

СОВРЕМЕННЫЕ ДИСКУРСЫ

Marek Pepliński

The importance of religious diversity for religious disagreement. Are the perspectives of believer and philosopher so different?

Marek Pepliński – Instytut Filozofii, Socjologii i Dziennikarstwa, Uniwersytet Gdański. Poland, 80–309 Gdańsk, ul. Bażyńskiego 8; e-mail: marek.peplinski@ug.edu.pl

The fact of religious diversity is vital for the philosopher of religion but also, to some extent, for the believer of a given faith. It takes place in such a dimension in which the views of a given believer or the meaning of the practice of a given religion presupposes the truthfulness of specific claims concerning a given religion or the beliefs included in it. If now on the part of the philosopher of religion or the followers of another religion, there is a direct or indirect challenge to such a key proposition, religious disagreement with epistemic dimension is involved. At the same time, it is not the case that any religious diversity is a case of epistemically significant religious dissent. The paper, by distinguishing different aspects of religions and functions performed by religion, tries to show in which situations religious diversification leads to religious disagreement. Both the follower of religion and the philosopher of religion can and should seek the truth in matters of crucial importance to religion. The difference is that the follower of a given religion is more interested in the salvific and practical functions of religion, along with the associated sense of value and meaningfulness of life and, to a lesser degree, the theoretical certainty that her religion is correct at crucial points. On the other hand, the achievement of ‘the soteriological’ purpose of religion based on false belief is impossible, just as the meaningfulness of life ‘based on the sand and not on the rock’. It is because the false foundation is devoid of higher value. That is why there is a community of a philosopher of religion and a follower of a given religion to search for the truth of it.

Keywords: Religious disagreement, religious diversity, rationality of religious belief, philosophical and religious attitudes, functions of religion

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The fact of religious diversity and related religious disagreement can be the subject of a thoughtful reflection made from the perspective of a believer of religion and motivated by the interests that have its source in the religion of a given person. On the other hand, they may be the object of a study of religion which is not religiously committed, including the philosophy of religion¹. However, it cannot be overlooked that philosophers of religion can be guided non-exclusively by theoretical motivation, but they also take part in various types of social and political activities, such as those aimed at increasing tolerance and peaceful coexistence among the followers of different religions [Meister, 2009, p. 24, 41–42]. Those theoretical and practical projects, directed by different goals, should not be confused. One of the crucial issues raised in this article is the question whether a devotee of a particular religion can and maybe even should consider the point of view of the philosopher of religion in her reflection on the significance of religious diversity for her religious attitude. The answer to this question requires grasping the similarities and differences between the two perspectives – that of a believer and that of a philosopher.

Usually, philosophers of religion investigating the problem of religious disagreement direct their attention to religious beliefs and their epistemic properties, including their epistemic justification or warrant and take up the issue of weight, diversity of the kinds of evidence [Dormandy, 2008, p. 56–83] supporting them and an obligation of regulating of beliefs by epistemic norms governing evidence². Therefore, it is reasonable considering this fact to pose a fundamental question, which is the second problem of this text, namely: which types of religious diversity and dissent have a direct or indirect epistemic dimension?

In order to assess the importance of religious diversity and religious disagreement, one must grasp the fact of the internal complexity, as well as internal pluralism of particular religions, so as not to seek discord where there is a misunderstanding arising from the confusion of different practices [Waardenburg, 1986]. To this end, it is necessary to distinguish different structural elements of religion together with the authentic purpose of a given religion and to grasp the significance of possible variation of these elements for factual religious diversity or only apparent or irrelevant religious discord. It is also crucial to understand the connection of the separate elements with the distinction between the practical dimensions of religion and between its cognitive dimension. Diversity of religion can concern both aspects, but the one that is usually emphasized by philosophers is the cognitive dimension. The next task of this text is to identify areas and types of real discord related to religious diversity.

Finally, the paper outlines the criteria that the philosopher of religion should take in assessing religion and will answer the question concerning the extent to which a believer may or even should use the method and results of philosophizing in his reflection on his religious involvement. Agreeing with the partial difference

¹ At least three types of religious sciences can be distinguished, namely, religious studies, theological sciences of religion as apologetics and confessional theology of religion and philosophical sciences of religion. For a defence of such a view, see: [Bronk, 2003, p. 75–89].

