

HYBRIS nr 59 (2022)

ISSN: 1689-4286



<https://doi.org/10.18778/1689-4286.59.01>

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**THE HERMENEUTICS OF THE SOCINIAN
ATHEOLOGY OF THE POLISH BRETHREN.
INTRODUCTION OF A DEMOCRATIC
POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY**

Philosophy and “God”

Political philosophies, as well as philosophy as such, often make reference to the notion of god. References to god may be direct — to God as an “actor”, as a person, or indirect — as a notion, signaling the cultural character of such representation. In certain philosophical systems, as well as in political philosophies, God occurs in the first of those aspects. In the present text — in the second.

Some philosophies deny the existence of god. In our opinion — hastily. God exists. The only problem is the manner of its existence.¹ The manner of its existence ensuing from the comprehensive view on Polish Brethren's "philosophy" does not overlap their theological declaration. God of Polish Brethren, laid out philosophically, doesn't exist in the religious way.²

The transition from "culture" to "civilization³" gave rise to the need for a definition of the notion of "god" and it even created the very notion or, alternatively, caused the transformation of "god" as an incomprehensible force⁴ (all forces were incomprehensible in the times of "culture", and were therefore not rendered notionally) into a concept (here a civilized god), into something mysterious, incomprehensible for the profane, and at the same time notionally conceptualized — for the initiates. Initially, the initiates were pontiffs only, but later the category also included conceptualization specialists — ideological specialists in religion and their opponents, first philosophers,⁵ and then religious

1About God's „manner of existence” see Paradowski, Paradowska, 2020: 359.

2The Polish Brethren („Arians”, „Socinians”, „Unitarians”) were members of the Minor Reformed Church of Poland, a Nontrinitarian Protestant Church that existed in Poland from 1565 to 1658. See more in Tazbir 1973.

3This draws upon a theory, essentially dropped in cultural sciences, along which culture is a way of life that is closest to nature (being nomads or, if settled, then following a rural lifestyle), with civilization being a subsequent stage of development, to do with the formation of cities and state.

4 This is the borderline between the archaic culture, based on magic, calling upon „forces” with which man enters into the kind of relations that are somehow balanced, even if not tantamount to partnership, and the traditional culture, characterized by a transformed fundamental relation, where God is an embodiment of force, otherwise concentrated in the power God wields, with man having none of it.

5The authors share the view where philosophy is typologically juxtaposed to religion and theology (where philosophy asks questions, religion and theology make assumptions that things have been settled, and the very question — a dilemma — is recognized as the basic structure of being), even though empirically (historically) the borderlines between these are blurred, particularly if the philosophical apparatus is applied to the implementation of the apologetic function of theology. Not so with Hegel, who states that the subject matter of both religion and philosophy is the same eternal truth in its objectivity — God and nothing beside God (Hegel, 2006: 21). If, at that, we know that God is the Absolute, and the Absolute is an absolute subject, then such

scientists, too. Professional ideologues dealing with religion produced theology, sometimes dubbing itself, to keep up its pretenses, the philosophy of religion. Sometimes, more openly, but also with a pinch of coquetry, it calls itself philosophical theology, which deals with the elaboration of the said notion⁶ and ascribing an ontic status to it, with the personification of the incomprehensible power, accompanied by a barely veiled apology of power. Philosophers, however, produced a knowledge of the world, which is only partly related to the notion of “god,” whereas in theologians' view, it remains in strict connection with it. What is meant here is not the knowledge produced by science, not a knowledge of different parts of the world, but the knowledge of the world as a whole, its beginnings, basic elements and the chief driving force⁷; this “god” (one of religious discourse) refers to the world as a whole in part only (only part of the whole can be symbolically represented in the notion of “god”), whereas in line with theology, God encompasses the whole, being responsible for both the beginning and every element of the world and for its energy, too. From the point of view of philosophy, this is obviously none other than extrapolating *pars pro toto*, ascribing to the totality what is inherent in a part only, recognizing the properties of a part as true for the whole, too. From the philosophical vantage point, the absolutization by theologians of some rather than other properties of the world is far from accidental (and this justifies calling them professional ideologues dealing with religion): theology absolutizes power. The God of theologians is, above all, almighty.⁸

philosophy is identical with religion. It goes without saying that philosophy as such is identical with religion.

⁶For theology, God is „somebody,” whereas for philosophy it is „something” — a symbol.
⁷Kant postulated that science does not deal with the whole, but scientists do not always go along with that, as per some religious-scientific considerations on the Big Bang.

