

Piotr Moskal, *Religia i prawda* [Religion and Truth], Wydawnictwo KUL, Lublin 2008, 229 pp.

The philosophy of religion has been present at the Catholic University of Lublin since 1973 when Z. J. Zdybicka established the Chair of Philosophy of Religion. Zdybicka worked out a realistic philosophy of religion connected strictly with the Polish version of the metaphysics of existential Thomism developed by M. Krapiec, S. Kamiński and herself. Moskal's book is in general aspect a continuation of this tradition but differs from it in many important details. It is a sign that this intellectual environment is still active and able to present interesting philosophical proposals.

In the book under review, inquiries concerning religion are concentrated on the category of truth. The author presents, analyzes and tries to solve problems from three main fields: the truth of religion, the truth-value of religion and the cognition of religious truth. This determines the general structure of the book – which is divided correspondingly into three parts.

Before the main body of the book the author gives a large introduction in which he presents the basic differences between the main religions of the world, gives some information about the history of the term „religion”, investigates the problems of the definition of religion and the problems concerning the object, the aim and the method of the philosophy of religion. Moskal argues that a univocal and strict definition of religion is impossible because there is no „religion in general” i.e. different religions do not have the same general structure or essence. The world of religion is analogical. Moskal holds that the main analogate of this world (the paradigm of religion) is Catholic Christianity. So, the further considerations contained in the book concern Catholicism and are adequate to other religions only insofar as they have features similar to Catholicism.

In Part I truth is understood as a transcendental property of being i.e. the intelligibility of being. In this sense every being is true because it is intelligible. For Moskal religion is a kind of being: religion exists. The main task of this part is to exhibit the essence of religion (chapter I), its role in the personal life of human beings (ch.II), its role in culture (classically divided into three fields: theoretical cognition, morality and art [ch. 3]), its historical and sociological aspects (ch. 4), its relationships with politics (ch. 5). According to Moskal religion (Catholic Christianity) is a certain human way of life. More precisely religion is a personal relationship between man and God understood as the source and ultimate aim of human life and as the object of eternal happiness. Moskal emphasizes two aspects of religion: its dynamics (religion is the actualisation of certain human potentialities) and its relational character. The author maintains that only religion gives adequate answers to fundamental human questions concerning the meaning of life, work, suffering, death etc. Another important thesis of this Part is that religion cannot be completely isolated from other fields of culture and from human life.

In the second Part Moskal considers truth understood as truth-value and asks whether we can justify religious beliefs. Moskal finds two main reasons partially

justifying religion: the fact that God exists and the fact that man is a contingent being having potentialities and desires which can be actualized and satisfied only in relation to God. The author maintains that we cannot give a strict proof or argument for the existence of God because among the premises of any such a proof or argument we find the principle of sufficient reason which is criticized by Moskal (in fact the object of his criticism is Krapiec's conception of the principle). Despite this the author presents a way of reasoning (which is called justification and is conceived as „a way of discursive cognition”) leading to affirmation of the proposition that „God exists”. This reasoning is strictly based on the Thomistic theory of the real difference between existence (*esse* – conceived as a subontic constituent of being) and essence. Then the author briefly considers the basic problems of God's nature and the God-world relation. Moskal also gives a new formulation of the argument that human beings have immortal souls. In the author's opinion this argument partially justifies the eschatological promise of religion.

The third part is devoted to religious epistemology. According to the author cognition is any activity of acquainting oneself with something, of receiving something by the intellect.

He distinguishes four forms of the cognition of religious truth:

1. Theoretical cognition which aims at knowledge
2. Theoretical cognition by faith in divine revelation
3. Affective cognition of God (cognition by natural inclination, by love and connaturality, by „tasting” God)
4. Cognition by religious initiation and social transfer of doctrinal contents.

According to Moskal knowledge depends on the fact that the subject receives propositions and „can see” their truth-values. In turn faith depends on the fact that the subject receives propositions but „cannot see” their truth-values. In the first two chapters of this part we find detailed considerations of religious experience, faith and especially of revelation, which is conceived as some kind of intentional object. In later chapters Moskal gives very interesting analyses of affective cognition which is very often forgotten in the contemporary literature. He also emphasizes that religious cognition depends on moral as well as intellectual conditions.

The recapitulation is entitled „The problem of true religion”. After a short presentation of different types of naturalism, exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism Moskal presents the official view of the Roman Catholic Church based on the declaration „Dominus Jesus” and summarizes the whole book. He emphasizes that according to his discernment Catholicism is *religio vera*.

The language of the book is very clear and precise but vivid. We can notice the great passion of the author. The style of presentation, although strictly methodical and satisfying all scientific standards, allows us to find immediate relationships between the problems considered and the ordinary life of the religious man. It makes the book a great study also for people not professionally interested in philosophy.