² Examples of such an approach can be found in: [Gellman, 1993, p., 345–364; King, 2008, p., 830–853].

in the attitude of the follower and philosopher of religion, the paper argues for the claim that a religious follower may use the same rule of judging religion in the light of the philosopher's argument, provided that he shares with the philosopher the love of truth and knowledge. However, the paper points to the differences in solving the problem of religious disagreement between a believer and a philosopher, which arises, among other things, from the difference of the importance applied to the cognitive dimension of religion and the significance given to the sources of religious cognition. All things considered, religious diversity and related religious disagreement are in many respects important for epistemic dimensions of religious belief, but the answer to them will be slightly different for a philosopher and a believer. Nevertheless, even though the philosophical approach external to the religion is different from the specific religious thinking, a religious believer should consider essential outcomes of philosophical thinking as well as findings of religious studies in general.

What does philosophy do and what is the philosophy of religion?

The following thoughts strive to outline the elements of philosophy that have consequences for the search for a specifically philosophical solution to the situation of disagreement, including disagreement over matters of religion. Some philosophy of religion is an application of some method of philosophy to questions concerning different religions. Therefore, to understand the philosophy of religion we need to understand the method of philosophy first.

What is philosophy?

Philosophy understood as a human activity with its results is not one 'substance' or even one thing. There is no such thing as the nature of philosophy in general. There are different methods or ways of philosophizing. It is correct to say that there is more than one kind of philosophical activity, corresponding to some metaphilosophy, or orderly selection of a formal object, purpose, tasks, and means to achieve them. Individual philosophers are advocates of one of the many practices and concepts of philosophizing that can be combined into some larger groups due to minor differences. Among others, there is also a kind of careful philosophical practice, understood as metaphysical, epistemological and ethical research, directed towards the nature of objective reality – for example being, knowledge or right moral action. This type of philosophy was practiced in the Antiquity, the Middle Ages and modernity. It is also popular in many currents of modern philosophy and is not limited to a specific school of philosophizing, but finds its followers in many of them, like Platonism, Aristotelianism, Thomism, some parts of the phenomenological movement and analytical philosophy. Below, a partial description of the philosophy understood in such a way, and its consequences for the problem of religious disagreement will be presented.

The purpose of this kind of philosophizing is theoretical and practical knowledge and truth. Moreover, the practice of such philosophizing and its results should meet a number of certain characteristics. Among them are anti-dogmatism, criticism,

intersubjectivity of philosophizing and its effects, proper justification of philosophical beliefs, application of the analysis method, rigorous language, and reasoning. The fundamental value in the theoretical aspect of such practice is a truth, and the main aim is philosophical knowledge of some part of reality [Pepliński, 2018, p. 41–48].

Some central philosophical attitudes and rules of thus understood philosophy

A₁ The pursuit of knowledge (and thus the truth – because propositional knowledge entails the truth of a given proposition) is one of the two main goals of philosophy. The second goal of philosophizing is a practical goal, which is happiness understood as a good life. Philosophy is not only about getting to know what such a good life is about, which requires knowing the place of man in the Universe. In addition to providing knowledge of the means to achieve the discovered purpose of human existence, the philosophical way of life is an integral part of achieving this goal [Hadot, 1995]. We accept as a theoretical principle, the propositions that

T₀. We are not born with knowledge about the most critical existential issues, nor with wisdom whose truths would coincide with the worldviews of religions. Getting to know these matters is most often like opinions gained through participation in societies (and cultures) sharing knowledge/cognition, including religious communities – like family and other kinds.

T₁. Each of us is fallible³.

From this, it follows that both a philosopher herself and other philosophers or just other people who have a different opinion regarding the solution of a specific philosophical problem may be wrong. Therefore, as the next principle, we accept that in the light of the possibility of error,

A₂ We should strive, as far as we can, to critically investigate the value of our position as well as opposing or contradictory views.

A₃ The realization of A₂ is carried out through the application of the analysis method, the use of precise language and logically valid reasoning.

As well as

A₄ We should take an attitude of open-mindedness and impartiality – we should accept the results of such a critical study regardless of whether they are in line with our expectations, the preferred vision of the world or not and always consider the real epistemic status of elements of a set of competitive solutions.

A_{4a} If we find a deductive argument, we should accept the truth of the position in question.

A_{4b} If the results of the investigation do not resolve unequivocally which one of the competing positions is correct, we should accept the partial confirmation of the competitive beliefs and the justification they have.

³ A fallibilist approach to religious disagreement is presented, for example, in: [Kraft, 2012].

A₅ Both issues resolved and especially those that remain unsettled should become the subject of further critical inquiries, in which the confrontation of the results obtained by a given philosopher with the assessment made by other philosophers and the results obtained by them plays a significant role.

What is common for the quoted principles is the theoretical position that

T₂ The philosopher's acknowledgement of the value of truth or falseness of a given metaphysical, ethical or epistemological position is determined by the arguments and evidence that testify to its truthfulness or its falsehood.

