

Stanisław ZIEMIAŃSKI SJ

**SOME REMARKS ON THE CRITICISM OF THE PROOFS
FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD
PRESENTED IN *RELIGION. IF THERE IS NO GOD...*
BY L. KOŁAKOWSKI¹**

Leszek Kołakowski, who was brought up in the climate of Marxist philosophy, has moved away very considerably from the Marxist position of extreme atheism, but he may not be called a convert. Of the two contrasting attitudes which may be assumed in respect of the existential problems, the attitude of the priest and the attitude of the jester, Kołakowski is closer to the latter. The priest, if he is to perform his role well, should take his duties seriously; he should be convinced of the truth of the deity that he serves. In carrying out his office he is expected to be ceremonious, formal and serious. The jester's position is more comfortable. His task is not to conduct a systematic and serious search for the truth: it is more the role of the critic. He is to observe the faults, the nonsenses, and the blunders, unconcerned for the persons at the butt-end of his critique and how they are to extricate themselves from it. The jester need not be a merry clown at all. Perhaps that is why alongside God, the sub-title of Kołakowski's book mentions things that are sad. Kołakowski is fascinated by the figure of Satan, who wants to be taken seriously but in culture, especially in the folk culture, is attributed grotesque forms. Only the devil of the *jasełka* traditional Polish Christmas play makes audiences laugh hilariously, the real devil is deadly serious, since he is eternally thirsting for the truth and for love. Kołakowski is not pleased with his role of jester. But neither would

¹ Leszek Kołakowski, *Religion. If There Is No God... On God, the Devil, Sin and other Worries of the so-called Philosophy of Religion*, 1982 (the English version of this paper follows the Fontana Paperback edition, and quotes refer to it).

he be any use as a priest. He has no gospel of his own which he could pass on to other people. He is trapped between two absurdities, which he briefly formulates after Pascal as: „The basic tenets of faith ... are absurd, and yet the world image which excludes those tenets is even more absurd”².

In his book Kołakowski scrutinises this fundamental opposition, showing the way a variety of points of tension brought about by the presence of an element of religion working in culture. The analysis of these tensions recurs in his book like a main motif of a symphony reappearing in the parts of newer and newer instruments. For instance, the rationalism of science is irreconcilable with the direct religious experience. But in the history of the Church there is a palpable tendency to reach „a painful compromise between Athens and Jerusalem” (p. 59). The urge to achieve freedom in the name of man’s dignity is pursued to the extent of rejecting the supremacy of God; yet the process of man’s emancipation leads to the repudiation of the sense of man’s existence and to his annihilation - in other words, precisely to what man was endeavouring to protect himself against in his bid for freedom. The continuity of the truth guaranteed by institutionalised religion comes up against the opposition of mystics and charismatics, who claim to possess their own, original truth. But without the Church’s patronage they are easy prey to self-delusion. Finally a continuous conflict between the spheres of the sacred and the profane has marked man’s entire history, and only rarely has a relative equilibrium been achieved between the two. However the predominance of one over the other has never proved beneficial to either.

The remarks in this paper are not a review of the entire book, but relate only to the chapter entitled *God of Reasoners*. In it Kołakowski presents the thesis that supernatural reality cannot be given a rigorous proof using rational methods. Here at the very outset we should ascertain what Kołakowski means by the word „rationalism”. If it is to mean the rationalism of Plato’s Dialogues or Euclid’s Elements, it would be incompatible with the practice of theodicy. The existence of God cannot be proved mathematically. This is presumably not what the Church understood, either, by the possibility of knowing God by the faculties of natural reason³. Kołakowski interprets the well-known

² *Religion*, 214. Crf. K. Pagór, *Problem Absolutu w filozofii Leszka Kołakowskiego*. „Zeszyty Naukowe KUL” 38: 1995, nr 3-4 (151-152), p. 28.

