
ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY WITH REGARD TO HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION

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Abstract

The paper deals with curricular relationships between Philosophy and religion in the context of education at high schools. The relationship between religion and Philosophy can be described in terms of a comprehensive effort devoted to two disciplines. Religion has common intersections with Philosophy as a discipline of general management. These intrusions have set their fields and non-empty subsets of mutual relations in high schools. Fairly comprehensive conflict areas are just a reflection of the extensive dual character nature of Science departments. Didactics of Philosophy is relatively underestimated. Lacking enough reputable publications, the author is confined to a few publications on the issue of the relationship between Philosophy and other disciplines within teaching. It appears that there is no one in our country with even a superficial attempt to map out the overall curricular relations between religion, Philosophy and other subjects in the secondary education.

Keywords: didactics, philosophy, religion, high schools

1. Introduction

Education systems, the goal of which is to form fully educated school graduates from all types of schools, ready to fulfil their future professional and personal roles in the society, should primarily address current issues [1, 2]. Every society has its own culture and cultural influences with a specific impact on individual. These may vary and are reflected in the way of life of human individuals and societies [3].

The curricular relations between religion and Philosophy are no stronger than those between Philosophy and other subjects. It certainly cannot be maintained that religion is closer to Philosophy. Heidegger has the same opinion. First, he says that Theology is science and not philosophy. Heidegger is in favour of the specific nature of the relationship between Theology and Philosophy, which is also in some respects close to the separation of Philosophy

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and Theology, as it was done by Duns Scotus. “*Theology is a positive science, and as such, therefore, is absolutely different from philosophy*” [4] which, as a science is closer to Chemistry or Mathematics than to Philosophy. “*Professor Macquarrie delineated what he considered to be the major similarities between Bultman’s theology and philosophy of Heidegger.*” [5]

2. Some notes on ancient philosophy

There are many topics in the curricula of both subjects that have common points of contact. *Theologia naturalis* perceives a common subject with the revealed theology, but without faith as a *conditio sine qua non*, and fundamentally outside of Scripture and tradition [6]. The philosophical discipline in question here is part of Metaphysics. In a similar fashion, Ethics has a joint object of investigation with Moral theology. The theory of Morality changes membership to an elementary discipline according to whether God’s standards are unreservedly accepted or not. Social philosophy itself shares many common points with the Social Doctrine of the Church (i.e. the Roman Catholic Church). Not only from a systematic, but also from a historical perspective, there can be found many similarities. But we cannot speak about the origin of Theology from the general framework of episteme. With reference to the time before the existence of Christianity, we can only talk about the relationships to natural religion and the statements of the philosophers who engaged it. According to the classical interpretation, Protagoras built on the possibility of knowing the gods primly, but Suvák believes “*that Protagoras did not formulate sceptical objections to cognition of gods, but he could only try to anthropologically define them, which indicates the need to appoint a new place for man*” [7]. Initially, there had been theological currents in Christian history that rejected worldly scholarship (Tertullian, 155-222). Another important point to remember is that the history of the relationship between Philosophy and Theology is devious. The ancient and medieval relations between the two disciplines often changed in a discontinuous fashion, and the volatility of their mutual relationship has survived into the modern times.

Already the early years of Christian philosophy contain a number of issues that are of theological nature or in a thematic compliance with it. “*The greatness of man created in the image of God was also emphasized by the fathers, when they said that man is a unity of spirit, soul and body.*” [8]

Many common elements can be found in the philosophy of Aurelius Augustinus (354-430). This famous *Doctor gratiae* devotes a large part of his work to drawing up the original history of Christian philosophy (or rather, Philosophy of history) in his book *De civitate Dei*. Through the image of the original sin of Adam and Eve, the book of Genesis has a substantial impact on Philosophy as we can see in the philosophical reflections of Augustine. The tree itself is a symbol of easily attainable test, the first human death, loss of the possibility to stay in Paradise. Instead, the words of judgment quickly find their fulfilment – you surely die – which constitutes an important moment for

