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TOWARDS A METAPHYSICAL-EPISTEMOLOGICAL DEFINITION OF RELIGION

Abstract: The search for the most adequate definition of religion is a constant subject of philosophical research. Existing definitions are relativized to a preconceived philosophical paradigm or research tradition to which a given author belongs, consciously or not. Most often you can find “horizontal” definitions explaining the fact of religion without reference to Transcendence, as well as “vertical” definitions showing the relationship of man with God or deities. Assuming that the most basic starting point for philosophical research is the existence of a specific thing, the article first presents a metaphysical approach to religion based on the doctrine of the real difference between essence and existence and the theory of the participation of being. Then there are listed the definitions of religion belonging to the “horizontal” trend and their inadequacy in relation to the metaphysics of the world and man. In the framework of Thomistic metaphysics, a religion is presented as an ontic relationship between man and God. Such a relationship also influences human cognition, especially in the light of the participation theory. For this reason, a new definition has been proposed that takes into account both metaphysics and epistemology. The metaphysical-epistemological approach to religion allows, for example, to distinguish religion from religiosity, or to answer the question about the causes of atheism, taking into account religiosity as a constitutive feature of the human being.

Keywords: P vs NP, religion, existential problem, essential problem, theory of participation of being, metaphysical-epistemological definition.

The article is based on the assumptions of Thomas’ theory of participation in existence. The word “assumptions” is not, admittedly, preferred by existential Thomists, but here I use it with a reason. I do not want to present this theory here, as it has already been discussed in Polish literature and I accept the content of this theory as true. Hence the word “assumption”. I assume that it is the basis for a realistic interpretation of reality, including the interpretation of religion. In the light of the participation theory, one can distinguish between religion and religiousness

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or religiosity. This distinction explains why religion and irreligiousness, theism and atheism exist side by side. The work does not only focus on the metaphysical interpretation of religion, but also shows the epistemic consequences of the participation theory. Someone might say that within existential Thomism there is already a definition of religion and there is no need to create another. Still, I believe that more emphasis should be placed on the need rather than ability to establish a relationship with God¹. As well as emphasising the volitional aspect of a religious relationship, namely love for God, in the light of the participation theory of being, there is also a need to take into account the epistemological aspect, not only in the sense of recognising a certain arrangement of the content of things that leads human thought towards Transcendence, but also in the sense of knowing existence itself. It is precisely this existential aspect of cognition that explains why man is a religious entity, why there is a religion and concurrently with attempts to deny it.

1. METAPHYSICS OF RELIGION

Like other complex entities, man is also subject to the process of participation. However, the human being is unique for its reasonableness and freedom². Man obtains an existence from God, but as a rational being he is able to recognise his dependence on the First Being. The very existence of man's dependence on God in terms of existence means religiousness. I distinguish between religiousness and religion. Religiousness is a feature of human nature which does not necessarily have to develop into a religion; it only has this potential. This distinction between religiousness and religion is made possible by the theory of participation. As Zdybicka writes:

The ontic relationship between man, the world and God is explained by the metaphysical participation theory, and it best explains from the ontological point of view the fact of each religion³.

¹ Cf. definition by Z.J. Zdybicka in *Powszechna encyklopedia filozofii*: Z.J. Zdybicka. *Religia*. In: *Powszechna encyklopedia filozofii* [*Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy*]. <<http://ptta.pl/pef/pdf/r/religia.pdf>> [accessed: 17.08.2020].

² The vast literature on human freedom makes it impossible even to briefly summarise the issue here. In the light of recent neuroscience research, it can be assumed that of the three main currents (libertarianism, determinism and compatibilism), compatibilism is likely to be the winner. This can be said on the basis, for example, of: M. Fisher. *Quantum cognition: The possibility of processing with nuclear spins in the brain*. "Annals of Physics" 362 (2015) p. 593-602.