³ *Breviarium fidei. Wybór doktrynalnych wypowiedzi Kościoła [Selected Church’s Declarations]*. Ed. S. Głowa SJ, I. Bieda SJ. Poznań 1988. Part I. *God’s revelation*, 6, § 13; See Kołakowski *Religion*, 59.

citation from the documents of the First Vatican Council in the following way: „the light of natural reason provides us with sufficient certainty of the existence of God, a certainty which may be derived from empirical premises”⁴. The Council text itself does not use an expression about „empirical premises”. The word „empiricism” may assume a variety of meanings. Radical empiricism, as for example Hume’s version of it, is certainly alien to metaphysical proof. Even if the parties to the discussion refer to data provided by the natural sciences, they will first have to make those data „philosophical”, that is treat them as manifestations of existence and apply the transcendental principles to them. On the other hand the empirical in the sense of the religious experience of the prophets and mystics is of an incommunicable, non-intersubjective nature, and hence cannot serve as the basis for a proof, even though as a testimony it may function as an efficient instrument of persuasion. But there is another sense of the empirical, as used in the Aristotelian and Thomist system, in which „empirical” means that through the senses reason is able to attain to general and universally valid principles. Thanks to his senses man is able to attain to actually existing reality; thanks to his intellectual intuition he observes the necessary links in reality. In this way the Kantian problem of synthetic a priori statements finds a resolution without the need for the subjective category of pure reason to be brought in.

Kořakowski often resorts to a method employing a diatribe with two fictitious debaters, one who believes in the existence of God, and a sceptic. He tends to sympathise with the latter, although occasionally he shows an understanding for the former as well. Here is how the dispute runs:

The summary of the classical arguments and their criticism starts on p. 62. First in line are the first two ways of St. Thomas, from the movement and from efficient cause. Kořakowski joins those of the commentators who see these two Thomist ways as one and the same⁵. The two proofs are treated as identical because of the similarity in their structure and content. In the kinetic proof the starting-point is the fact of motion, which in the classical formulation is a sub-category of change. The metaphysical principle is applied to this: that which is moved, is moved by something else. The second proof is about causes, and cause is defined as the reason of a change. So again change is there at the

⁴ *Religion ...*, 61.

⁵ E.g. F. Sawicki; cf. G.E.M. Anscombe & P.T. Geach, *Three Philosophers*, Oxford, 1961, 113-114.

starting-point, although now it is rather a question of change of substance. And just as in the previous case, the metaphysical principle is applied here, too: whatever comes into existence must have a cause other than itself. Kołakowski concentrates in his criticism on the first way. His first criticism is as follows; „Apart from the fact that the Aristotelian premise implying that whatever moves is moved is untenable in terms of physics, the logical construction of both these cosmological arguments has always revealed, in critics' eyes, an incurable flaw”.

The observation that comes to mind is that the word „moves” is ambivalent. It may mean:

- something moves itself,
- something is moved,
- something is in spatial motion,
- something is undergoing change (motion in the wide, classical sense).

The first sense is not in agreement with the principle of sufficient reason; the third sense refers to a state, where motion is tantamount to momentum, that is an accidental or modification of substance. As it is a state, it has no need for a currently acting cause, and hence it is not subject to the principle of causation and cannot constitute the starting-point of the argument.

Only the second and fourth of the enumerated meanings may be of any use in a proof of the existence of God. The second meaning indicates that something new, momentum for instance, has appeared in the subject. The subject was at rest, and now it is in motion. This is a definite event, not a state. The new element cannot be due to the subject itself in which it has appeared, since this would be contrary to the principle of sufficient reason. That is why the passive has been used in this expression.

The fourth meaning involves a wider range of applications. All changes whatsoever, that is movements in the wide sense, are among its designates; and one of these designates is being moved (the second meaning).

Kołakowski does not state which of the senses of „move” he means. If what he means is the third sense, „something is in motion”, then of course being in (spatial) motion, which is a state, is subject to the law of conservation and does not require a cause. If on the other hand he means the setting in motion of something, then the physicists, too, will agree that no body sets itself in motion without the influence of another body. The problem of whether this setting in motion has a permanent effect, or whether the change may be reversible, that is transient, not

conclusive, is quite another matter. I have discussed this issue elsewhere⁶.

Subsequently Kołakowski attends to the logical side of these two proofs together. He regards the premise, „if any link in a chain (of movements or causes) has to be preceded by an earlier one, then there has to be the link preceding all of them” as logically inadmissible. But this statement does not agree with the real, known form of the argument. For not every link in the chain of movements (viz. factors giving rise to motion, that is efficient causes), as Kołakowski implies, must have a link which moves it. This error was made by Bertrand Russell, who put forward the following pitfall statement in his proof for the non-existence of God: „Every being has its cause”⁷. The true premise runs as follows: „Only such a mover which is in turn moved itself, must have its mover”. The Prime Mover, who is not subject to motion, has no need of a predecessor. He is the Absolute. The requirement of a first link in the argument is not based on logical premises, but on the principle of sufficient reason, which says that everything that is not absolute in itself must have its explanation in something else. In the event of changes, the principle of sufficient reason does not allow for the emergence of anything new in the subject unless there has been external interference. In physics, for instance, every increase in the energy or mass of one system must be accompanied by an equivalent drop in the energy or mass of another system.