⁸The complexity, and the antinomian quality of the world in particular, is no doubt a challenge for theologians, but it is, above all, a problem. The major issue is the presence of evil in the world and the need to take off the accountability for that from

Almighty, too, is the God of religion, which makes sense — religion is a product of theologians.

Not religious notion of “God”

God was not always defined this way, though: as almighty. The representation of god predates theology and its daughter religion.⁹ The pre-theological and pre-religious representation of god was diverse and complex, which reflected the variety and complexity of the world. Such complexity, contrary to some simplifying theological and religious interpretations, popularly called “Revelation,”¹⁰ is characteristic for representations of god such as those in the Old Testament Book of Genesis.

In line with a theological-religious interpretation of the text, in accordance with the discourse that is dominant in the religious-theological culture, the God who appears there has a personal nature and he is also a kind of “actor” understood in sociological terms, he is a subject in a narrow sense of the notion — somebody who acts, is mentally in control of his actions, design and artifacts. This alone demonstrates how limited a perception that is: a teleologism, which is typical of a human approach to the environment and, quite naturally, to the closest environment in particular, is extrapolated onto the totality of

God (can't or won't prevent it) – a glorification of power, supposed to legitimize doing only good to the subjects (even if evil, then it is for the subjects' benefit, anyway) would be incomplete without it.

⁹Exactly: theology, as the ideology of power, transforms the existing cultural material of archaic beliefs into religion, that is, the cultural dominant of the authoritarian system. It is the principle of authority and hierarchy that transforms and orders the material. Generally, though, the relation is rendered in opposite terms. Cf. “Every religion produces some theology...”. *Theology*, in: The Fontana Dictionary, 1979: 633.

¹⁰A “personal cognition of God” is deemed a revelation, too. This is an aspect of the official interpretation (official religious discourse): man experiences something that is initially indefinite, but the dominant cultural tradition has man establishing that this something is “god,” in the meaning which is imposed by the tradition.

being. Thus, theology extrapolates the shape of a part onto the whole. This “actor” is, obviously, “God-Creator,” essentially taken from the other of the two creation stories that make up the Book of Genesis: God makes man from the dust of the earth (clay), makes man masculine only, and dominates man in a way which is meant to be absolute (power over life and death). This absolute power is mitigated by God's readiness to make man's life easier and more pleasurable by way of giving man a right to use some of God's assets, animals and women in particular.¹¹ One could say that God can be made known only through “his creation,” and this could be taken for granted (the word “god” could be just as good for denoting the world as the word “world”) were it not the vision of the world as subordinated to mind, will and power of just one (“absolute”) subject looks a little impoverished to begin with — it fails to reflect its complexity and antinomian quality. Theology, and religion whit-it, shows the world to be simple: be obedient and the Lord will surely share his cattle and women with you which, incidentally, he previously took away from you.

It is far from accidental that there was a strict ban on reading the Bible until the time print was invented: the biblical definition of God is indeed complex and antinomian, and does not render itself to the above simplified, if not simplistic, version.¹² Genesis juxtaposes one religious-theological definition of god with another, the latter appearing in two functions: one (above) describing something as particular (absolutized

¹¹Later (in the Decalogue) this would be emphasized by a threat of punishment for disobedience that spans three generations, which is mitigated by the graceful promise of a reward – until the tenth generation.

¹²Religion, with its leading function of legitimizing the authoritarian system is exactly such a simplistic version of the Old Testament cultural diversity, which is filled with an abundance of genres – philosophy, legislation, love poetry, to name but a few that religion brings down to the message of obedience with the help of theology. However, it is not the diversity of genres but the antinomian quality of the message (force and covenant, with a stress on the latter) that makes the Book so culturally rich (and atheistic rather than theistic; cf. Paradowski 2010).

in its ideological intention, which is groundless in religion and theology) and the other, symbolizing the totality of the world, otherwise made up of both of these particular reflections. The other definition of god (first in order of the narrative) shows the world where god does not only appear as a subject (and if so, then one that creates after a good model, designated by someone else¹³), but mainly as a symbol, as a “divine image,” albeit one that does not symbolize an “actor”¹⁴ or the whole hierarchical structure, consisting, in its higher level, of the only one competent in deciding what is good and what is evil, and of those situated at a lower level, bound to absolute obedience, corrupt with limited access to women and animals, but who are both men and women, undifferentiated hierarchically¹⁵, and free from an absolute ban on independently deciding what is right or wrong. According to theology and religion, the world is “only the way it is”,¹⁶ that is one based on a hierarchy and authority (God at the top and below him the “power that comes from him,” and still below come the “faithful” and “subjects”), whereas the world is “one and the other” that is both as shown by theology and religion — hierarchical, authoritarian — and completely different, with the parties to the relationship treating each other as equals, where man (the stronger party) does not respond with