³ Z.J. Zdybicka. *Udział filozofii w określeniu prawdziwości religii* [*The contribution of philosophy in determining the truthfulness of religion*]. In: *Filozofować w kontekście teologii. Problem religii prawdziwej* [*Philosophise in the context of theology. The problem of true religion*]. Ed. P. Moskal. Lublin 2004 p. 47.

The ontic structure of the human being does not guarantee that the metaphysical relationship between man and God will take on religious forms; it is rather the basis that religion cannot do without. Therefore, if religion is realised, it is because man has recognised and wanted to realise this metaphysical relationship. Religion as a result of religiousness therefore comes from man's free will, at least to the extent that it is dependent on him. Let us quote again Zdybicka's opinion on this subject:

The participation relationship with regard to man is special. For God is not only the ultimate source of man's personal existence (soul), but man as a person is created in his »image and likeness«. God is also the Highest Good which man can consciously and freely pursue and thus achieve the highest development or fulfilment. Only man as a person, that is to say, a being capable of intellectual cognition and free pursuit of the known Good, is capable of knowing the participation relationship and pursue it consciously and freely throughout his life. This is expressed in a particular way in the moral and religious action of man⁴.

Religion is carried out on a voluntary basis and depends on the free will of man. This applies not only to man's positive response to God, but also to a negative one. In the light of the above interpretation of religion as a free human response given to God, atheism is also a derivative of free will as a rejection of relations with a deity.

When we consider atheism from a metaphysical point of view, it turns out that it is a manifestation of religiousness. Just as religion stems from free will as a positive response to a metaphysical relationship in order to make it a personal relationship, so atheism is a negative response rejecting the possibility of building such a personal relationship⁵. In the light of the participation theory, atheism is not, however, able to deny religiousness itself because it does not concern metaphysics. In this sense, Jan Sochoń says that

[...] the denial of the existence of God is something secondary because first there is the need for God to exist as a reason, the need that something is rather than not. The beginning of the affirmation of God's existence is in reality beyond the subjective⁶.

As atheism contradicts theism, that is, contradicts a metaphysical thesis, it suggests that it is more than just a decision of will, that it has a basis in reality beyond subjective. To defend their thesis, atheists should not so much demonstrate that God does not exist, but that the basic doctrine of theism – the real distinction between being and existence – is false. For from this doctrine arises a theory

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ The causes of atheism can also be intellectual, in the sense that some people may not recognize the existence of God at all. In such a case, his existence is not even denied.

⁶ J. Sochoń. *Ateizm [Atheism]*. Warsaw 2003 p. 90.

of participation and, as it were, a necessary question of the necessity of God's existence. However, in order to deny the doctrine of real distinction, atheism would have to explain the metaphysics of the world differently, referring to other metaphysical doctrines. Of the main currents in metaphysics, however, it is theism that seems to be the most consistent doctrine, at least in the light of the methodology of Larry Laudan and Imre Lakatos⁷.

The theory of participation in existence therefore sheds new light on human religiousness. It is an ontological feature of human existence. St Thomas claims that God is present in all things profoundly⁸. What does this mean for man as a participatory being in God? Participation occurs in the place of existence, not between things and God. The whole process of participation is an act of God: created beings remain in the capacity to God all the time, which means that *in fact* they do not participate but are passive. That is why it is so difficult to recognise our own participation in God. God becomes part of the metaphysics of this world, and he is materially separate from the world, transcendent. In order to discover the existence of God, human reason must look at this world, learn about its ontological structure and see the inadequacy of the world in terms of existence demanding complement from the "outside". It is necessary to indicate the rationale for sufficient existence in order to avoid the absurdity that we face with regard to the existence of things. For we know the existence of things, their own existence, from which it does not follow that they were able to begin to and to continue to exist. The need to discover another source of existence arises from the decontradictification of the contingent existence of things.

