly understood instrumentalization.

### 4. Actual/Implied Forms of Instrumentalization

The mode of analyzes aimed at differential diagnosis at the most basic level can be presented on basically any examples. After all, the point is to determine whether in the particular analyzed case, this phenomenon corresponds to the permanent and necessary elements of the content of the idea of instrumentalization. Theoretically, two systems can be distinguished:

1. something that initially appears as an instrumentalization, turns out not to be instrumentalization as a result of a more detailed analysis (thus there is only with the appearance of instrumentalization);
2. something that initially does not appear to be instrumentalization, turns out to be instrumentalization as a result of a more detailed analysis (thus the instrumentalization really takes place).

In such circumstances, the next question appears: what the vagueness or doubt is, and what its grounds and sources are. However, one must admit in advance such a possibility that it is not always possible to unequivocally resolve these doubts and suspend the final answer; at best, to formulate some questions, the answers to which will bring us closer to the final decision. At this point two such vague or questionable forms of instrumentalization are presented here. Anticipating the rest of the argument, there is need to indicate the impossibility of their final settlement for specific reasons that will be indicated.

#### 4.1. First Case

The first arrangement may be illustrated by an episode from the occupation fate of a Jewish child, whose mother, trying to save his life, asks a woman she meets for help in dramatic words:

You are a Christian, you believe in Jesus, so in the name of this Jew whom you believe in, save my child. When he grows up, he will become a priest [20].

These are fragments of conversations on this subject (maliny Press interview), although they concern very personal experiences of all participants of this dramatic events, have been present in space for some time as available.

Doubt and uncertainty in this case concern whether addressing the quoted words to another woman is tantamount to instrumentalizing the religion she professes. In this statement, one can find a characteristic distribution of accents - emphasizing both the nationality and religion of Jesus. It is impossible to resolve this issue without taking into account the two-part structure of this statement. Each of the elements concerns different moments, significant for the whole situation - the first is a request for help, the character of the second is not entirely clear. It seems that the second segment's ambiguity is the basis of various opposing interpretations - there is an instrumentalization or not. For if the analysis of this request was limited to the first segment, there would be no doubts that in this case there is not instrumentalization. It seems that referring to someone's views in order to persuade them to behave in certain ways (consistent with their views), even when these behaviors are beneficial to someone, who asks another person to behave in this way, is not instrumentalization. At best, a new, generally important question can be formulated, should the negative answer not be relativized to the importance of the matter to which these views relate?

Interpretations of the content of the second segment can probably be multiplied and one can expect that some of them will surprise with their obviousness, and others - on the contrary - surprise with their unexpected character. Among them, one can find extremely different, going in opposite directions; juxtaposed side by side allow to capture the essence of the problem and its importance in its entirety. They are best summarized using two formulas that illustrate two different types of man's relationship to God. In the Latin slogan they read as follows: "I give (you) so that you (You) give to me" and "you gave (me) so that I (I) would give (to you and others)". It is the former that is evidently instrumentalizing God.

One of these extreme interpretations (perhaps inadequate) could find a specific transaction in the other part (something for something) and would directly lead to an extremely important question as to whether, in the case of instrumentalization, there is always a transaction. If this were the case, then transactionality would have to be added to the list of permanent elements of the content of the idea of instrumentalization, apart from those already mentioned (the degradation of the ontic status and axiological position).

#### 4.2. Second Case

The latter arrangement may be illustrated by Pascal's bet. In his case, there are basic ambiguity and basic doubts. Contrary to the previous system, however, "at first glance" it may seem that it is not about instrumentalization, but eventually there are data that give rise to doubts as to whether this is really the case and that in the case of Pascal's plant there is instrumentalization. Also in this case, however, one has to reckon with the fact that in the end it will be necessary to suspend the definitive answer and continue looking for arguments "for" and "against" as a result of obtaining answers to the questions posed "along the way".

Pascal's wager is analyzed in many ways and from different perspectives. In these analyzes it is considered - as suggested by Leszek Kołakowski - not in terms of a contribution to a specific "epistemology of God's existence", but in terms of a way to manage one's own life. A Pascal bet - as in gambling or sports betting - is what someone bets on, taking into account both win and lose, their size and the probability of profit or loss. In Kołakowski's reconstruction, Pascal - answering the question of how to live - claims:

By betting on God - still assuming that his existence is uncertain - we can gain an infinite life of happiness; and at stake is our finite life, with its fleeting pleasures. So, a finite stake in the face of the chance of infinite profit - or a finite profit in front of the chance of eternal torment: what rational creature can hesitate? [9](p. 223).