13Religious consciousness was unable to grasp it in ways other than that the model is designed by some supreme God rather than in a Platonic fashion, where the model (supreme Good) has no specific privileged author, even it be called a “god.”

14The “actor” is obviously the god of the first narrative, and so is the god of the their story, but that one is not the god of the “divine image”, showing a particular (double, particular, universal) status of that which the first “actor” created (as opposed to the other actor, whose output is particular, like the work of the first actor. Also, it is deprived of the seal of universality; not so with the work of the first actor).

15L. Feuerbach was a passionate critic of defining man disregarding the difference of the sexes. Cf. Feuerbach 1959: 262.

16This is why the statement by Feuerbach that God is a mirror image of man needs to be corrected: it is a mirror image of man but not all man. Cf. Feuerbach, *op. cit.*, p. 131. This is so unless a distinction is made between „god” (a symbol of that which is particular) and „divine image” (the symbol of that which is both particular and universal).

dominance to “the desires directed towards him.”¹⁷ One could say (thus doing justice to some theological settlements) that the issue of the desires is not overlooked completely. On the contrary, it was verbally attributed a special role (speaking of the so-called “Christian love”), with it at least being introduced, to a limited degree, into the Decalogue. It was thus introduced to the most important document of Jews and Christians, but also a most widely known document. The thing is — and here we should rely on the document rather than the propaganda — that the answer it gives (and also one provided by the evangelist¹⁸) to the question of the “supreme commandment” is vastly different from the answer given in the Book of Genesis, where the notion of “God's image” (this could be more important than the notion of a “Divine image” in that archaic culture before it was locked up in the iron cage of religion) does not mean God's power over man and man's obedience to the ruler, and also the power of man over a woman and cattle, but it is also the image of god as man and woman, on par with each other, as man and woman treating themselves as equals.¹⁹ Neither Catholicism nor the Orthodoxy

17“Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you,” says the God of the patriarchal culture in “establishing” the culture, cf. Gen. 3:16. [all biblical quotations come from New International Version.]

18Cf. Mt 22:36-39. about the relationship between the two supreme commandments (or, in an educational version, between the first two parts of the Catholic Decalogue), cf. Paradowski, 2009.

19Both in Genesis and Matthew 22:36-39 „god” appears twice except that rather than the word „god” being repeated (on one occasion denoting a hierarchical relation and a non-hierarchical on the other). In Matthew the notion of „god” is used once, and twice (with exactly the same meaning as in Genesis the notion of God is) in the meaning of love – once to denote a hierarchical relation (You shall love your God [unconditionally]) and on the other occasion to denote a non-hierarchical relation (You shall love your neighbor as yourself). What matters, too, is that the relations are presented in a reverse order: in the Old Testament there is a non-hierarchical one first and the hierarchical one next; in the New Testament, it is the other way round. This means that if the creation “story” had been rewritten by Christianity (whereas, as we know, it was only properly interpreted), the “divine image” would have been one of a hierarchical relation, the opposite of the actual account, which is one of a hierarchically undifferentiated man and woman. The awareness of the notional status of God is particularly emphasized in John:

or even the many reformed denominations wish to concede that — to use philosophical language — the principle of the whole is equal treatment. On top of that there are particular principles, one of which is absolutized by theology (You must not eat from tree as it is I only who can do that²⁰), and the other is its contradiction. Incidentally, it is possible that the widespread conviction (often at the root of a number of various religious reform movements) that the Church “has departed from God” is founded on the intuition to do with the biblical “divine image.” Reformers, if honest in their reforms, mostly do not go far enough. Perhaps they fail to do so with a view to adjusting the immanently ideological function of religion to new social and political conditions because the “divine image” is the very opposite of the religious image, which organizes a “traditional,” authoritarian type of order. Unawares, some religious movements did clearly go beyond the bounds of religion; this was well discerned by the guards of political correctness, not only those who defended unity in the name of the *ancient regime*, inquisitors of all kinds, but also those who defended a hierarchical order within the modern-day pluralism, who tolerated all outlooks except atheistic.²¹ In the above sense of the “divine image” the Polish Brethren could also be called atheists. Socinians, professed a belief in a (“unitary”) God, and were recognized as atheists by the forerunners of the famous, though

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (...) without him nothing was made”. John 1:1.