In other words, the primary tool for changing a philosophical position is sound and valid reasoning. If a philosopher uses any kind of experience, then it performs evidential functions through specific mediating reasoning from evidence to a knowledge of something. However, the use of T₂ is difficult because philosophy does not consider only the number or strength of arguments and evidence, but also the importance that the philosopher assigns to them in the light of her current, relativized to a given time, understanding of reality.

T₃ results from T₂:

T₃. The sociological or academic authority of the opponent, her actual rationality or being epistemically equal is not enough to accept her position, because none of them remain in the proper relation to the truth of her stance.

It is the case because even a reliable person may be subject to prejudice and make mistakes in reasoning. Concerning knowledge having an intersubjective character, we are all equal.

The philosophy of religion and the possible solution to the problem of religious disagreement

The philosophy of religion is the application of some general philosophical principles to the complex phenomenon of various religions. It seeks to gain knowledge and understanding of different aspects of religious phenomena. What is disagreement within such practice of philosophy of examining a specific religious doctrine or religious belief? It consists in stopping the discussion at a given moment of the study because at this time, the two sides of the discussion do not have convincing arguments for the truth of their approach. Both sides know their argument; they know the weaknesses and strengths of their position. Neither of them is convincing for all, however, and each of the alternative shots carries some costs.

For example, we may point at the disagreement over the properly basic status of belief in God and ask if we should construe the problem in terms of internalism and justification or externalism and warrant. At the beginning of this century, neither reformed epistemology nor evidentialist epistemology has resolved the matter indisputably. So, the question needs further argumentation, and some philosophers try to develop it⁴.

⁴ See: [Plantinga, 1991] for essential examples of Reformed Epistemology. [Swinburne, 1984] is an example of the evidentialist approach.

Recently, in the last dozen or so years, the issue of the rationality of religious beliefs has often been undertaken in the aspect of religious diversity and the problem of religious disagreement. However, the problem of disagreement is put differently. The discussion is concerned with:

the epistemic challenge raised by religious disagreement: does awareness of the nature and extent of religious disagreement make it unreasonable to hold confident religious [...] views? [Pittard, 2018].

The discussions in the epistemology of religion are the application of the results of similar discussions in general epistemology. Among the recently undertaken epistemological issues, issues concerning the situation of disagreement between equal philosophers or researchers play a significant role. One should not underestimate the significance of the various solutions proposed during the numerous and sophisticated discussions held by epistemologists regarding the importance of discord as a possible testimony that can influence our beliefs⁵. However, the position presented here prefers the search for solutions to disagreement on the way of inquiries of a subject, stressing the importance of a “material”, not “formal” approach, so to speak, to the extent that is available to us in the area of religion. Presenting this position, we could use Jennifer Lackey’s terminology and classification of the possible ways of solving the situation of epistemic contention. As she puts it, there are two basic attitudes towards the fact of disagreement:

The *nonconformists*, who maintain that one can continue to rationally believe that p despite the fact that one’s epistemic peer explicitly believes that not- p . The second view is that “of the *conformists*, who hold that, unless one has a reason that is independent of the disagreement itself to prefer one’s own belief, one cannot continue to rationally believe that p when one is faced with an epistemic peer who explicitly believes that not- p ” [Lackey, 2014, p. 300–301].

Like nonconformists, we argue that there can be reasonable disagreement among epistemic peers in philosophy as well as in religious context. It is because of the mainly non-deductive characteristic of justification of philosophical views. There are many different philosophical interpretations of some aspects of reality, with a partial justification of their correctness. The same is correct with a religious interpretation of reality and of Man’s place within it. Religious beliefs, or even more so religious faith, do not fulfill only or mainly a descriptive function to the world, especially when this function of religious utterances or religious beliefs is attempted to be understood in the way statements, opinions or scientific knowledge are, including philosophical ones. However, when the problem consists in explaining why a devotee accepts certain beliefs, doctrines or religious judgments, answering this question and defending its legitimacy almost always refers to the descriptive function and cognitive meaning of religious beliefs and their truth claims [Kraft, p. 97–108].

Like the correct reasoning view states, we believe that someone is justified in giving her belief extra weight in the face of peer disagreement if the belief in question is, in fact, the product of correct reasoning. An equally important factor is the coherence of the result of reasoning with the knowledge and the experience of

⁵ See: [Pittard] for an elementary bibliography of epistemology of religious disagreement.

a philosopher. However, we hold against them that it is false that the mere fact that two persons disagree does not rationally require any doxastic revision on every part, even if they cannot point to any significant epistemic asymmetry between them. So, we agree with the conformists that the fact of disagreement between those who regard one another as epistemic peers requires some action, though not necessarily always significant doxastic revision in the face of peer disagreement.