A man who belongs to the world of contingent beings also requires a decontradictification of his existence. Edith Stein expressed this search for the meaning of existence in the following words:

⁷ Laudan writes as follows: "Theories are inevitably involved in the solution of problems; the very aim of theorizing is to provide coherent and adequate solution to the empirical problems which stimulate inquiry". L. Laudan. *Progress and Its Problems: Towards a Theory of Scientific Growth*. Berkeley – Los Angeles – London 1978 p. 70. Since Laudan claims that theories should solve problems rather than create them and thus stimulate the search, it can be said that the theory of participation (theism) by its generality is involved in solving all metaphysical problems (in the sense that there are no entities that do not participate in God). The same is true if we treat the participation theory as a research programme according to Lakatos. If research programmes have a so-called hard core and protective cloak (I. Lakatos. *The methodology of scientific research programmes*, Cambridge – New York – Port Chester – Melbourne – Sydney 1989 p. 48), then the hard core of theism is existence. No protective cloak can grow to such an extent – and thus generate so many problems – as to replace existence in the hard core (what instead of existence?).

⁸ STh I, q. 8., a. 1.

In my existence, therefore, I come across another existence. It is not mine. But it is the support and the basis of my existence, which in itself has neither support nor basis⁹.

In knowing the world and himself, man discovers that God is present in the material world, “here, at the bottom”. This means that by applying the classic definition of truth as the conformity of intellect with reality, God becomes an indispensable “element” of truth. Without God present in every being subjected to sensual cognition, the existence of the world could not be decontradictified. God becomes part of the metaphysics of the world, enabling human reason to know anything. However, by knowing reality, we do not get to know God who remains transcendent, but rather through the things decontradictified by the First Being through the process of participation.

If religiousness is a feature of human existence that stems from the distinction of essence and existence, then human existence also demands to be decontradictified. In the case of man, a reference to God for the purpose of decontradictification means religion. In this way, religion and truth are combined in the process of cognition. Religion decontradictifies human cognition. This does not necessarily mean that religion will morph into a cult. As the etymology of the term “religion” indicates, it can be a rereading of rituals and acts of devotion or *relegere*¹⁰, it can be a reunion with the deity or *religare*¹¹, a re-election of God or *reeligere* and the abandonment of certain aspects of this world in order to fully surrender to God: *relinquere*¹².

Religious decontradictification does not yet determine man’s free will but leaves him the choice of whether to engage in a personal relationship with God or to remain at a philosophical level. Nevertheless, religion means affirming the real action of God in creation. Therefore, revelation is not needed to create a religion because a positive response from man alone is enough to give rise to a religion. Natural religions are an example. They are the result of human reason rather than God’s Revelation. The existence of natural religions does not prejudice the fact that human reason will certainly make such decontradictification. For there is no guarantee that reason must necessarily discover that God exists because the existence of God is not obvious to us as St Thomas explains:

⁹ E. Stein. *Byt skończony a byt wieczny [Finite and Eternal Being]*. Trans. I.J. Adamska. Krakow 1995 p. 91.

¹⁰ The term comes from Cicero – see footnote 195.

¹¹ The etymology is from Lactantius: “Hoc vinculo pietatis obstricti Deo et religati sumus; unde ipsa religio nomen accepit”. *Institutioes divinae*, VI, 28. Quote from: J. A. Kłoczowski, *Między samotnością a wspólnotą. Wstęp do filozofii religii [Between Solitude and Community. Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion]*. Tarnów 2004 p. 20.

¹² E. Sideri, L.E. Roupakia. *Religions and migrations in the Black Sea Region*. Thessaloniki 2017 p. 4.

I say that this proposition, »God exists«, of itself is self-evident, for the predicate is the same as the subject, because God is His own existence as will be hereafter shown (I:3:4). Now because we do not know the essence of God, the proposition is not self-evident to us; but needs to be demonstrated by things that are more known to us, though less known in their nature – namely, by effects¹³.

Religiousness, therefore, does not yet follow from religion, either as a response to revelation or as a decontradictification of cognition.

