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LUDWIK WCIÓRKA, POZNAŃ

**THE STRUCTURE OF RELIGIOUS AND COGNITIVE ACTS
AND THE CONTROVERSY CONCERNING THE CONFORMITY
OF SCIENCE WITH RELIGION**

**Classical approach to the problem
of science and religion conformity**

There exists at present the widespread, however not always critically justified, conviction about contradiction, or even hostility¹ between science and religion. That is the historical inheritance of the 19th century misunderstandings and controversies, expressed most often in the sentence, that between, some however religious theses, on one hand, and scientific statements on the other hand, there occurs opposition. Religion speaks for example about man's creation by God, and science maintains that man is the product of — natural, free of any extramundane elements — evolution of matter. Religion connects man's appearance with God's creative activity, but science perceives here the result of material changes of cosmos. Finally, religion tries, in substance, to explain all the phenomena occurring in the world by the activity of the First Cause, transcendent towards world, but science wants to elucidate each phenomenon by the activity of causes immanent to the world.

Opposition of religion and science, comprehended in such a manner, is of a special character. Namely, it is the opposition of statements different as concerns the sense, subordinated however to the same purpose: cognition and explanation of world. But, the starting point in the fulfilment of this purpose is different for religion and for science. In religion it is the God's instruction about world and man, and in science — observation and experiment. Nevertheless, the mutual cognitive aim may be and actually is the basis of confronting and comparing the religious statements concerning

¹ E. Schrödinger, *Nature and the Greeks*, Cambridge 1954, 9.

world with the sentences speaking also about this world, but formulated on the grounds of science. Such approach to the opposition of science and religion implies, in substance, that both are equivalent manifestations of man's spiritual activity.

The religious aspects in science genesis

It seems to be a paradox, that in the genesis of such religious and anti-religious science interpretation, the significant role played the religious factor, and more precisely — the religious thesis about world's creation by God. It is the essential "novum" in the Judaistic-Christian religious tradition, unknown to the religions of ancient Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, or even of Greece and Rome. In its essence it expresses the conviction of ontic difference between God and world. God is world's creator and therefore He does not identify himself with world and is no part of it. World, however, as it is no God's part, has no sacral character and, though from God dependent in existence, it may be the object of cognition, disregarding — in some however aspects — the moment of its dependence upon Creator.

Quite different is the case in the mentioned ancient East, or Greece and Rome religions. The consciousness of deity transcendent character towards world was not clear and often even erased. Deity was dealt by them as an element immanent to the world, hence the cosmos cognition was the sacral activity, destituted of autonomy in relation to religion².

To be sure, the comprehension of the possibility of world cognitive treatment, in the autonomic, independent upon religion way, did not appear at once, but had grown up successively, and its increase was connected with the deepening of conviction about the opposition of religious world interpretation and its scientific explanation.

The ambiguity of „religion” term and the controversy about religion and science conformity

The stand depending on inducing the religion and science opposition to the cognitive level and treating that opposition as antinomy of two kinds of statements, subjected however to the same purpose: explanation of world, operates with far gone and not substantially justified simplification of the whole problem. It focuses on one only from among the religion elements, namely on cognitive factor, and omits the others, more essential. This stand treats religion as a branch of man's activity competing with science. Proper

² W. Kern, *Zur theologischen Auslegung des Schöpfungsglaubens*, in: *Mysterium Salutis*, Vol. 2: *Die Heilsgeschichte vor Christus*, Einsiedeln-Zürich-Köln, 1967, 517. See also: L. Wciórka, *Spór między ewolucjonizmem a kreacjonizmem jako problem filozoficzny*, In: *Poznańskie Studia Teologiczne*, Poznań 1972, 280.

consideration of the mutual relation: "religion — science" — demands, first of all, to examine what is, in its essence, religion and what science, and to analyze the structure of constitutive acts of these both spheres of man's activity. On this basis only we may determine the occurring between them connections.

The "religion" term — however in colloquial language — is not the univocal expression. Notwithstanding the ambiguous ways of its usage, we may distinguish, in more systematic analysis, at least four meanings of this term.

On the first place we have to mention religion in subjective meaning. It is composed of several acts performed by man. God is their purpose or end. The basis of those acts is the objective relation of man's ontic dependence, as the unnecessary in its existence being, upon God as Absolute Being — justifying man's existence and activity. It is the basis, but not the essence of religion. As far as this relation is not by man cognized and accepted, we can not still speak about religion. Ontically all beings depend upon God. He is the cause of their existence, but not all of them — because of that — remain in religious dependence upon Him. This last is constituted but by the cognition of ontic dependence upon God and its affirmation³. Only man is capable of such affirmation, hence, only because of him we may speak about the world of religious values and of specific acts, which constitute this world.