Instead of a 'rational action' of a weakening of belief, we propose a solution consisting in maintaining one's position combined with an intense search for a solution to the situation of disagreement through developing a new one and examining the old argumentation. The conciliationism and lowering confidence in own's belief by both sides is not the correct answer. It is because the sole fact of disagreement does not point to correct move of dispute. Moreover, it does not do so because we still do not know which position is correct and which is false.

In the case of disputes in the field of religion, this depends, among other things, on capturing and understanding the current epistemic and non-epistemic, factual basis for the acceptance of a given perspective, view, and doctrine. Besides, it should include both possible support for the position adopted by the rest of the available religious knowledge belonging to a given religious tradition, as well as philosophical and scientific knowledge, if the latter can take place. Another element is the attempt to deepen understanding of a given practice or religious response as a particular case of a more general trans-religious or inter-religious problem. Of course, the key here is to consider the possibility that we are not dealing with one problem but, in fact, with various problems and different solutions to different problems. An example of such a question may be the so-called problem of salvation in the world religions and various ways to solve the problem of evil. It is not evident that these problems are understood in the same sense in various religions, for example, in Buddhism and Christianity, though both religions address the issue of suffering.

Ultimately speaking, there are many disputes between religions interpreted as a whole, sophisticated type of religious life, as a set of practices subordinated to the realization of a religious goal or a collection of goals. What is needed in the case of religious disagreement is intra-religious and trans-religious hermeneutics of the meaning of certain doctrines, practices and the whole religion in the light of a broadly understood in-depth reflection on religions as a means of achieving a particular life goal or their set.

Does this stance recognize someone's point of view as epistemologically privileged? It is not the case, because it does not assume dogmatically that any particular point of view is "the" correct one. We do accept the possibility of rejection of our position, and our belief in the light of the results of further investigation. In the fallibilist spirit, the position that "we are right" in a case is possible to reconcile with the recognition that we can be wrong. The more important the issues are, the more importance we should attribute to their critical consideration in the situation of disagreement. Such a position does not entail either a lack of religious conviction or the need for believers to doubt their beliefs. Neither agnostic nor skeptic solutions are necessary as a reaction to the complexity of issues, the multitude of positions, the fact of discord, and the possibility of an error made by each of us. Instead of

this, our posit requires striving for a better understanding of one's religious tradition, its practical and theoretical meaning, and its epistemic justification, and the relations of these two dimensions – theoretical and practical – to each other. It requires more, namely a better understanding of the meanings of the existence of different religious traditions as different and sometimes competitive ways of ultimately governing human existence.

Does diversity among religions always carry a religious disagreement that is an epistemic challenge?

We are aware of religious diversity. Religious diversification occurs not only among religions but also within a given religion. Let us take into consideration different ways of living conducted by laypeople and monks of different religions, or for example different rules governing the behaviour of the latter, different confession in Christianity or different school of Buddhism. However, do all matters of a religious dispute and diversification have an epistemological dimension? It seems not to be the case. It should, therefore, be indicated in which aspects religious diversity has and in which it does not have a significant epistemic dimension. To this end, one should realize the complexity of the phenomenon of religion and its internal differentiation into practical and theoretical elements.

What is included in religion and what kinds of diversity can appear?

In order to realize the task of distinguishing the theoretical and practical elements in a given religion, we will use the characterization of religion made by William Alston. Alston, in his article "Religion" (2006), distinguishes several constituent elements of religions, which will be divided into two groups; the first contains items that can serve theoretical functions and can be evaluated regarding their truthfulness or falsity, while the other consists of three parts, including practical elements [Alston, 2006, p. 366–383].

One can, like Alston, distinguish three cognitive areas of the theoretical dimension of a given religion. Of course, not every religion contains an attitude of faith and its correlative – objective faith. However, every religion as a practice is constituted by theoretical and practical beliefs, sometimes only implicitly assumed. Alston points to three critical items. First is a. a belief in supernatural beings (gods). The second is b. distinction between sacred and profane objects specific for the religion, and the third is c. a worldview, or a general picture of the world as a whole and the place of the individual therein.