2. TOWARDS A METAPHYSICAL-EPISTEMOLOGICAL DEFINITION

Let us now look at the different definitions of religion to see which one corresponds best to the metaphysical view of religion. One of the most classic definitions of religion was formulated by Edward B. Tylor in his book *Primitive Culture. Researches Into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion Language, Art and Custom*. Tylor claims that religion is “[...] a belief in spiritual beings”¹⁴. This definition is based on Tylor’s research on primitive peoples. The author is convinced that religion exists among all races of primitive peoples¹⁵. As an example of the religion adhered to by these peoples Tylor gives animism. It is a primitive form of religion, but nevertheless contains two important elements: faith in the existence of the soul and life after death, and the existence of spiritual beings that influence and control events in the material world and people’s lives¹⁶. The existence of spiritual beings therefore presupposes their influence on the affairs of this world, which is a reference to metaphysics.

Another definition from 1890 by James G. Frazer says that:

By religion I mean the propitiation of higher powers than man, who are believed to directly control the course of events in the natural world and human life¹⁷.

Also here, the entities to which man turns have an impact on material reality and man. Unlike Tylor’s definition, Frazer’s combines religion with worship. It is not only a reference to supernatural beings, but also a sacrifice to them.

William James, another well-known scientist who has a strong influence on understanding religion, said that religion is

¹³ Sth I, q. 2, a. 1.

¹⁴ E.B. Tylor. *Primitive Culture. Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion Language, Art and Custom*. Vol. I. London 1871 p. 384: “[...] the belief in spiritual beings”

¹⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁶ Ibidem p. 385.

¹⁷ J.G. Frazer. *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*. New York 2009 p. 50.

[...] the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine¹⁸.

It was a move away from an objective view of religion towards showing its essence from the point of view of the subject. Widening the scope of his view of society, Émile Durkheim states that

[...] A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them¹⁹.

Religion has a predominantly horizontal dimension as a cohesive factor in society. As Władysław Jacher writes,

it reduces religion almost to a ritual. He believes that a particular ritual contributes to its creation and to the changes that religion undergoes. This ritual regulates man's attitude to »sacral« things, sacred things, which are ultimately a personification of society itself and are therefore surrounded by respect and subject to various prohibitions²⁰.

Religion therefore does not relate to transcendent reality, but to society. It divides things into sacred and secular, but "they correspond to two states of social life"²¹.

Durkheim saw religion as a feature of supernaturalism that people once believed in, but today, as he says, science has explained the complexity of the world and there is no need to resort to miracles²². The French sociologist contrasts religion with science, seeing in these two phenomena the spiritual world and the natural world explored by science²³. Religion has therefore been referred to and narrowed down to transcendent reality. Reason has been attributed to natural reality. However, from the point of view of Thomistic metaphysics, such an assignment seems to be insufficient. Religion, of course, points to transcendence, but only through things belonging to "this" world.

¹⁸ W. James. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. <<https://www.templeofearth.com/books-/varietyofreligieusexperience.pdf>> p. 21b [accessed: 28.05.2019].

¹⁹ E. Durkheim. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. New York 1995 p. 44; cf. J. Szcze- pański. *Socjologia. Rozwój problematyki i metod* [*Sociology. Development of problems and methods*]. Warsaw 1961 p. 314.

²⁰ W. Jacher. *Emila Durkheima koncepcja religii jako czynnika integracji społecznej* [*Emil Durkheim's concept of religion as a factor of social integration*]. "Studia Philosophiae Christianae" 9/2 (1973) p. 52.

²¹ Ibidem.

²² E. Durkheim. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* p. 23-24.

²³ Ibidem.

It is necessary to justify religious doctrine, its intrinsic coherence, but it is unjustified to detach it from the material world and close it only within the framework of syntactics because, as has been said earlier, God is present in all things in depth. Participation in God's being is done in the place where it exists, and therefore separating God from creation is metaphysically wrong²⁴.