20Cf. Gen. 2:17. The text does not say that “I only” but it hardly has to; if God is eternal, he is not under threat and there must be somebody to decide the fundamentals – God, or somebody higher in the hierarchy, anyway.

21An atheist is a threat to the hierarchical order not because they “do not believe in God”, but because they do not believe in the ultimate value and reason behind an authoritarian order; if they really do not. Some atheists do believe in an order like this. The thing is that atheism carries a potential for such unbelief, so theists and (theistic) authoritarian rulers want to play it safe. Can a theist disbelieve in an authoritarian order? The theory of false consciousness allows for such a possibility. The Socinians are a good illustration of the theory.

overrated, “Polish tolerance,” by the founders of the Warsaw Confederation of 1573 and the Pact of Toruń of 1645 as well as by the authors of the parliamentary Resolution of 1658 and one of the world's modern “inventors” of the democratic order — John Locke. Both the confederation (and then the treaty and the resolution) and John Locke not only saw atheists in them, but they also disgracefully excluded the Socinians – actual atheists, though honest believers²² — from the pact on tolerance, thus providing evidence that on this issue they had stopped mid-way, defining tolerance in a purely political manner as a pact between the strong enough to defend themselves. This was then a pact entered into by those who provide various rationales for the principle of authority, a pact against those willing to question it as they feel or simply know that it contradicts the “divine image” — a version of “*cuius regio, eius religio*.”

From religious particularity to metaphysical wholeness

We are not going to analyze Genesis in detail in terms of the definitions of God it contains²³ or, to be more precise, one but in fact antinomian definition of God as a universal and at the same time self-contradictory order, which puts to the foreground its inalienably individualistic nature, which goes against its religious image. It is simply worth noting what this individualistic nature of the text and its message, promoting freedom, consists in. Faced with two contradictory principles

²²Deism and pantheism are usually attributed an atheistic potential. So vague is the concept of „god” in these ideological formations. However, the regular theism can have a no smaller potential of atheism in it if we consider that what decides the perception of God is not the attributes ascribed to him as a person (the god of theism is always more or less personal) but the fundamental values that accompany the theistic declaration and those can be compatible with it, such as in Catholicism, and completely contradictory (more on that below), as illustrated by the Polish Brethren.

²³On the definition of God in the Book of Genesis see for more details Paradowski 2011. On the definition of God in the Book of Genesis see also Paradowski 2013.

of the structure of the world, its metaphysical foundation must necessarily be a free choice of one of those as on one only (one being foundational, the other subsidiary, one being absolute and the other relative) can order be built – the moral order of an individual's life and a cultural order of collective life. Integral life both collective and individual can only be founded either on recognizing the other to be equal to me and demanding a reciprocal recognition or considering the other to be an object of domination, with myself being the subject. Accordingly, in the first situation, hierarchy and authority will find limited application, whereas in the other the “supreme commandment” of “loving thy neighbor as thyself” will be just as limited.

The “God” of Polish Brethren ostensibly “unitary” for them as “antitrinitarians” reveals itself in effect to be an internally bifurcated (precisely bifurcated and not “triplicated” as for Catholics) God from the “image of God”, reflecting in this way the totality of being, and not only the part of it, as it is the case in a typical religion and theology of a unitary and supreme God.

Polish Brethren as atheists. The criteria for distinguishing theism and atheism, religious and not religious spirituality

This text is not really meant to be an account of the Socinian theology but a hermeneutic attempt at its reconstruction. First, then, the above discussion refers to the Polish Brethren chiefly along the principle of probability, a penetration of spirit: by no means are we attempting to suggest that it was in any way articulated by these people, at least not in the realm of strict theology. The Socinian theology, seen in narrow and traditional terms as unitarian and anti-trinitarian, gives one no right