Claiming that religion has a theoretical dimension does not imply, for example, that religion should be treated as providing some quasi-scientific explanation of the world. It is only about the elementary function of describing the world which belongs to propositional structures. The most important aspects of the cognitive/theoretical dimension of religion are: like every element of human culture, human activity that forms a religion is guided by cognition, connected with the language expressing, objectifying, consolidating and communicating this cognition; every

religion is created by a specific 'creed' or creed [Bocheński, 1965, p. 10]. So, for each religion, one can strive to determine the d. conditions of meaningful involvement in it. It means that it presents itself as a rational/reasonable activity, under certain conditions. These conditions do not have to (though they can) be acknowledged directly in the creed, and believers do not have to be aware of them. Whether our world meets these conditions is essential for the rationality of a given religion and of the involvement of people in its practices.

On the other hand, the practical elements of religions include morality and a way of life, religious worship and prayers, as well as the social organization of believers into various groups and institutions. The first two elements are e. a moral code believed to be sanctioned by the gods and f. a more or less total organization of one's life based on the worldview. The part related to prayer and worship includes g. ritual acts focused on sacred objects; h. characteristically religious feelings which tend to be aroused in the presence of sacred objects and during the practice of ritual, and which are connected in idea with the gods; i. prayer and other forms of communication with gods. In the case of the social element, Alston only describes it as j. a social group bound together by the above.

Alston's nine-element definition of religion can be improved. Regarding the theoretical dimension, apart from d. the set mentioned above of proposition correlative to the conditions of the meaningfulness of a given religious practice, one can distinguish k. experiences that characterize a given religion and religious attitude of a given believer and l. a more or less developed theological or philosophical reflection over the content of religious beliefs. The moral element also includes m. the essential practical attitudes for a given religion, such as the attitude of faith or the attitude of daily mindfulness, an ascetic attitude or the one based on a heroic pursuit of a morally good life, ethical discipline or exercises aimed at getting enlightenment. As far as the social dimension is concerned, it is necessary to emphasize the internal structure of religion, the division of social roles of believers, the relationship between the individual and the religious community as well as relations of a given religion or religious community with non-religious communities.

What is essential, Alston also points out that three different types of religiosity can be distinguished due to a location of the divine and response to it and, correspondingly, the importance attributed to the social dimension of moral practices, ascetics, worship, and religious experience. Accordingly, he distinguishes a prophetic religion, a sacramental religion, and a mystical religion.

It may seem that thanks to the distinction of theoretical and practical elements in religion, it is relatively easy to explain the kinds of religious diversity result in the existence of a theoretical religious disagreement. Namely, it would occur in a situation where the contradiction or differentiation of the religious beliefs and religious interpretations of them and also in the case of a difference of opinion specifying the proper realization of practical-religious points of e-m would occur. Such an explanation is, however, insufficient. It is because religions are complex sets of practices that can fulfill more than one function in the life of their followers. At the same time, it should be emphasized that some functions or one of the functions may have distinguished value and be referred to as the primary or only function of a given religion. The primary function in two different religions can be so

different that it only seems like we are dealing with a dispute about how to reach a supposedly common goal for two religions. In the meantime, we are dealing with either misunderstanding or an implicit dispute that is worth pursuing. At the same time, due to the complexity of religious practices, practical means used to achieve different goals, such as meditation techniques or ways of gaining control over the emotional sphere, despite being differently understood elements of different religions, actually lead to the same goal of development or positive personal change.

In order to deepen the understanding of the nature of discord among religions, it is necessary to pay attention to the primary and subordinate functions that a given religion performs. What is missing in Alston's article is the importance of the different role or function of religion for a believer. Religions, or more specifically, the religious life of a particular believer, are differentiated because of the function she prefers or many functions that religion performs in her life. Due to place constraints, we will only outline the division of the functions of religion by means of some examples, essential for our argument.

Functions of religion

F.1. Religious-specific functions.

Sometimes philosophers express themselves in a way that suggests that they treat religions as practices aimed at the same goal or at least for the same type or type of purpose. This goal is called salvific or soteriological. It is about realizing such goals of human action, which, according to a given religion are available to those who practice a given religion. Such a goal may be to be reaching the state of buddha, Nirvana, getting to know God, the forgiveness of sins, living in a special relationship with God. Chad Meister, for example, describes the goal of Hinduism as “moksha, release from the cycle of death and rebirth (samsara), and absorption into Brahman”, of Buddhism as “nirvana, liberation from the wheel of samsara and extinction of all desires, cravings, and suffering”, of Judaism as “blessedness with God – here and perhaps in the hereafter”, of Christianity as “spiritual transformation and spending eternity with God in the kingdom of heaven”. For Islam “the soteriological goal is blessedness in paradise through submission to the laws of Allah and by His mercy”. Let us ignore the question that the above definitions of religious purposes are short and simplify given religious traditions⁶. The use of the term “salvation” has the character of mental abbreviation and simplification. It is not suggested here that all religions are soteriological, and only one wants to underline the explicitly religious character of this group of functions.