Other definitions proposed by well-known scholars also oscillate around the assumption that religion is somehow about the reality of "this" world, but through man or society. For example, Paul Tillich's definition of religion reads that

Religion as ultimate concern is the meaning-giving substance of culture, and culture is the totality of forms in which the concern of religion expresses itself²⁵.

Everyone has the ultimate care or concern, and that means that every person is a religious entity – *homo religious*²⁶. It is unavoidable to be religious, but not everyone finds the right ultimate concern and therefore not everyone will pursue a religion²⁷. In this sense, the concept of religion as the ultimate concern is compatible with the metaphysical approach to religion and religiousness presented in this article. Tillich rightly points out that religiousness is different from religion, but religion is not needed – according to the Protestant philosopher and theologian – to decontradictify cognition, but to express the ultimate concern for infinity and its ultimate purpose²⁸.

American cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz defined religion as follows:

Religion is (1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, persuasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in [people] by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic²⁹.

In this definition, too, religion is narrowed down to culture which Geertz defines as follows:

it denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life³⁰.

²⁴ We must constantly remember not to fall into pantheism.

²⁵ P. Tillich. *Theology of Culture*. New York, Oxford 1959 p. 42.

²⁶ L. Midgley. *Religion and Ultimate Concern: An Encounter with Paul Tillich's Theology*. "Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought" Vol. 1 No. 2 (1966) p. 59.

²⁷ *Ibidem* p. 59–60.

²⁸ P. Tillich. *Systematic Theology*. Chicago 1951 p. 14.

²⁹ C. Geertz. *Religion as a Cultural System*. In: *The interpretation of cultures: selected essays*. Geertz, Fontana Press 1993 p. 90.

³⁰ *Ibidem* p. 89.

Religion therefore plays a great role in society – it is able to shape culture by influencing people, their moods, motivations and general attitudes to life. This definition opens up a view of the influence of religion on social development, but from a metaphysical point of view, it only places religion within culture, so it can be assumed that if there were no religion, culture would be impoverished, but it would not affect reality. Meanwhile, metaphysics indicates that religion is an ontological relationship between God and man, reflecting the general dependence of creatures on the Creator described by the theory of participation. Thus, the existence of such a relationship also means the existence of God, without whom nothing would exist (the real distinction between being and existence), so religion cannot be merely an addition to culture.

An example of a definition of a religion that refers to the *relegere* concept is that proposed by the American researcher of religious history Catherine L. Albanese. She claims that religion is

[...] a system of symbols (creed, code, cultus) by means of which people (a community) orient themselves in the world with reference to both ordinary and extraordinary powers, meanings, and values³¹.

This understanding of religion comes from Cicero, who wrote in *De natura deorum*:

Those who carefully reviewed and so to speak retraced all the lore of ritual were called religious³².

As Jan Kłoczowski writes,

[...] religion in this sense is, above all, a collection of beliefs and practices relating to the gods and specific to a given nation, which is a legate of tradition to be treated carefully and with reverence³³.

In this sense, religion is relativized to culture, to a nation or even to civilization.

Consider two more definitions that refer to the existential side of religion from the point of view of man and his contact with God. The first one says that religion is a means to an ultimate transformation³⁴. The authors refer to the

³¹ *The World's Religions: Continuities and Transformations*. Ed. P. Clarke, P. Beyer. New York 2009 p. 143.

³² Cicero. *De natura deorum* II, 72. <<http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/cicero/nd2.shtml>>: „quod nomen patuit postea latius; qui autem omnia quae ad cultum deorum pertinerent diligenter retractarent et tamquam relegerent, [i] sunt dicti religiosi ex relegendo” [accessed: 5.06.2019]. Polish translation after: J.A. Kłoczowski. *Między samotnością a wspólnotą* p. 20.

³³ J.A. Kłoczowski. *Między samotnością a wspólnotą* p. 20.