Kant’s postulate, which Kołakowski calls „rational”, that we should look for the premise of any premise, and a condition for any condition, is not valid. It contains the error we have just mentioned that was made by Bertrand Russell. Only facts which are not self-sufficient, that is which are not self-explanatory (and are recorded in the first premise) require an external explanation (which is recorded in the conclusion of the explanatory reasoning).

The principle of sufficient reason forces us to assume an ultimate condition, since the multiplication of insufficient reasons, even an infinite number of times, will never result in a sufficient reason, just as multiplication by nought will never give a positive value, even if performed an infinite number of times.

⁶ *Związek argumentu kinetycznego z argumentem antropologicznym*, [The Connection between the Kinetic and Anthropological Arguments], *„Studia Philosophiae Christianae”* 7 (1971) 2, 277-295.

⁷ Russell’s second premise is „God is a being”. His conclusion is, „God has a cause”.

On p. 63 Kołakowski discusses the „degrees of perfection” argument. The criticism of the form of this argument presented by him is quite justified. Indeed, one cannot leap from a succession of finite beings to actual infinity. However the argument can be formulated in another way which can validate it. Perfections may be treated as ontological components that are form, accident and existence, correlated to matter, substance and essence respectively. For such a formulation the premise that there is at least a one-many relation between these correlatives allows us to conclude that the relationships between them are contingent and therefore, if the principle of sufficient reason is applied, they require an external explanatory factor, and ultimately a Prime and Absolute Factor, which we may call God. The ambivalence of the relations may be demonstrated by means of a method reminiscent of the application of John Stuart Mill’s principles. If there is a perfection that is present in several different subjects, or if, conversely, various perfections are manifest in subjects that are generically the same, then there is a contingent relation between them. There is no intrinsic reason of correlation between them.

Next Kołakowski criticises the validity of the teleological proof (p. 63-66). But his remarks are reminiscent of an attempt to manoeuvre his opponent into the position of whipping-boy. The example he cites, of a map and the territory it represents, indeed is not convincing at all. It does not follow from the fact that the map is the outcome of the cartographer’s work that the earth is a product of a mind. But this example does not correspond to the concept of purposefulness which is the foundation of the teleological proof. That is why Kołakowski’s criticism side-steps the issue and misses the point. What is considered in the teleological proof, at least in one of its versions, are products which are not so arbitrary as the Earth’s composition or appearance, but instead precisely constructed functional systems, often which are more ingenious than the artefacts of man’s engineering, and preceding man’s inventions by millions of years, such as, for example, the electric motor found to occur naturally in the Flagellata.

On p. 64-5 Kołakowski admits that the idea of a random emergence of living organisms seems paradoxical, but nonetheless he still takes the probabilistic miracle hypothesis seriously. He may not be aware of the infinitesimally small probability involved in the assumption that life appeared by random occurrence. To illustrate his view he takes the example of a pack of 52 playing cards. However unlikely any given outcome in the distribution of a hand, there is always a chance that it may occur even in the first deal. But this comparison is no proof. The concept of the probabilistic miracle has been given an extensive

treatment by Father Piotr Lenartowicz SJ,⁸ who sees it as impossible. On the question of the playing-card analogy, Father Lenartowicz quotes Campbell's opinion: „... in science chance is always a theoretical conception; and the analogy on which, like all theoretical conceptions, it is based is with such events as the tossing of a penny or the drawing of cards, which constitute our examples. These observations are not themselves part of science so long as they are regarded as due to chance”⁹. Lenartowicz comments: „Campbell suggests that random occurrence, although used in the vocabulary of science, does not reflect the direct data collected in scientific experiment; neither does it present some abstract notion of such data. It is merely an abstract reflection of the games humans play, subsequently applied to explain the natural phenomena”¹⁰.

On p. 65-6 Kołakowski holds that the mathematical structure of the world depends on our apparatus for seeing, experiencing, reacting to, and using objects. In his opinion everything comes down to sensory perception (could this be Kant's empiricism?). „The universe as we know it is the way we react to our environment [...]. We are understandably liable to see certain characteristics in the objects we perceive because these objects have indeed been shaped by our minds [...]”. „Kant and Husserl are in agreement up to this point”.