F.2. Non-specifically religious purposes of religion.

These goals can be achieved by practicing a different religion or through other non-religious practices. We will mention only some of these goals:

⁶ “Consider the following views from several major world religions regarding a fundamental concern of religion – the soteriological (salvation) goal as typically understood in the respective traditions [...]” [Meister, p. 25].

F.2.1. Providing the worldview ‘skeleton’.

Through the worldview, one understands the essential claims regarding what exists, the types and hierarchies of goods worth pursuing, describing, interpreting the world's place of the individual in the world, and regulating conduct. Part of the worldview is the answer to the questions about what the meaning of life is and with what activity one can lead such a meaningful life.

F.2.1.1. Describing a meaningful life and being a part of it.

Different, incompatible religions can fulfill these functions. They can at least partly be accomplished also by philosophical thinking and practice, as well as by other types of activity. They can, at least in part, be carried out even with the falsity of some claims of a given religion, as it may occur in the sense of the meaning of life due to belonging to a particular community of people sharing specific values, goals or by finding their place in a particular social hierarchy.

F.2.1.2 Providing and helping in the practice of a set of moral principles that guide the life of a given individual.

F.2.2 Organizing the “psyche” of a given person, his emotional-volitional, mental and spiritual life and satisfying his needs and inclinations to know the truth, reach the good and enjoy the beauty and in particular, achieving internal peace and the right attitude towards other living beings, especially other people.

F.2.3 Various other functions related to socialization or satisfying the needs of a given person; the functions identified by the sociology of religion.

About the function consisting in describing the world, we should note that a particular (religious) worldview has two connected but different goals – first it describes and explains the world and gives us some rules governing our lives. This is the function with epistemic dimension: such a worldview is true and correct or not. The second goal of a worldview is to be a foundation of rational (in the light of a particular worldview) everyday activity and making crucial decisions. The second goal may be achieved even if the worldview is false in some of its parts.

Now we can return to our questions: namely, which types of religious diversity and dissent have a direct or indirect epistemic dimension and whether diversity among religions always carries religious disagreement that is an epistemic challenge. So far, we have found that a theoretical religious disagreement would occur in a situation where the contradiction or differentiation of the religious beliefs and religious interpretations of them would occur. It would also occur in the case of a difference of opinion specifying the proper realization of practical-religious points of e-m.

Now it can be seen that the primary and fundamental issue and the place of possible disagreement is the nature of the goal of religion worth pursuing. Stating this more strongly, the realization of which is the duty of people, for example, due to the right attitude towards God/Ultimate Reality or appropriate, most accurate or adequate orientation in reality. It is therefore, about choosing the right aim from the F1 set.

The achieving of the proper purpose is usually defined as available only by means determined by a religious system of concepts and beliefs, which specify

the right moral, spiritual and social practice of the devotee, corresponding to points F.2.1.2, F.2.2 and F.2.3. It may also be that some ethical practices are not treated as a means to achieve the soteriological purpose of religion, but these are matters related to each other in a different but necessary way.

However, the theoretical dispute regarding the manner of achieving the goal from the collection of F.1 through properly conducted life is not so much a problem of disagreement between the religions but merely a problem of the religious organization of human life. Therefore, in this context, the opposition between the dispute within the religious tradition and the dispute between religious traditions seems to lose some of its clarity. For this reason, there is a chance that the alleged and actual diversification of religion turns out to contain elements belonging to F.2.1–2.3 that either exist in different religions or are not mutually exclusive. The chances for this are higher if we treat these elements of religious life as valuable elements, irrespective of their relationship with the explicitly religious purpose of religious practice. On the other hand, it is in the areas of moral, spiritual, and social life that are inter-related that theoretical and practical disputes may arise. An example of this may be the discord between Hinduism and Christianity regarding the function and significance of suffering in the life of the individual and the right attitude towards the suffering, arising due to the different eschatological understanding of suffering.

Of course, within one religion, there may be different ways of religious life or different ways of achieving the goal of the final religion or goals specific to a given way of life. Analogously, the diversity between religious practices or aspects of these practices that are aimed at different goals does not necessarily result from the essence of theoretical dissent and conflict. Conflict or dispute may arise if the realization of one practice excludes the realization of the other, e.g., when the aims of different religions are contradictory, or the realization of one is an obstacle in the realization of the other. Another type of disagreement arises when the religious practice engages the believer's life enough that there is no room for another purpose. We would have a conflict when the soteriological goals of religion are mutually exclusive. On the other hand, there would be no conflict if the intermediate goals do not differ, or are achieved through different paths, and when the ultimate goals of religion are not mutually exclusive.