to make such statements.²⁴ Paradoxically, the traditional Catholic theology of the “Holy Trinity” gives more grounds (if we were to go into a detailed philosophical interpretation)²⁵ to show the world in its diversity and antinomy. This will not be undertaken here just because the dialectic of the relations of the father, son and the “holy spirit” renders this antinomy rather poorly²⁶, even if, as done by some, the “spirit” is to be interpreted as the feminine, which would otherwise have some biblical justification, considering that the impulse for anthropogenesis came from a spiritual element, placed by the authors of the text in the woman as an inner dialog, which leads to the questioning of the absolute power of authority to arbitrarily decide what is good and evil²⁷. Obviously, the authors of the trinitarian concept were as far removed as possible from such an interpretation, and they were attached to the patriarchal order: in the end it is the “father” who is most important in the “trinity”. None the less, the mere fact that the “persons” of this triangle remain related and possibly build their identities on mutual determination makes the picture relevant to the reality, to something specific.²⁸ However, the image of one and only god, internally

24About Socinianism see for example Ogonowski, 2009.

25The philosophical analysis of the „Holy Trinity” was undertaken by Hegel but its conclusions are far from impressive: God as a father is not yet that which is true (...) Rather, he is just the beginning and the end, etc. cf. G.W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* II.

26Hegel would not have agreed with that. He was strongly attached to his trinitarianism, but he most likely inscribed his notional speculations into the idea of the “Holy Trinity.” These were recently very competently discussed by Antoni Szwed, cf. A. Szwed, 2011: 379 and next.

27Cf. Gen. 3:1-6.

28This is probably what Hegel was probably influenced by if we assume his intention was honest (As A. Szwed believes, ([Hegel] “seeks a total replacement of religion ... with philosophy” A. Szwed, op. cit.,17) rather than theological. If it had been theological, we can think that the point was a reconciliation of the “spirit of Christianity” with “the spirit of the Enlightenment” by giving the Trinity a more universal meaning, if the Christian sense is not universal enough in itself. The conviction expressed by Hegel on the identity of philosophy and religion apparently reveals a theological intention. So, a philosopher

unstructured, is irrelevant, particularly when its divinity is (as it usually seems it is) understood as unrelated to any necessary relation with anything else, whereas we know something like this does not and cannot exist. If it does exist, though, it is as a metaphor only²⁹ of the independence of that which is above from that which is below (in reality a relative independence, but absolute in ideology) with an emphasis on the dependence of that which is below on that which is above in hierarchy. If the unitary and self-contained God of Socinians and all unitarians is something like that, and it is one necessarily shared with all kinds of theists and monotheists in particular, then we are dealing with the same god of authority, hierarchy, the secondary status of the woman and the overall incompetence of man to decide their own things³⁰. Not so if the word “god,” in itself devoid of meaning³¹, is right from the start given some specific content that denies a simple religious interpretation³²; this can be (jointly) man from clay who rules over his woman and livestock (1), hierarchically undifferentiated man and woman (2), as well as the “divine image” (3) — indicating a particular and at the same time universal nature of one of the two definitions of man given above.

In the Socinian theology there is either an internal crack resulting from not enough philosophical (and in a way theological) self-consciousness, or we need to recognize a hedging status of this theology,

does not as much replace religion with philosophy as they construct its philosophical, and in fact a theological, equivalent.

²⁹Actually, metaphors and symbols are related, but this is another kind of relationship. On God definition in that context see Paradowski, Paradowska, 2020: 359-369.

³⁰One that is competent to determine the fate of another here is someone situated higher in hierarchy.

³¹There are those who claim that any name is meaningful and purposeful and that every word is associated with its “object” counterpart with a necessary bond and that the word “god” can only mean God.

³²This is the main point where the Occam’s razor works.

just like Galileo's self-denial or the quasi theological multi-words of Descartes who, like the Polish Brethren, with a radical concept of tolerance and separation of church and state, hit, by the primary status of the metaphysical "I," an ultimate blow to theology as an authoritarian ideology, that is, theology as such.³³ In spite of his multi-words about God.