Kołakowski's arguments here rely on authorities, not on an impartial and objective analysis of our perception. Someone accustomed to the idealist theory of perception, to the Kantian forms of sensuality (time and space), and to the categories of pure reason may be inclined to attribute the main role in the construction of ideas to the subject, not only in the sense of interference in the mode of existence of content (intentionality), but also in the very component parts of content themselves (perceptive subjectivity). A philosopher habituated to a moderate realism, for instance an adherent of the Aristotelian-Thomist system, has a different approach to perception. He treats the mind as a passive *tabula rasa*, and ideas as genetically dependent in their content on experience. He also treats time and space, substantiality and causation as real facts, not as subjective forms or categories. So in his system perception is not something that is directed chiefly towards one's own person; neither is it a kind of narcissist peering into one's self.

⁸ Cf. *O 'cudach' probabilistycznych, czyli fakt selekcji i odmowa poznania tego faktu* [On Probabilistic 'Miracles', or the Fact of Selection and the Refusal to Acknowledge This Fact], „Rocznik Wydziału Filozoficznego Towarzystwa Jezusowego w Krakowie 1993-1994”, Kraków, 1994, 99-148.

⁹ *Foundations of Science*, New York, 1957, 164.

¹⁰ Op. cit., 121.

One might agree with Kołakowski's opinion that a statement affirming the existence of God should not be treated as „a logical conclusions from a physical theory” (p. 66). However this does not mean that the facts observed by physics and considered in the philosophical sense as beings or events cannot be used as a starting-point for arguments in favour of the existence of God as their prime cause. Indeed, science offers no conceptual tools „with which to tackle [this] problem”, but such tools are to be found in philosophy, which, like science, is a rational method of perception.

On p. 68-9 Kołakowski proceeds to the criticism of St. Thomas' third way, in which the argument is put forward of the contingency of beings, as derived from their corruptibility. To explain the existence of contingent beings St. Thomas postulates the existence of a necessary Being, that is the Absolute. Kołakowski is right to stress that we have no empirical foundations to claim that the world as a whole is corruptible and could be annihilated, and that contingency refers to the very fact that the essence and existence of a thing do not coincide, in other words that its essence does not involve its actual existence¹¹.

Kołakowski mistakenly suggests that „to know properly what it is to be contingent in a metaphysical sense we have to know what it is to be non-contingent, thus to know what God is”. In reality we are able to observe contingency irrespectively of whether we want to use it as a basis for the formulation of an argument or not. It is sufficient to show that there are some mutually related elements in an ambivalent relation with respect to each other. It is only the negation of contingency that gives us an idea of what necessity is.

It is likewise with the concept of finitude. Kołakowski claims that without the concept of infinity we cannot conceive of infinity. This argument does not seem to be right. In our everyday experience we encounter innumerable limitations which clearly show the finitude of beings and their limits, beyond which other beings exist. It is only the negation of these limits that gives us some idea of infinity, but only a negative idea, not a direct one.

Kołakowski's reference to Descartes, Spinoza, and Hegel on the question of the priority of infinity over finitude (p. 72) testifies to his conviction that infinity may be discussed within the Platonic type of rationalism, but not in empiricism. Contemporary cosmology tends to favour the concept that the Universe is finite¹². That logically infinity

¹¹ It is on the grounds of this difference that St. Thomas argues for the existence of God in *De Ente et Essentia*, 4.

¹² Albert Einstein expressed his opinion in a statement that the Universe is finite, but

and finitude are correlative does not mean that the implication of these concepts is symmetrical. It only means that when we use either of these words it must have its opposite word, if it is to be used comprehensibly. Logic does not say which of them is the primary, and which the secondary one.

On pp. 73-4 and 96 Kołakowski discusses the question posed by Leibniz, Bergson, and Heidegger, „why is there something rather than nothing?” and the degree to which it is a scientific question. He calls it metaphysical, but not in the sense of metaphysics as a ready-made doctrine, but in the sense of a particular experience of the world's unreality, and of astonishment at the fact of existence. According to Kołakowski we should not try to make these experiences scientific. They cannot be formulated within a rigorous prescription of proofs devastating in their patency to the atheists. In the light of this discourse he interprets the arguments of St. Thomas and Descartes (p. 75). In his opinion, „they produced no 'proofs' in the modern sense”. St. Thomas „tried to polish up the available conceptual apparatus in order to translate his faith into Aristotelian parlance;” while Descartes „worked out his experience of the unreality of the world”, the non-existence of which „appeared to him a distinct possibility”. Without going into a resolution of the problems involved in the Cartesian discussion, it seems that as far as St. Thomas is concerned, his intention was nonetheless to convince the atheists of the existence of God through the use of arguments appealing to reason. He made a distinction between the theological and the philosophical approaches¹³, and at the beginning of the *Summa Theologica* he observed the impossibility of acquiring a knowledge of God's existence intuitively.