An attempt to give a definite answer to the question of whether any traces of instrumentalization can be found in Pascal's plant should, as it seems, distinguish the plant itself from its wider context, and more precisely, two assumptions. The first assumption is that there is someone (Someone) who "watches the rules of the game", insures its course and makes sure that the insurance conditions are respected. Therefore, it acts as an "insurer" and "inspector" checking compliance with the terms of the insurance contract. The second assumption boils down to the statement that life, and more precisely its temporal fragment, can fulfill certain utility functions and ultimately has a functional value - it is a means to the goal of achieving salvation and eternal life. By analogy, one can also ask if such an approach to life is instrumentalization of life, which boils down to an attempt to leave behind a trace that is well remembered by posterity (the secular version of Pascal's bet?).

And it is in connection with these two assumptions that doubts arise as to whether in these prejudices there is an instrumentalization of both God and life - both God and life are included in their function [10].

The fundamental question for which Pascal's bet is considered here is: Is treating God as the insurer who issues and vouches for the policy already an instrumentalization of religion in general, and more specifically of God? An attempt to answer them may be as follows:

1. it is, especially in the case of people who approach religion in general, their faith and God legalistically (with an accent even more on the letter than on the spirit of the law);
2. it is also the case of treating not even God, but one's own earthly life as a means to achieve eternal life (salvation);
3. it is, because both God and one's own earthly life are so special beings that they deserve to respect their respective non-functional, i.e. autonomous values.

A number of doubts that may nevertheless appear in the face of this classification of Pascal's wager boil down to the following conclusion: a certain form of positive agnosticism recommended by Benedict XVI to "political reason" [22] (p. 39) can be interpreted as a non-instrumental [14] (p. 94) form of attitude towards God and religion.

## 5. Particular Figures of the Political Instrumentalization of the Religion/Church

As particular forms of instrumentalization, three types- illustrated by four examples- will be presented. They were distinguished on the basis of three criteria. The first criterion comes down to focusing on the object, as in any case of instrumentalization, but not on its values, but on its shortcomings, shortcomings or weaknesses, in order to use them to contrast with the values of the object of instrumentalization. For this reason, such instrumental actions can be described as negative and circular, and tentatively called "black PR". The second criterion is that the same individual appears simultaneously as the subject and the object of instrumentalization, as a result of which the particular form of instrumentalizing activities takes the form of auto-instrumentalization. The third criterion arises from bringing together the first and second criteria; therefore it has been called "cumulation".

### 5.1. "The Black PR"

"The black PR" may or may not be a political instrumentalization of religion; it is more general in nature. It is characterized by:

1. treating by the instrumentalizing entity a political competitor, opponent or even enemy as an object of instrumentalization;
2. using its weaknesses, shortcomings and failures to build and present a negative image of it;
3. going (in extreme cases) to deliberate distortion of information about him, or even confabulation;
4. basing on negative emotions;
5. creating a negative image of a political opponent / enemy in order to build a positive self-image through contrast.

For all these reasons, this type of activity can be described as "formal" and "circular". All this is done with the unfortunate hope that, as a result of this contrasting with a competitor, opponent or political enemy, the "bars of support" will decrease, and the instrumentalizing entity will grow. The so-characterized form of "black PR" activities can be filled with various contents. In the context of these analyzes, the negative vision of religion and God is particularly interesting, ascribed to the opponent as the object of instrumentalization, and contrasted with one's own, i.e. the instrumentalizing subject, considered to be the right and only right one:

There is also a danger of pushing Poland towards utopian ideas (e.g. universal enfranchisement, which will allegedly make us all capitalists) and religious fundamentalism (e.g. introducing an absolute ban on abortion and sexual education, removing the possibility of divorce). These radical ideas would have to be implemented by revolutionary means, the only effect of which would be destabilization and political war in a period when Poland faces a historic chance of joining NATO and the European Union when the process of systemic reconstruction has to

be completed. [19]

The preamble speaks of God, but this should not confuse us, because he is not a Christian God, "he who is", "almighty God Who created Heaven and Earth", the Triune God, "personal God", but rather a god, or rather an idol, which all kinds of pagans can talk about. The expression "God who is the source of truth, justice and beauty" speaks of God who was the object of worship of non-Christian philosophers." [4] (pp. 1- 7).

### 5.2. Auto-instrumentalization

The second and very specific example of specific forms of political instrumentalization of religion / Church is self-instrumentalization. It is distinguished by:

1. dual status - one is both an instrumentalizing subject and an instrumentalized object;
2. the specificity of the instrumentalised object - it is one's own professed religion;
3. using it to achieve political goals - gaining and maintaining power;
4. the use of sometimes (professed) religion as a criterion for the characteristics and evaluation of both oneself and a competitor, opponent or political enemy;
5. denying (generally unintentionally and unconsciously) one's own subjective status or even abandoning it.