Of course philosophers will also find the book sound. Its main advantage is the scope of the investigations. Moskal simply considers many problems absent in the

contemporary literature especially in the analytic tradition. He has a great knowledge of contemporary debates (the extended bibliography is sufficient evidence of this) but he keeps a reasonable distance from some ways of setting out the problems which enables him to have fresh look at them.

The detailed analysis of particular problematic points of the book is simply impossible because of the limited space of the review. Yet I want to list two problems. The first appears in the introduction: the problem of the choice of Catholic Christianity as the paradigmatic form of religion, and as the main analogate of the world of religions. This problem seems to be the most important and I think it will be the first object of criticism. The question is simple: how to justify such a choice? The author prepares the answer by means of the following considerations.

At first he emphasizes that the great religions of the world differ radically in some basic aspects: their understanding of God and the Absolute, their understanding of man and of the main existential problems of human beings, their understanding of eschatological aims. They also differ in their concepts of the functions of soteriological means such as offering, asceticism, meditation, prayer, contemplation. Although we can find some similarities between religions they are not, as the author says, „isomorphic structures”. We can also find some features of religions in non-religious phenomena such as communism.

Then the author presents the history of the word „religion” and says that in Antiquity and in the Middle Ages this word was used only to signify Christianity. The view that religion is a genus which subsumes many species comes later and is connected with the disintegration of Christianity during the Reformation and with the discoveries of different, non-European cultures. In these cultures Europeans found many phenomena which had some features similar to the features of the Christianity. Thus the term in question was extended.

Then Moskal maintains that we cannot give a strict univocal real definition of religion. Any definition of religion is nominal, operational and its function is only to isolate the object of sciences of religion. According to the author such a definition is a family resemblance definition. The word „religion” does not signify an essential feature or features making something a religion. We define religion by pointing to some typical features belonging to many but not to all religions.

Finally Moskal justifies his choice of Catholic Christianity in three points:

1. from a historical point of view the term „religion” referred primarily to Christianity
2. Christianity is still a paradigm in research on religions
3. first and foremost, according to his own discernment Catholic Christianity is *religio vera*.

I think the last point states the weakest reason. Moskal does not give us any elucidation what such a discernment is and whether its results are intersubjectively acceptable. Is this discernment available only in a confessional context?

The second problem is connected with determining the essence of Christianity. Many considerations seem to be theological i.e. the author looks at Christianity

from the Christian point of view. Thus one can have a problem with distinguishing the philosophy of Christianity from the theology of Christianity.

Despite these problems (and others not mentioned) Moskal's book is certainly worth reading, as it inspires and provokes further research.

MAREK PIWOWARCZYK

John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin

Philip Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect. Understanding How Good People Turn Evil*, New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks 2007, 576 pp. [Polish translation: Philip Zimbardo, *Efekt Lucyfera. Dlaczego dobrzy ludzie czynią zło?*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN 2008, tł. pol. A. Cybulko, J. Kowalczevska, J. Radzicki, M. Zieliński.]

Since *The Lucifer Effect* was published in March 2007, it has quickly become one of the central motifs around which ideological and political discussions have formed. Author, Philip Zimbardo (born 1933) is professor emeritus of psychology at Stanford University and director of the Stanford Center on Interdisciplinary Policy, Education, and Research on Terrorism. In 1971, Zimbardo realized, along with his colleagues and a group of students, the famous Stanford Prison Experiment (SPE), which made him one of the most influential contemporary American psychologists. He is also co-author of *Psychology and Life*, a popular handbook, translated into many languages. In 2004 he became an expert witness for Ivan „Chip” Frederic, one of American guards in the Iraqi prison Abu Ghraib.

What decided the success of *The Lucifer Effect*? Firstly, the subject is fascinating—the evil embodied in human nature. Secondly, like the majority of publications from the domain of social psychology, *The Lucifer Effect* reads like a novel, because it is written in an interesting, informal way, with a great number of case studies. Moreover, there exists on the Internet an attractive website, www.lucifereffect.com, which contains not only fragments of the book (preface, chapter list, subject index), but also book reviews, reader feedback and „The Lucifer Effect Theology Blog”. [„Our hope is to expand the range of theological perspectives presented here. We start with »Lucifer Goes to Church« and we invite input from all interested parties so that soon Lucifer can also go to Synagogue, Mosque, and Temple” [www.lucifereffect.com, 15.05.2009]. Moreover, it contains information about the movie „Quiet Rage” about SPE, and social projects supported by Zimbardo, especially the educational „Hero Project” [cf. „Our fundamental conception is to instill in young people the self-belief that »I am a hero-in-waiting«. Further, to internalize the perspective, »That when I become aware of the need to act on behalf of others needing help or being the victim of evil forces, I will be ready and able to take the necessary action«”; cf. www.lucifereffect.com, 15.05.2009].

Copyright of Forum Philosophicum: International Journal for Philosophy is the property of Forum Philosophicum and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.