Could God force man, as it were, to accept His existence? In Kołakowski's opinion this would be impossible, since modern science always endeavours to explain things in a natural way. While respecting the methodological principle that no supernatural explanation ought to be sought if a natural one is sufficient, I think, we could still ask whether the methodology of the natural sciences has the right to deny the legitimacy of other methods of perception, for example the methods of philosophical perception? Can the experiences of the mystics and the converts be reduced to ordinary physiological processes in the brain; can the dialogue with the transcendental Being be reduced to a monologue,

unbound. This means that it contains a finite amount of matter and energy, but that one may move within it without encountering any barriers.

¹³ Cf. *In Boëthii de Trinitate*, q. 2, a.2; q.5, a.4.

man's soliloquy with the creations of his own imagination? This does not seem possible.

Here (p. 78-81) Kołakowski stages a discussion between a believer and a sceptic, conducting as it were a dialogue with himself in which the attitude of the scientifically oriented man comes into conflict with the attitude of the religiously oriented man. The main points in the debate concern the problem of grace and freedom, certainty, and the limits to perception. The first problem is how to explain the fact that so many people are unbelievers. The believer's answer is that an explanation of why not all people believe in the existence of God is because they insist on clinging to their own opinion, rejecting God's grace and the witness of other people. As regards the second problem, the sceptic insists on the certainty of scientific cognition within a certain range, but he does not include the supernatural world within this range. I have already expressed my view on this question in the previous paragraph. What has to be added here on the attitude of Kołakowski the sceptic is that the methods of science hold good because they allow for reconstruction and prediction. This opinion is justified because the constancy of motion and the determinacy of the initial conditions defines the direction, nature and time of reactions, events, and their forms at all intervals of time¹⁴. But at the root of the conviction of this constancy lies the assumption that the world is rational and self-consistent, and that beings have a defined nature. In such a formulation, the greater our knowledge of the laws of Nature, the more clearly we can see what Nature is capable of doing, and what it is not. A further implication resulting from this position is that phenomena which patently transcend the laws of Nature, in other words miracles, must be explicable in another, supra-natural reality.

However Kołakowski restricts his discussion to the Humean empiricist theory of knowledge, in which an observation of the statistically observed correlations within any given field of investigation is extrapolated into other fields. There is no assumption here of the existence of essences (natures) of things, while the probability level of a given statement is determined by the number of events observed. Whereas in the Aristotelian-Thomist system of philosophical thought what is discovered are the necessary structures (substances) which are perceived intuitively,¹⁵ and it is on their basis that the existence is

¹⁴ Provided one does not adhere to the ontological interpretation of the Quantum Theory as held by the Copenhagen School, which says that in the micro-world there is no determinism, only indeterminacy.

¹⁵ This is the Aristotelian induction, which depicts the essence of things (*katholou*); as

postulated in a reductive way of facts which constitute the explanation of other facts. In rejecting the opinion that the philosophical mode of thought is as good as the approach taken in the natural sciences, Kołakowski feels obliged to remark that the epistemological principles of religion and science cannot be reduced to a common denominator. Nonetheless it seems that such a common denominator might be found in the rationality of the methods of reasoning used both by the sciences and by the most general science, that is philosophy. Kołakowski the sceptic admits that we have no ultimate criteria for values in knowledge, and that whether a given theory will be accepted or rejected depends on the general consensus of the scientists: hence ultimately scientific perception is a faith, too¹⁶.

Kołakowski's further deliberations focus on the issue of the ultimate foundations of truth¹⁷. He eventually reduces the problem to the question of grounds for all claims to truth (p. 82 -92). Just as in ethics the lack of an ultimate foundation precludes the possibility of a well-ordered system of ethics being set up¹⁸, so too in epistemology failure or inability to accept an absolute reason makes the use of the term „truth” in its semantic sense impossible. „Either God or a cognitive nihilism, there is nothing in between”. Kołakowski evidently likes this Cartesian form of argumentation. But is it perhaps not a kind of wishful thinking? Do we really need to have an absolute criterion of truth?