The next meaning of the term "religion" is religion in objective sense. The designate of this term is not — as in the case of religion in subjective sense — the man and acts performed by him, but objectified in sentence form statements concerning God and His relation towards world and man, behaviour principles resulting from that relation and, at last — rules determining the manner of God's worship. The set of sentences constituting religion in such comprehension does not make, or at least, must not make, a systematically arranged whole and proves no uniform character, from the methodological point of view. Besides descriptive sentences, there occur normative ones, the sense of which is often embraced in the literary shape of pictures, metaphors and comparisons. These sentences, however in their descriptive layer, concern the transcendent, in relation to man, reality and therefore the question about their relation to the described reality and about the way of their verification, remains always a problem. Nevertheless, this problem is the separate research object of philosophy of religion, surpassing the frames of our analyses and it would take up to much space to go here into details.

We may also speak about religion in the third meaning, namely in the habitual sense. This meaning of the term "religion" remains under significant influence of psychology. It is composed of certain inborn psychical predisposition, expressed by the inclination towards reflecting upon world as

³ P. Schebesta, *Ursprung der Religion*, Berlin 1961, 41.

a whole and in looking for the answer to the question about man's life sense. This tendency is afterwards developed and established, under the influence of authentically experienced religious acts, into habit influencing the way of thinking about cosmos. In such meaning, religion is a certain psychic attitude, expressed in specific, dictated by the consciousness of being dependent upon the Supreme Being, way of looking upon world and man's place in it, and the evaluation in the light of this dependence of own deeds and events occurring in the world.

The fourth meaning of "religion" term does not signify neither cognition, nor approbation of man's dependence upon God. It is neither the set of statements concerning God and His attitude towards world, nor the developed and established in man's psyche, tendency to look upon world and to evaluate the occurring processes through the consciousness of the dependence upon the Supreme Being. Here, religion means the social phenomenon, consisting of such elements, as the place of religious worship, the art connected with cult, inspired by the cult customs, religious literature, religious organizations and the like.

From among the above mentioned meanings of "religion" term, the first place takes undoubtedly religion in subjective sense. Acts forming the designate of this term are the most fundamental and constitutive elements of that what we name at all religion. The designates of this term, considered in all the above mentioned meanings, are always the derivatives of the most fundamental act, that means of the consciously accepted man's dependence upon God, constituting religion in subjective sense. The set of statements forming religion in objective sense, bases on the cognition of ontic link between man and God and the acceptance of all the theoretical and practical consequences resulting from this cognition. On the cognition and acceptance of man's dependence upon God bases also the tendency to look upon and to appreciate the world from the point of view of its dependence upon Creator, from whom it derives, that is religion in habitual meaning. Out of cognition and acceptance of man's dependence upon God, that is from religion in subjective sense, there derive all those elements, which constitute religion as social phenomenon. Hence, religion in subjective meaning is the fundamental designate of this term, from which the others derive genetically. The analysis of religion phenomenon, even in the scope of considerations concerning the religion relation to science, must necessarily focus on "religion" term designate in subjective meaning.

The ambiguity of „science” term

There exists a certain analogy as concerns the variability of "religion" term meaning and the ambiguity of the sense given to "science" expression. Notwithstanding the clearly secondary and critically undefined meanings given to this term in colloquial language, in more substantially deepened analysis, we may differentiate but four — paralelly to four different "reli-

gion” term meanings — dissimilar senses of that expression met in the theory of science.

From among those different meanings of “science” term, we have to mention, on the first place, science in functional sense. It is constituted of the set of cognitive functions performed by the cognizing subject. We cannot number among this set any cognitive functions, but only those, which answer to some previously determined conditions. Those are to be functions cultivated in methodological way, that means — performed according to the previously elaborated and critically justified plan. It assures the possibility of control, both of each applied cognitive treatment separately, and of all of them together. It allows also their frehowever theoretically — restoration.

The next meaning of “science” term, with which we meet in the reflexion concerning the world cognition by man, that is science in objective sense. The products of methodically applied science — creating activities constitute science in that meaning. Those products are sentences concerning the given branch of reality, arranged and joined by resulting relation, in one whole.

Science in habitual sense, in contradistinction to science in functional and objective comprehension, means the based on inborn psychical predisposition, fixed in stable habit as the consequence of science-creating activities performance, tendency to think about world, its explanation and evaluation of the occurring phenomena, in the way determined by the method proper for science-creating activities.

Finally, science in sociological sense denotes the social phenomenon composed of several elements, such as: laboratories, scientific institutes, people cultivating science, results which they reach, fixed in print, scientific apparatus, which they use in investigations and the influence, which they exercise on the development of man’s mentality and attitudes.