Theology can be "existential" when the only thing stated is that "God exists" but one can hardly ascribe an attribute to him (it can be called a moderately agnostic approach); it can be "attributive" when on top of existence various attributes are ascribed to God, resulting for the most part from a vision of a "perfect being"; somewhat along the lines of *contradictio in adiecto*, there is also an apophatic theology³⁴, an agnostic one, which operates with the idea of mystery. Closest to philosophy (and in many ways to science, too) is the theology of the work of God³⁵; "in learning about the work of God, we find out about God." Obviously, the work of God, as mentioned above, is expressed in "methodological" terms into a certain framework that imparts on them a certain sense, but also one that imposes some limitations – religion, in itself being an

33If a metaphysical status (primary metaphysical status) holds for God only as independent from any relation, which it can but does not have to enter into, then assigning such a status of "I" (any "I" no doubt) causes God to cease to be absolute or else it must (if we insist on its existence) share the absolute quality with man. Such a God, incompletely absolute, is no longer God by definition. The same happens to a god of any religion when tolerance is no longer a symptom of the mercy of the strong (which is, incidentally, shown by a strong one when the weak one is no longer so weak), but it becomes transformed into reciprocal recognition of equal statuses. This is why Bossuet and the likes openly opposed tolerance. The metaphysical status of the Cartesian "I" as undeniably existing is also incomplete (like God, "I" is not autonomous), if we accept that ontic independence (autonomy) is only true for a relation rather than any party separately. The metaphysical autonomy, too, except that the emphasis is on the "I" that makes the metaphysical choice about itself and "not-I" that is, within a relation.

34On the other hand, it is only apparently paradoxical. In fact, it illustrates with itself the model of unconditional obedience.

35This is obviously a non-canonical, selective typology of theology. One usually distinguishes between fundamental, historical, moral and applied theology. Cf. Mozejko, 1999: 707-709.

authoritarian ideology³⁶. From the point of view of philosophy, this is not a disadvantage (incidentally, it is a trivial regularity, though): we thus find out what somebody saying they believe in god really believes in. Following the Christian canon, they believe in a hierarchical structure of the world, dominance and obedience, superiority and inferiority, what is ours and what is not, which was discussed above. Usually, though not always, they believe the world is exactly the way it should be, as it essentially cannot be another. This correspondence is not perfect, though, and does not occur without problems. The devil never sleeps.

Where there is a striking discrepancy between what the world is like and what it should be like, the essence of faith can better be seen — not as faith in what exists (a thing or something like God). Here faith is confused with knowledge (it would be better to know about God if it were possible) but faith in what may (in an extremity) not even exist, but what is possible, on top of the fact that it is desirable. Take an example: people compete with one another; they say “the world is like this“. Is the world like this really? We do not know this but contrary to Kant's warnings, we generalize particular experience and extrapolate it onto a whole. Indeed, we believe in rivalry, advantage, force and so we believe in hierarchy and power, that is, we postulate such a shape of the world³⁷. However, we can postulate a different shape of the world: we can believe in just and equal treatment between people, no matter how different they are in religious, racial or sexual terms. We can believe in tolerance. Here is what provides a better illustration of the uniqueness of faith: we do not believe in something that is (what there is calls for no faith, or at least not so much of it). But something that we treat as the supreme value, what we

³⁶More on religion as ideology in Paradowski, 2012.

³⁷We can believe in such a shape of the world, thinking at the same time it is insufficiently the way it should be; such a stance is called fundamentalism in a religious dimension and right-wing extremism in political terms.

postulate, what we are ready to witness (to use religious language). The Polish Brethren — the Socinians — believed in tolerance (in their understanding it was supposed to be mutual³⁸), they believed in religion rid of an ideological function, even though on a daily basis they encountered intolerance and authoritarianism of a religious origin (which is typical for authoritarianism), in the abolition of slavery (in Poland called serfdom of peasants), in the equal right of women in holding public office and the supremacy of reason over “revelation.” Each of these articles of faith is contradictory to standard articles of faith³⁹: tolerance contradicts a belief in a “jealous God,” the idea of the separation of church and state goes against the belief in the primacy of the Church and religion over the state, a belief in a subordinate status of women clashes with their potential being equal to men, a belief in individual reason with that of the Teaching Office of the Church. There is faith in a mind that is situated higher than I am, and a belief in the supremacy of my own mind as compared with the mind situated lower than where I am and, respectively, mistrust in my own mind versus a mind located at a higher level; a belief in the equivalence of “revelations” in different religions remains contradictory to the belief in my faith in the exclusive truth contained in only one “revelation.”

The above list of dilemmas is probably incomplete (there is the dilemma of only one avenue for salvation and a conviction that there can

38A model for tolerance is supposedly the „divine” statement formulated after God recognized the validity of man's aspirations to equal rights in the definition of good: “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil.” Gen. 3:22. „Mutual tolerance” is the god to Polish Brethren, and it is not a unitary god as in Socinian orthodoxy, and not “a triune” god known from the Catholic orthodoxy but a d o u b l e one.