³⁴ E.J. Streng, Ch.L. Lloyd, Jr., J.T. Allen. *Ways of Being Religious readings for: a new approach to religion*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 1973 p. 6.

concept of “metanoia” meaning a complete change of life. They believe that not every religious activity will lead to the ultimate transformation, but that every rational means that a person uses in the hope of achieving the ultimate transformation should be called “religion”³⁵. With this approach to religion, we do not limit its meaning to a specific religion, but show the result of a person’s religious activity, his transformation. Since the authors of this approach state that any action taken by man in the hope of transformation can be considered a religion, this thesis implies the conclusion that religion does not have to concern the relationship between God and man, but is relativized to the goal. It can be salvation, but it can also be enlightenment, perfection, fulfilment or joy³⁶, and the means to achieve this are both personal relationships with the deity and the creation of a community based on myths and rituals, a harmonious life with the law of outer space, spiritual freedom achieved through discipline, the attainment of internal integration through creative interaction, a life in accordance with human rights through political and economic activities, the development of new technologies and, finally, the enjoyment of the fullness of life through sensory experiences³⁷.

The metaphysical approach to religion here specifies the way in which religion is seen and narrows it down to the knowledge of the relationship between God and man based on the ontological structure of the human being. From this point of view, human activity leading, for example, to self-fulfilment or the building of a just society, will not be called religion, although it is not ruled out that such activity may have spiritual effects.

The last characterization of divine reality I want to refer to is that of Rudolf Otto: *mysterium tremendum and mysterium fascinans*. In *Das Heilige*, Otto presented a comprehensive view of religion, to which many researchers have referred³⁸. Otto believed that there are rational and irrational elements in religion, but the essence of the deity lies primarily in what cannot be understood³⁹. Hence the concept of *numinosum*, which expresses what is specific in religion, namely holiness, but without moral and rational connotations⁴⁰. A *numinosum* is unrecognizable by its nature. Only people with strong emotional religious experiences have access to transcendent reality⁴¹. These experiences lead to the feeling that

³⁵ Ibidem.

³⁶ Ibidem p. 7.

³⁷ Ibidem p. 9.

³⁸ H. Machoń. *Rudolfa Otto Das Heilige a problematyka (brakującej) definicji religii* [Rudolf Otto’s *Das Heilige and the problem of the (missing) definition of a religion*]. “Philosophical Quarterly” I/XLI (2013) p. 78.

³⁹ Ibidem p. 82-83.

⁴⁰ Ibidem p. 84.

⁴¹ Ibidem p. 85.

numinosum is *mysterium tremendum* and *mysterium fascinans*⁴². According to Otto, the feeling of “tremendum” acts as a shelter for man because man represents the profane and is not worth standing in the presence of holiness⁴³. The German theologian presents an important issue in terms of religious cognition, which has been raised since the first centuries of Christianity: *via negativa*, apophatic theology⁴⁴. It is extremely important for the metaphysics of religion. Otto has developed a dual approach to mystical cognition: the mysticism of the interior and the mysticism of the unifying view⁴⁵. The first kind consists of entering into one’s own interior in order to achieve intuition and there, in its greatest depth, finding the Infinite, God or Brahman⁴⁶. We do not look at the world, but only at the inside, the world does not count. We achieve a vision in which only God and the soul know the truth⁴⁷. The other type of mystical cognition consists in moving away from the inside and looking at everything in unity without any differences⁴⁸. This vision of mystical unity allows us to get higher and higher starting from things, but Otto denies that it is a scientific paradigm⁴⁹.

In a sense, Otto presents religion in metaphysical terms, but focuses on the mystical side of access to transcendent reality. He shows human being in the perspective of a deity, emphasizing that God is completely different from us, and thus arouses both horror and fascination. Thanks to religious experience, man unifies his cognition and reduces it to a common source. We do the same with the theory of participation. It seems, however, that this theory does not limit our reflection on religion to emotionality, but rather focuses more on the general concept of religion, starting with the things we can consider in terms of their existence, and we deny this contingent existence by referring them to God. However, the theory of participation does not give us an insight into the emotional endowment of a person who, as a subject of knowledge, certainly does not separate *the ratio* from feelings, especially when there is contact with the Person.