The above mentioned meanings of “religion” and “science” terms exhaust by no means all the meaning nuances connected with their application. However, it allows to establish more precisely the differences occurring between them and to determine to what a degree their opposing is justified. The examination of act structure, which constitute on one hand religion and on the other hand science, as they are the most fundamental and original designates of “religion” and “science” terms, must be the starting point of such analyses.

Religion in subjective meaning

I have just mentioned, when speaking about religion in subjective sense, that its basis is the dependence relation of occasional being from absolute being. The religious act bases on that relation, but it does not mean that it determines its specificity. The religious act occurs but when dependence relation is distinguished and recognized by the subject remaining in that relation. Hence, it must exist not only as autonomic, however in dependence relation remaining being, but besides he must be conscious of the fact, that on one hand he is an autonomic entity and not a part of the other being,

but also of that — on the other hand — that he depends upon the other, different from himself being.

Hence, religion occurs only among such beings, who are able to be conscious of dependence relation. But the very dependence consciousness does not still constitute religion in subjective sense. The next, not less important, factor of that constitution, is the affirmation of dependence. It does not only depend on intellectual acceptance of the objective being order, but on the existential engagement of the dependent subject in the problems of the subject from whom it depends. There occurs here always — on the one hand — a certain dualism of the two subjects, and on the other hand — their dynamic unity. This unity, as dynamic, is just something what is given and what, at the same time, through the increasing engagement, is to be fully actualized. Engagement moment is especially important, as because of that element, the specific for religious act, unity of both subjects is not only limited to consciousness sphere, but embraces also the volitive and emotional spheres — shortly speaking — the entire subject. In such comprehension, religion remains always in unsurpassed frames of subject as a subject, not surrounding to objectivization, where the extremely important moment of no recurrence, would have vanish⁴. Here is the source of those peculiar psychic stages, which accompany religion experienced subjectively, namely: unrest, joy, despair, fright, quiet certitude.

The structure of cognitive act

In comparison with religious act, the cognitive, science, creating act proves the essentially different structure. However, even in that structure, a certain duality is to be observed, as the cognitive act is an act, in which the given subject tends to the cognitive apprehension of the object. Nevertheless, this dualism does not exclude their mutual reference, even more — it implies the specific unity between them. Here, the object of cognition, without losing its distinctness from cogniting subject in the cognitive act, starts to exist in it as a certain modification of that subject. The way of object existence in cogniting subject is often determined as the way of intentional existence, for the sake of stressing its specificity. It is typical for cognitive act, as it constitutes the object being cognized in object character. The intentional existence is always connected with objectivization process, which determines the difference between cognitive and religious acts.

Structural dissimilarity of religious and cognitive acts

The last mentioned moment is extremely important for establishing the similarity, but also the structural distinctness of religious and cognitive acts. Both cognitive and religious acts are characteristic because of specific

⁴ J. Maritain, *Existence and the existent*, English version by Lewis Galantiere and Gerald B. Phelan, New York 1948, 68.

dualism, as there always occur in them two relation members, referred but different each from the other, namely the cognizing subject and the cognition object and the occurring between them intentional unity. This structural feature of cognitive act is so characteristic, that even if that, what is cognized would be a certain being existing in the way of subject, the cognitive act will not occur as long, as this subject will not be objectified, that is till the moment, when it starts to exist in him, who cognizes in the intentional way.

The other is the case as concerns the religious act and its structure. It is also marked by a peculiar dualism, as it implies the relation of two subjects different, but referred each to the other. It is the dependence of the subject conscious of that dependence in existing and acting and affirming that dependence, and of subject, which is the source of the described dependence and — antropomorphically speaking — waiting for the cognition and acceptance of the mentioned dependence.

Hence, that what determines the specificity of religious act, namely, the based on ontic dependence, dynamic unity of the referred to themselves subjects, preserving in that unity the existential autonomy, in the cognitive act is changed into intentional unity, unity not of subject with subject, but of subject with object. From the very structure of religious and cognitive acts, there results their essential diversity and mutual irreducibility. The cognitive act is not to be changed into religious act, with simultaneous preservation of its cognitive character. Religious act will not develop into cognitive act, remaining at the same time an act constituting religion.