On several occasions in his dialogue between a believer and a non-believer Kołakowski stresses that the God of the philosophers is not the same as the God of the man of faith¹⁹: „even assuming the explanatory power of an absolute Being we would be very far away (perhaps infinitely far away) from the God of believers, a friend and a father”²⁰. „The God thus forced upon our mind appears merely as a biblical 'sum qui sum', not as the Christian Judge and Benefactor, yet

opposed to the Humean type of induction, which for Aristotle is a preliminary measure indicating the actually occurring correlations (koinon).

¹⁶ This view is close to T.S. Kuhn's methodological programme; although there is an alternative programme devised by I. Lakatos, in which the hard core is independent of scientists' conventions, while scientific discussion is conducted in the peripheries, in the sphere of hypothesis.

¹⁷ Kołakowski accepts the semantic concept of truth, which he understands in a way similar to Husserl.

¹⁸ Kołakowski cites the quasi-Cartesian thesis entailed in Dostoyevski's famous dictum: „If there is no God, everything is permissible” (82).

¹⁹ Cf. 67.

²⁰ 90-91.

this God is not a figmentum rationis either"²¹. I have devoted a separate study to the problem of the God of philosophy and the God of faith²². The outcome of this article was the observation that philosophy and faith give rise to complementary pictures of God. Moreover, as J. de Finance wrote²³, the acknowledgement in philosophy of the existence of God also has an existential value of its own. The certainty that God exists provides a foundation for prayer and adoration, and also a sense of permanence, and a purpose and meaning to life. Also the divine attributes presented in theodicy fulfil a religious function. Infinity evokes a feeling of respect; simplicity encourages us to concentrate our efforts to make all of our actions suffused with love of God; the uniqueness of God calls for the focusing of our love on Him, since only He is truly worthy of our love. God's omnipresence allows us to perceive signs of His will everywhere and in all things; His omniscience exhorts us to prayer and gives us the certainty that His judgement of us will be in accordance with the truth of our existence. God's freedom conditions the sense of prayer, since only a free God can listen to and fulfil our pleas in a truly disinterested way. The awareness that God is our Creator, on whom our existence and our ability to act depend inspires humility in us; while the omnipotence and providence of God arouse our confidence and peace of mind.

After a series of lengthy analyses of the traditional arguments for the existence of God well-known from the history of philosophy, and after an account of the diverse pros and cons in the question of what may be accepted of the ideas used in religious thought, Kołakowski reaches a conclusion which looks rather like the aftermath of a battle-scene. Neither the empiricist nor the rationalist philosopher may claim the right to sound the fanfare of victory. But then neither will admit defeat. Perhaps, however, the situation is not as bad as it might seem, perhaps it is worth while continuing this difficult debate.

²¹ 96.

²² *Czy istnieje więcej niż jeden Bóg?* [Is There More Than One God?] „Rocznik Wydziału Filozoficznego Towarzystwa Jezusowego w Krakowie 1991/1992”, Kraków, 1993, 157-172.

²³ *Theologia naturalis*, Roma, 1960.

Stanisław ZIEMIAŃSKI SJ

**UWAGI NA TEMAT KRYTYKI DOWODÓW
NA ISTNIENIE BOGA
W KSIĄŻCE L. KOŁAKOWSKIEGO *JEŚLI BOGA NIE MA ...***

Streszczenie

Uwagi dotyczą jednego z rozdziałów książki, noszącego tytuł: *Bóg rezonerów*. Kołakowski analizuje w nim argumenty na istnienie Boga, znane jako 5 dróg św. Tomasza z Akwinu oraz argument ontologiczny św. Anzelma i psychologiczny argument kartezjański. Wynik tych analiz jest negatywny. Obecny artykuł ma na celu sprawdzenie zasadności tej krytyki. Przyznając w wielu punktach słuszność Kołakowskiemu, autor opowiada się jednak za możliwością dotarcia do Absolutu na drodze filozoficznej. Broni założeń argumentacji teodycealnej, takich jak: realizm poznawczy, metafizyczna zasada racji dostatecznej, możliwość stwierdzenia przygodności i skończoności bytów bez odwoływania się do ich korelatów oraz celowość w przyrodzie. Na koniec autor podkreśla wbrew Kołakowskiemu egzystencjalną wartość filozoficznego pojęcia Boga.

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