Ultimately, therefore, it can be said that he is escaping his own subjective status, analogous to Fromm's "escape from freedom":

It is also hard not to mention the drama that took place in recent weeks and related to the cross in front of the Presidential Palace. In fact, it is not a defense of the cross (although some probably think so), but a fight against the president and the government and undermining their prestige. It is also not a call for the victims of the Smolensk catastrophe to be honored, which the people who currently run the country do not want to do, because the president and the government have repeatedly declared their will to honor these victims in a dignified manner. This is regrettable political adventure! Unfortunately, some bishops are pouring fuel on the fire, supporting this irrational protest. Do they not know what they are doing and how they contribute to the fragmentation of the Church? (...) Many priests have lost the boundaries between the gospel and politics. [23] (pp. 177-178).

This type of action can be observed, as it is shown in detail in a collective monograph of a multidisciplinary nature under the meaningful title *Politics on the pulpit?* [13], presenting both longer fragments of the homily, as well as a commentary relating them to the doctrinal note issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and a record of a panel debate, trying to formulate the conditions for a correct narrative on the relationship between religion and politics, not turning the homily into a political agitation. The multitude of examples seems to suggest that there was no need to look for special opportunities for this type of activity (as opposed to the political instrumentalization of religion / church carried out as part of election campaigns).

### 5.3. Cumulation

The third example shows combining the elements of the previous two into one whole called a cumulation. It can be presumed that the effect of such a combination is usually something more than just the sum of the partial effects. This phenomenon can be found in the following three quotes:

Vigano's memoirs are categorically questioned by two witnesses, and this multiplies doubts and questions about the overall credibility of his dossier. It is not about the documents he cites, but about their instrumental use, aimed only at presenting in a bad light the Pope who imposed serious sanctions on McCarrick. [13] (pp. 107-108).

But if you think about the source of this corporate view, there is a lack of an evangelical and ecclesiastical view of the problem. If you place your trust in structures, committees, regulations, techniques, and marketing strategies, losing sight of what distinguishes the Church from any company, corporation, or media network, the result can only be negative. [13] (p. 282).

Let the short third fragment serve as a commentary on them: "The attackers use the pedophilia scandal to wage their struggle for power in the Church instrumentally." [16] (p. 8)-observers of this struggle describe it in a number of "strong" categories, which they emphasize:

1. fratricidal nature of the struggle for power and importance in church structures;
2. attempts to ideologize and politicize the Church and religion;
3. the vision of the Church (and attempts to implement it) as a corporation or enterprise;
4. participation in cultural wars (and sometimes their initiation);
5. organizing a campaign against Pope Francis (Archbishop Vigano's activity).

## 6. Conclusion

As announced by the analysis - the analyzes contained in this text were to show that not only is it possible at all, but also how it is possible to make a specific differential diagnosis in the field of political instrumentalization of religion / Church on at least two levels of generality / concreteness. It turned out that it is possible thanks to the phenomenological vision of the relation of the suitability of the examined object with the content of the idea under which it "falls" and Husserl's method of variation, which allows to determine what is constant and necessary in the content of an idea, and what is the scope and degree of what is variable. (I use Roman Ingarden's terminology, provided by the author himself only sometimes with quotation marks.)

However, it is necessary to relativize this possibility to have complete and unambiguous data concerning both the instrumentalization itself and the circumstances in which it occurs. It is possible to make a reasonable presumption and seriously reckon with the fact that sometimes it will not lead to the intended and desired result. It is good if in such a situation

it is possible to formulate at least questions that will allow to specify the grounds and sources of doubts, so that ultimately the objective state of affairs can be grasped both in the content of the idea and in the subject "subject" to this idea.

As a consequence, it is also possible to confront this objective view with the subjective conceptual representations of the studied objects, because they are a regulatory power as long as the objective state of affairs does not force the individual to more or less radical changes, at least bringing the content of subjective representations closer to the objective state of affairs.

Finally, there is need to come back to the fact that the instrumentalization cannot fail to have negative consequences. Blessed is the situation in which the human "give", instrumentalizing the divine "would you give", is removed once and for all. Probably only the language of art is able to so poignantly reflect God's gratitude to Job for the fact that his human "I give" does not instrumentalize the divine "would you give":

I've had you on my mind a thousand years  
To thank you someday for the way you helped me  
Establish once for all the principle  
There's no connection man can reason out  
Between his just deserts and what he gets.  
(...)  
My thanks are to you for releasing me  
From moral bondage to the human race.  
The only free will there at first was man's,  
Who could do good or evil as he choose.  
I had no choice but I must follow him.  
(...)  
You changed all that. You set me free to reign.  
You are the Emancipator of your God. [3]

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