It should also be remembered that the pursuing of different aims of different religions may require maximum commitment, including the demanding endowment of the whole life, both symbolically and literally. In addition, as is for example in the case of Christianity, participation in practices or techniques of other religious traditions can be understood as inconsistent with unconditional devotion to God in the attitudes of faith, love and hope and with the appreciation of Jesus as a sufficient and the perfect source of religious knowledge and The Way.

So, it is not always possible to dismiss the problem of religious diversity in the way described earlier, because sometimes it can take the form of serious disagreement. This may happen in many cases; we will omit here the situations related to the cohabitation of different religious groups in one society, focusing on the theoretical disagreement. The severe type of religious diversification is the theoretical and practical disagreement about what is worth or should be done or about objects of religious worship. Religions, although they may agree that an essential part of

life is worshipping the Sacrum, can vary significantly regarding the location of Sacrum. An example of this kind of disagreement is the disagreement among religions about which God/gods need to be worshiped. This kind of discord is a particular case of theoretical/worldview disagreement about what exists, and about the duties that govern human life, and about Man's place in the universe. It must, therefore, be recognized that there are cases of epistemic severe religious disagreement.

Therefore, the epistemological dimension of religious disagreement takes place in the case of religious faith, which, although not reduced to its propositional aspect, nevertheless has a propositional dimension. Also, in the case of religions that do not use the concept of revelation and authentic, orthodox, correct faith, we are dealing with religious convictions that are treated realistically as having the logical value of the truth. Even if they are not treated as revealed by God, they are treated as correctly describing the reality of the world and man in the world and successfully regulating his actions due to his chosen goals, worth pursuing in life and because of being recognized as a binding 'real' relationship that connects goals with the means to achieve them. We do not propose to treat religion as a theoretical practice like philosophy or science. However, even when religion plays its role of delivery of a worldview and making life meaningful, some parts of it have an epistemic dimension which could be an object of disagreement and which could be examined in an aspect of its epistemic status.

Even if we do not deal directly with the theoretical disagreement on the propositional level of religion, we can deal with it indirectly. An example is the striving for a friendship of a believer with the Trinity and striving to get rid of ignoring the non-existence of a permanent good in the world. So, there are conflicts where there is a direct or indirect contradiction between the religious/philosophical beliefs that are merely part of the creed of a given religion or where there is a contradiction implicit between the assumed statements, whose truth is a condition of the meaningfulness of a given religious practice.

It seems that even if most of the religious differences are not epistemic disagreements between equals or if we do not know that such a conflict between the actual equals occurs, the very fact of contradictions in the critical issues should encourage us, who recognize a reasonable belief, to make an effort to determine which party is right. It may be that a person who does not agree with us is wrong, but it may also be that we are wrong. Thus, now we can address the question: in the area of religious disagreement, can the follower of a particular religion use methods and share attitudes characteristic of a philosopher?

What is the difference and what is the similarity of the attitude of the philosopher of religion and the believer of a particular religion?

What, then, can be the similarity between a philosopher and a follower? The philosopher is guided by the pursuit of knowledge, stemming from the love of the truth about reality. A similar love of truth can be found among some believers of religion. This is especially true of those who have a distance to their understanding of reality, or who creates a religiously inspired philosophy about the object of worship or the place of man in reality. However, also when it is not the case that

religion openly puts truth high in the hierarchy of values, if the believer values objectivity of her religion, then she should, like a philosopher, strive to achieve cognition, which will provide an answer to the question of whether her beliefs are true or false. This is true, especially when she does not want her worldview, life efforts, the way of dealing with evil and misfortune to be based on falsehood.

The difference between a philosopher and a follower is complicated. We will take into account only such a situation that the philosopher cultivates philosophy as a non-believer, and due to the extent of the analysis required to, omit a more complicated situation, where the philosopher is also a believer of a particular religion. Let us turn our attention to two aspects. The philosopher, in a way, professionally strives for knowledge and tries to maximize knowledge and understanding of a given point of reality, in this case, religious diversity. Philosophy demands an impartial and meta-objective position, examining the meaning of given religious beliefs, their internal and external coherence with other religious assertions and non-religious knowledge as well as the possibility of their connection with scientific and philosophical knowledge, e.g., their justification or rational falsification, or partial verification. That she does not achieve security of belief, certainty and non-conclusive resolution in a given case, at a given time, is not a problem for her. She returns to the survey regularly hoping to achieve an appropriate, certain knowledge in an undefined time, and perhaps – never.