39Therefore, the theology of the Polish Brethren is actually an atheology. For more on the concept of atheology see Onfray, 2005.

be many⁴⁰); something else really matters: first that it is “faith” that builds the world (of values and culture); second that the world constructed by faith has a structure of a dilemma and that this structure is fluid – it depends on which positions the people making the choice take and so, third, faith is secondary to their choice. The Polish Brethren, convinced that they were professing “true Christianity,” and that they were proselytizing for a “true Christianity”, were in fact departing from religion, making anti-religious choices. This perhaps explains the resentment they encountered not only among Catholics but among Protestants, as well. There is a widespread tendency to call anti-religious choices a religion (this speaks volumes of the totalitarian ambitions of religious consciousness): principles of equal treatment as opposed to authority and hierarchy, a rejection of the concept of salvation in the church alone or embracing the primacy of “individual interpretation of Scriptures” over its official interpretation (reason over the “revelation”) or treating atheism (recognizing God as not existing in ways other than a cultural symbol) as a form of religion. This too inclusive way of defining religions explains itself ideologically (in refusing free choice the rank of the absolute⁴¹), rather than logically: if something such as authority or exclusivity is an attribute of religion, then logically something that is its opposite cannot be its attribute, such as individual reason or mutual tolerance.

40One of the main Socinian articles of faith: no church including ours has a monopoly for salvation because it has no monopoly for the truth.

41In a *par excellence* religion such as Christianity the freedom of choice, called “free will” there, only means the “freedom” of disobedience: God and the power that “comes from Him” tries to impose obedience under the penalty of death, but he does realize that man not always knows what is good for him (and the Church does) and this is why man tends to be disobedient in spite of the many penalties (such as hell). Atheism defined as a kind of religion comes from the intention to extend the term of “religion” onto the entire area of possible “spirituality”. On the typology of “spiritualities” cf. Paradowski, 2013 (b).

Therefore, be that as it may, the Polish Brethren constructed not only the foundations for the philosophy of democracy by practicing (even if temporarily) adult baptism — conscious choice and equality between people⁴² (anyone, irrespective of creed, can be “saved,” and no one is burdened with “original sin”) but also by stressing the necessity to privatize religion, and thus the futility of legitimizing power by appealing to God, and also by means of their atheist, *par excellence* philosophical “creed.”⁴³ If anyone can be saved, no God is “supreme,” none is “perfect” (if they have to share the attribute of being supreme and perfect with other Gods), and so it could basically live in a pantheon and at the very best make up the absolute alongside with other gods. Within the absolute thus perceived no single element (this or that God) is “supreme,” none is the supreme level of hierarchy and thus no longer constitutes or legitimizes hierarchy, and no hierarchy is absolute. Such God is no more “almighty” than dukes, who – unlike the emperor – whose *regio* must

42 The belief in the equality of people with all the consequences stemming from it cannot help but be an anti-religious faith if faith sanctions inequality. Christianity sanctions the actual inequality in the so-called “temporal (i.e., real) world” professing the equality of everyone in the face of God, thus in the virtual world. This equality in the face of god could be considered some sort of „divine image” from the first creation story, were it not for the fact that it fulfills an ideological function in a unequivocally authoritarian and hierarchical choice (of authority and hierarchy as fundamental values) in reference to a socio-cultural and political order, including the subordination of the sheep to the shepherd. Incidentally, a purely religious ideological faith in inequality (in hierarchy) also has its casual „common sense” references: empirically perceived differences between people are easily confused with the issue of equality especially if, like the difference, it is being made ontological rather than being expressed in the categories of treatment choice, which would suit its nature.

43 What we are trying to convey here, and in the whole text, is a specific and original definition of atheism which does not make reference neither to classical notion used by Spinoza, Hobbes, Feuerbach or Marks, etc., nor, above all, to anti atheist (like neo thomist f. ex.) concepts. The starting point for such a definition comes from a conviction which we have already signalled that philosophy as such is a-theist, while theology is the opposite of philosophy. The way in which atheism is defined is determined by either a philosophical or a non-philosophical (theological first of all) context of such a defining process. Various philosophic and historic conceptual frameworks linked with the questions of atheism are shown, among others, in the book Szocik (2014) which, in itself, is an example of how an ideological option (a theist in this case) influences the perception of the „phenomenon” of atheism.

recognize the domain of other dukes, or citizens (unless we mean all of them taken together as the civic society), irrespective of their place in the particular “functional” hierarchies.