The above statement refers chiefly to religion and science in subjective sense. Nevertheless, their diversity influences the above mentioned differences occurring between religion and science, both in subjective and in objective sense, and the differences between them, when taken in habitual and sociological sense. In objective meaning, both religion and science are the sentence set. From among them certain, however, seem to concern the same subjects, as for example the sentence about man's origin, belonging both to religious and to scientific sets of assertions. As religious statement it promulgates, that man is the product of creative activity of the First Cause, as scientific statement it proclaims, that man is the product of long process of matter evolution. Such sentences — formulated however on the grounds of different sources — have to fulfil the same purpose: the cognitive apprehension of the world. Therefore, it seems to be reasonable to juxtapose them as alternative statements, from which one only — religious or scientific statement — is true. However, it is impossible to ignore the fact, that religious statements, although apparently concerning the same problems as the scientific ones, but as religious instructions are subjected to another purpose than scientific theses. Those last, namely sentences containing the result of the methodically applied cognitive treatments, are subjected to the intellectual need of world comprehension. Theses composing the religious instruction have to serve to deepen the consciousness of dependence of subject, limited in its existence, upon the subject, who is unlimited in its existence, is the source of existence of all, what fully never actualized,

exists besides him. Hence, sentences containing religious instruction, can never be the essence of religion. It results from the analysis of religious act structure, that this essence is marked by conscious dependence affirmation of the subject limited in its existence upon the subject being the existence source of all beings not fully realizing the existence act, that is also of beings able to cognition and affirmation of that dependence. This factor is unknown to cognitive act, the essence of which is constituted by intentional unity of subject and object of cognition, unknown to the dynamic unity of two objects characteristic for religious act.

Because of that, the opposing of religion to science is not justified, as it never concerns that what is essential on one hand to science, and on the other hand to religion. It refers rather to the products of the first and the second, what for religion and science — taken in their constitutive elements — has secondary and derivative character.

The problem of mutual relations between religion and science, taken in habitual sense, is analogical. Both in religion and in science, considered in habitual way, the central place takes the subject, as he is, who performs both religious and science-creating acts, leading to the development of proper habits in the subject these acts performing. Nevertheless, as it is the problem of various, from different acts developed psychical efficiencies of the subject performing these acts, they may be associated — not only religious, but also science-creating acts — with the just mentioned in connection with religious acts experiencing, emotional stages of the subject: with disquiet, doubt, enthusiasm and the like. It depends upon the acts the subject performs more often and to which he possesses greater predispositions, that there develop in him, but they must not develop, on the grounds of a certain unilaterality, either science-creating, or religious efficiencies. They may be also opposed and treated as the contradiction between science and religion. However, when taken in such a sense, they do not concern the essence of that what is science and what constitutes religion, but they refer to the diversity of the way of thinking developed under the influence of performing different from the point of view of structure, acts. The conviction about contradiction between science and religion, based on such grounds, is especially widespread in our times, mainly because of a certain fascination by rapid development of scientific world cognition and the vast possibilities of its practical application. It is to be stressed, that the opinion about religion and science opposition in habitual sense, is of secondary and derivative character. This opinion does not concern that, what is essential for religion and science, namely the structure of acts forming both religion and science, notwithstanding that it results from the diversity and opposition of those acts.

Moreover, when religion and science is considered from the sociological point of view, it seems apparently, that they are very similar. Here the most important fact is, that both religion and science are a certain social phenomenon. But the structural diversity of religious and science-creating acts is reflected also in this branch. It is visible in the difference occurring between

the elements composing this phenomenon. That what consists the composing elements of religion in sociological sense is always the product of not to be restored experience of the subject as the subject. This, however, what consists the composing elements of science in sociological sense is but the product of subjective cognitive activity. Nevertheless, as it is the question of cognitive activity, directed in substance to objectivization allowing for restoring and control of the results obtained by science-creating functions, hence some of the elements, composing science in sociological meaning, are to be restored. It concerns chiefly the set of scientific statements, which are the social property, not only because of practical application, but also because of the influence with they exercise on the development of social mentality. The diversity of acts constituting religion and of science-creating acts exercises the influence on the difference of religion and science in sociological sense.

The conclusions of the above mentioned analyses are as follows:

Essential for solving the problem of contradiction between religion and science is not the opposition of sentences — however of some of them — formulated by science and statements forming the elements of religious instruction, as this last does not tend to interpret the world, what is the fundamental purpose of science, but the deepening of man's consciousness of his ontic dependence upon the First Cause, in order to experience more fully this dependence. Religious instruction does not compete with scientific cognition and therefore they are not to be opposed. The basis of such statement is the analysis of religious and scientific act structure, as it points out that religion in its essence is something else than science. This diversity, but not opposition, influences religion and science and their mutual relations, when they both are considered in objective, habitual and sociological senses, which are derivatives of religion and science taken in subjective sense. One has to pay attention to religion and science in such sense, when we want to determine precisely the scope of the controversy about contradiction between religion and science.