In turn, a follower of a given religion does not face such a comfortable situation, because, in a way, she has staked her life on a given religion. Thus, the case in which she bet on the wrong horse is difficult for her to accept. She cannot, however, suspend her belief without resolving it until at the end of an undetermined future when she can settle the dispute once and for all. If therefore, the parties involved in the debate do not obtain a decisive deductive argument, she has the right to her belief for as long as in her view the validation of her disputed position is equally strong or stronger than the opposite. The mere fact that there are cases of people who disagree with her in this matter and seeming to be equal to or even more spiritually perfect in connection with the fact that she does not have a conclusive argument is evidence functioning as a defeater of a possible certainty of her view. Therefore, if she wants to combine a rational attitude of respect towards the truth with the confidence of belief, she should, like a philosopher, undertake critical inquiries aimed at examining the values of both positions, as far as it is possible for her.

Consequently, she should conduct activities that are guided by A4–A5 attitudes. Maintaining a legitimate belief, in the light of the lack of a stronger justification of the opposite position combined with the search for the final resolution, is a rational cognitive attitude in a situation of religious disagreement. Deepening the understanding of the real disagreement through the analysis of religious beliefs doctrines, the hermeneutics of the meaning of a particular religious practice and the justification of her beliefs through arguments does not exhaust the criteria for assessing a given aspect of religion. Other criteria for evaluating religious beliefs and practices also include logical consistency, the coherence of an overall set of religious understanding and consistency with scientific, humanistic and philosophical understanding and knowledge as well as existential plausibility and giving a reasonable

answer to fundamental human questions, especially those arousing within an individual's life experience, and within the understanding of the meaning of her individual life and fate achieved [Meister, p. 38–41].

However, it is necessary to emphasize three crucial differences between a philosopher of religion and a believer of a given faith. A philosopher of religion can study the value of a given religion as a whole and a particular proposition that comes into play, and it will not be a problem for her when she concludes that a given fragment of religion is devoid of cognitive value. It is different in the case of a devotee. This is because beliefs that fulfill worldview functions are passed down as the specific whole and undermining a fragment of a given religion somehow casts suspicion on the entire religious tradition. Different religions will "react" differently in such situations, and religions which seem to be more rational will be able to be modified in the light of philosophical inquiries or the results of scientific research [Pepliński, 2013, p. 65–69].

The second difference arises from a fact related to the previous one, namely when the believer evaluates given religion, also regarding its theoretical dimension, she considers the whole religion. She does not examine only a particular fragment of religion, for example, the belief in the factuality of the occurrence of a specific miracle, such as the transformation of water into wine or the value of view that everything, every being and good is contingent and related to suffering. Therefore, even if she encounters some theoretical difficulties related to a particular aspect of her religion, in her evaluation, she takes into account its total 'explanatory/interpretative' power. The comparison of this aspect of competing worldviews requires much life experience, knowledge of different religions, and time. It is very difficult to properly assess the rationality of accepting such a given set of religious beliefs at a given moment. Instead, a more significant role should be attributed to the rationality of actions aimed at changing the state of knowledge and increasing the spiritual understanding of man in the light of various competing philosophies and religions.

The third difference between an ordinary interpreter of a given religion and a follower lies in the fact that the acceptance/rejection of a given religious statement (or its interpretation) does not depend solely on its epistemic function, but also on the practical tasks that it performs in the religion of a given believer. In other words, the rationality of her position may be limited due to the interference of non-epistemic functions.

If a devotee of a religion wishes to react to the conscious fact of religious disagreement rationally, she should proceed just as it was suggested. She should search for new argumentation, undermining and strengthening the current one, both for and against her position. This requires deepening the understanding of one's own religious tradition and deepening the understanding of competing ones. One can rationally stick to one's views, as long as one is still inquiring about the truth of one's own and different positions. It can be complicated, and probably reaching an absolute epistemological certainty and security is not available to us. However, the rationality of an attitude that accepts a particular religion does not require absolute certainty, but only occupying a critical attitude of open-mindedness, and seeking a new, fuller, better-justified understanding, including understanding different religious perspectives.

We should strive to change our uncertain epistemic situation by following the principle that reasons and evidence should determine what we believe. However, we should not restrict the set of possible reasons and evidence to only philosophical or scientific kind. There is a place for personal experience as well as theological knowledge, too. An issue that requires in-depth discussion is the weight that should be attributed to the various types of evidence used to solve this kind of discord⁷.

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