Due to the fact that Otto and other authors excessively narrow religiousness down to emotionality and religion to a phenomenon that is mainly social or cultural, without regard for the metaphysical and epistemological aspects, I propose

⁴² R. Otto. *Autobiographical and Social Essays*. Trans. and ed. G.D. Alles. Berlin 1996 p. 3.

⁴³ Idem. *The idea of the holy: an inquiry into the non-rational factor in the idea of the divine and its relations to the rational*. Trans. J.W. Harvey. London 1936 p. 56.

⁴⁴ More on this in the next chapters.

⁴⁵ R. Otto. *Mysticism East and West: A Comparative Analysis of the Nature of Mysticism*. Trans. B.L. Bracey, R.C. Payne. Eugene 1932 p. 39; cf. D. Brylla. *Epistemologia mistyczna i dwie metody poznania Rudolfa Otta* [*Mystical epistemology and Rudolf Otto’s two methods of cognition*]. “Humaniora. Czasopismo Internetowe” 2/6 (2014) p. 63.

⁴⁶ R. Otto. *Mysticism East and West* p. 40.

⁴⁷ Ibidem p. 40.

⁴⁸ Ibidem p. 43.

⁴⁹ Ibidem p. 44-46.

to adopt the following definition of religion: *religion is a reference to God as the Necessary Being that creates the world and sustains it in existence in order to decontradictify human knowledge of reality and to establish a personal relationship with God.*

This definition shows the religious relationship from the human side. Religiousness itself, resulting from the real distinction between being and existence, does not yet mean religion. Only a personal relationship between man and God can create religion. Therefore, it is not enough to try to establish a relationship on the part of man, but there must also be a “movement” on the part of God, a gateway for man, which we call Revelation. It is an attempt to establish a relationship with man on the part of God. There are, therefore, two moments that can block the emergence of religion on the part of man: 1) failure to recognise the need to decontradictify the existence of things, 2) unwillingness to give a positive response to Divine Revelation.

This definition could therefore be supplemented by the statement that religion can only exist if Revelation has taken place. However, then there is a risk that we would exclude, for example, religions that are considered natural, where there is no Revelation in the sense of monotheistic religions. It therefore seems right to me to preserve the definition as it stands. It is also worth emphasizing that the definition refers to metaphysics (the real distinction between being and existence demanding an decontradictification – the theory of participation of being), epistemology (the cognition of existence by man) and the necessity of the relationship between man and Transcendence. Religion begins with the cognition of the existence of the world and then the personal contact between man and the deity is transformed. In this way, religion somehow connects the two worlds and shows the relations between them. It should be noted that man can establish a relationship with God on condition that he knows the world properly. Knowledge of reality determines a personal relationship with God. This is the conclusion of the metaphysical-epistemological definition proposed above.

It seems important to distinguish between faith and religion, following Joseph Ratzinger. In the book *Faith – Truth – Tolerance*, the cardinal writes:

[...] the concept of »faith« does not exist in all religions, or at least it is not constitutive for all. Conversely, the extension of the notion of religion as a general name for the relationship between man and Transcendence did not take place until the second half of the present epoch⁵⁰.

⁵⁰ J. Ratzinger. *Glaube – Wahrheit – Toleranz*. Fribourg 2003 p. 42, cited after: R.T. Ptaszek. *Uniwersalizm chrześcijaństwa a pluralizm kultur – stanowisko Josepha Ratzingera* [*Universalism of Christianity and pluralism of cultures – Joseph Ratzinger's stance*]. “Drohiczyński Przegląd Naukowy” 1 (2009) p. 193.