Polish Brethren's theological intuitions and socio-political ideas (such as treating the “revelation” or “holy spirit inspiration” with a reservation, tolerance and the privatization of religion) found their continuation in the mainstream modern philosophy, even if they sometimes were found in religious disguise, particularly with deists and Kant. The positioning of the source of religion in man's heart in particular allowed some fundamental distinctions, so necessary for the understanding and articulation of the antinomian nature of all being. If God lives in man's heart, then we must only ask what, living there, he expects of us? Kant put this expectation in the guise of a categorical imperative, thus leaving much to be desired: transcendent or immanent, God expects not only what is expressed by this imperative. He not only expects tolerance but with equal intensity he expects something to the contrary. He not only expects people to trust their reason but also expects people to subordinate themselves to the directives of the stronger subject's reason and their definition of the common good. The Polish Brethren still believed that God can decisively side with equality. Today we know that with all the complexity of the notion of God in culture, including the Old Testament, the simple and religious God always sides with the “stronger battalions.” Therefore, the theological and political message of the Polish Brethren can be implemented only within consistent atheism — by rejecting the faith in authority and hierarchy.⁴⁴

⁴⁴Something like that seems to be suggested by Stanisław Obirek in his discussion with Jakub Majmurek (Majmurek, 2013: 31), even though he does not draw atheistic conclusions from that and this is why he probably does not share Leszek Kołakowski's doubts from his book *Herezja* (Kraków 2010) regarding whether the recognition of religion “is a step towards the self-destruction of religion.” (ibidem, 30). So, he sees no problem in calling both an authoritarian (official) and anti-authoritarian order

And, of course, by rejecting the very concept of “God” as one that is most tied to the primacy of power. A self-conscious philosophy of equality between people can no longer be religious.⁴⁵

“I am the way, the truth and the life,” said the Jesus of the Gospel.⁴⁶ Had he said “I am the way, the truth and the life and you are the way the truth and the life,” perhaps the Polish Brethren would not have refused him divinity; however divinity divided between the subjects recognizing one another's equality is only a metaphor and one that does not refer to a religiously understood God.

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(the religion of the heart) a religion, including a religion of his own: the “permanent opposition towards the existing order”; what if the existing order is a non-authoritarian, democratic order?

⁴⁵This is perhaps why the notion of “god” gradually disappears in the Old Testament, in favor of the concept of the “covenant.”

⁴⁶John 14:6.

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**THE HERMENEUTICS OF THE SOCINIAN ATHEOLOGY
OF THE POLISH BRETHREN. INTRODUCTION OF A
DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY**

Abstract

The paper discusses the arguments in favor of the proposition that an atheistic concept is not just one where "God does not exist" (in a sense bequeathed on it by theologies) but also one where, despite a declarative belief in the idea of God understood in religious terms, it formulates its creed in a socio-cultural and axiological order in ways that diametrically contradict a view of God seen as the supreme level of an absolute hierarchy, embodiment of an absolute power and an exclusive competence to defining good and evil. In this understanding, atheism is an outlook, holding that the world is built non-hierarchically and there is no one absolute authority. Thus seen, the ideology of the Polish Brethren is atheistic (despite a theistic declaration).

Keywords: Socinianism, mutual tolerance, atheism, theology

Abstrakt

W artykule twierdzi się, że ateizm polega nie tylko i nie głównie na przekonaniu, że „Boga nie ma” (w znaczeniu, jakie pojęciu Boga nadaje teologia), ale również (i przede wszystkim) na przekonaniach, które same przez się kłócą się z deklarowaną skądinąd wiarą w Boga, w szczególności takich, które odrzucają metafizyczny prymat porządku hierarchicznego, głoszą równą wartość (równość) wszystkich religii (a więc nie wyróżniają w sposób szczególny żadnego boga i jego kompetencji do decydowania o dobru i złu). Stąd też w tekście twierdzi się również, że ideologia braci polskich jest co do istoty ateistyczna, mimo iż ich tradycyjne „wyznanie wiary” pozwala, a nawet nakazuje zaliczyć ją do rzędu ideologii religijnych (gdy tymczasem „wyznanie wiary” w odpowiednie wartości metafizyczne i społeczne pozwala taką kwalifikację zrelatywizować, a nawet wręcz wykluczyć).

Słowa kluczowe: socynianizm, wzajemna tolerancja, ateizm, teologia