Faith is a reference to Revelation, while religion is merely a human attempt “[...] to know divine reality”⁵¹. Religion is therefore possible without faith, as in natural religions, unless we treat nature as a kind of revelation of some higher being or beings. It is therefore possible to accept religion as an expanse of the world’s existence with the simultaneous rejection of faith in Revelation, and thus by denying God the possibility of going out to man, it is possible not to reject religion as such with Transcendence as the “keystone” of the metaphysical system. By rejecting faith in Revelation, we also deny the doctrine of a given religion because the doctrine conveys the message that God has revealed Himself. Without believing in this message, man is left with religion alone as a part of anthropology, which is a part of metaphysics. Religion without Revelation is a general construction that explains the relationship between Transcendence and the world. It can be said that such a religion is a common denominator for all people in terms of their response to the mystery of existence. Religion is therefore more primeval than the doctrine of faith.

CONCLUSIONS

From a metaphysical point of view, religion is, therefore, the answer to the existence of the world. In order to make this human search for answers to a particular religion more specific, i.e. in order to move from the general level of discussion on religion – as we have been doing so far – to the particular answers given by religions, we have to reach for their theology. Because different religions give different answers, it is up to philosophy to identify the most appropriate one. Thus, we come to the conclusion that we can apply to religion the category of truth⁵², according to its classical definition of *adaequatio rei et intellectus*. With regard to religion, truth would express the conformity of its theology (in the sense of the doctrine of faith) with the metaphysics of the existence of the world. In other words, we can compare what we know about the metaphysics of the world with what a given religion says about it. We can also go further and compare what we know about God in the light of the natural light of human reason with what religious doctrine preaches about it and compare the doctrines with each other. This is a task that goes beyond one article or even a book. However, I would like to stress that, in the light of the classic definition of truth and against the metaphysical background shown by the theory of participation, it can be said that a given religion is true, or that the seeds of truth can be identified in it.

⁵¹ R.T. Ptaszek. *Uniwersalizm chrześcijaństwa a pluralizm kultur* p. 193.

⁵² Cardinal Ratzinger says that faith has a chance because “[...] it corresponds to the nature of man. [...] In man lives an unfinished longing for what is infinite”. J. Ratzinger. *Glaube – Wahrheit – Toleranz* p. 110.

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W KIERUNKU METAFIZYCZNO-EPISTEMOLOGICZNEJ DEFINICJI RELIGII

Streszczenie: Poszukiwanie najbardziej adekwatnej definicji religii jest nieustannie przedmiotem badań filozoficznych. Istniejące definicje są zrelatywizowane do przyjętego z góry paradygmatu filozoficznego czy tradycji badawczej, do której należy dany autor, świadomie lub nie. Najczęściej można znaleźć definicje „horyzontalne”, tłumaczące fakt religii bez odwołania do Transcendencji, a także definicje „wertikalne”, pokazujące związek człowieka z Bogiem czy bóstwami. Przyjmując, że najbardziej podstawowym punktem wyjścia poszukiwań filozoficznych jest istnienie konkretnej rzeczy, artykuł przedstawia najpierw metafizyczne ujęcie religii w oparciu o doktrynę realnej różnicy między istotą a istnieniem i teorię partycypacji bytu. Następnie zostają wymienione definicje religii należące do nurtu „horyzontalnego” i ich nieadekwatność wobec metafizyki świata i człowieka. W ramach tomistycznej metafizyki religia jest pokazana jako relacja ontyczna między człowiekiem a Bogiem. Relacja taka wpływa również na ludzkie poznanie, zwłaszcza w świetle teorii partycypacji. Z tego powodu została zaproponowana nowa definicja uwzględniająca zarówno metafizykę, jak i epistemologię. Metafizyczno-epistemologiczne ujęcie religii pozwala np. odróżnić religię od religijności czy też odpowiedzieć na pytanie o przyczyny ateizmu, uwzględniając religijność jako cechę konstytutywną bytu ludzkiego.

Słowa kluczowe: P vs NP, religia, problem egzystencjalny, problem esencjalny, teoria partycypacji bytu, definicja metafizyczno-epistemologiczna.