soteriology. According to Augustine, God did not create people as angels who cannot die even if they committed a sin [9]. Being under the influence of Neo-Platonism, Augustine stopped perceiving the bipolarity between good and evil as two variables - as Manichaeism understood it - and instead he considered evil as deprivation, the lack of goodness, which is the result of an inherent apostasy from God [10]. Augustine, however, differentiates between evil as sin - falling away from God - and external evil, which is a possibility of an accident, illness, misfortune, and certainty of death. External evil is evil as a consequence of apostasy from God. Augustine's basic conception of the Philosophy of history differentiates between the devil's communion and the communion of God, the effects of which carry the whole history of salvation, forming the backbone of world history. It cannot be specifically identified who belongs to which communion, and God's communion absolutely cannot be identified as the Church fellowship. "*The Church - Regnum Dei - is mixed with good and evil through the spiritual government of Christ in us and thereby peace can be achieved.*" [11] We know only their founders - Cain and Abel. The fellowship of God is a communion of ethically conscious people led by Christ.

Augustine as a philosopher and theologian discusses the issue of predestination, too. According to him, the reprobate person deserves punishment, while "*God is merciful to ones and fair to others. Impossibility of understanding leads Augustine eventually to silence in front of the Mystery.*" [12] Only the omniscient knowledge of God knows who is and who is not pardoned. By the way, the question is not consistently dealt within Augustine's work. An important factor is the scarcity of human need in addressing the issues at stake.

3. Issue of scholastic philosophy

Intersections of Philosophy and Theology can be discerned also in Peter Abelard (1079-1142). Particularly interesting for him was the area of Biblical hermeneutics, namely the theory of errors in Scripture. "*In his book Sic et Non, the combative Frenchman Peter Abelard pointed out that the writings of the Church Fathers were not always consistent.*" [13] There are some statements of the saints and the Bible that are simply contradictory. However, there is no need to condemn the authors, but beg for more grace in understanding. We lack that spirit, under the guidance of which the authors wrote, so we cannot fully understand their writings. Various expressions were often changed for synonyms not to make it boring, and now it can cause inconsistencies. In Latin, occasionally arose the so-called neoplasms, unsteady words, and this may cause confusion in meaning. One must love truth in the words, not the words themselves. The mistakes were caused by putting the names of saints as the authors of the apocrypha. In the texts of Scripture there are many errors due to transcribers. There is also a dispute about how to determine the time when Christ was crucified as the numeral six was mistakenly replaced by transcribers with the numeral three. The transcribers mentioned sometimes all views and did not

identify who said it. The Scripture itself would sometimes call Saint Joseph the father of Jesus [14]. According to Abelard, the Holy Spirit did not always reveal everything. Even the Apostle Peter himself believed delusion about the validity of the Law of Moses for pagan Christians. The Holy Fathers may be wrong so they should be critically compared with Scripture. In his treatise *Collationes sive Dialogus inter philosophum, iudaeum et christianum*, Abelard addressed the issues of inter-religious dialogue. “Abelard’s philosophical reflection of religious dialogue was transformed into problematisation and possible addressing of specific philosophical and theological issues.” [15] This work presents the dispute between a philosophizing pagan, a Jew and a Christian. All three recognized monotheism. Similarly, all three believed in the immortal soul. Abelard points out here that the philosopher may have had natural sense arguments, by means of which one recognizes the usefulness of Philosophy to Theology. Here, too, he points out to the need for an allegorical interpretation of Scripture. When it came to supernatural reality, however, he did not consider Philosophy as a sufficient source of knowledge. Philosophy is useful in its focus on examining the human intentions of ethical deeds (an emphasis shared with Moral theology), which, according to Abelard is essential for our appreciation of Philosophy.

In a high school educational context, it is also possible to examine the relationship between Theology and Philosophy in the scholastic thought. The thinking of the early scholastics dealt with issues on the border of Theology and Philosophy. Among these, for example, was the issue of God’s omnipotence. “Among the most famous products of debates on omnipotence of early scholasticism there are works of Anselm of Canterbury (especially *Proslogion*, *De libero arbitrio* and *Cur Deus Homo*) and Peter Damian (*De divina omnipotentia*).” [16] In the context of a religious class (religious education), we can also easily recall that the Church dogma of transubstantiation caused by philosophical and theological disputes in scholasticism. It was the well-known dispute between Paschasius Radbertus (785-865) and Ratramnus of Corbie (died around 868 AD). Ratramnus’ opinions survived until the 11th century when they were picked up and further developed by Berengar of Tours (999-1088). The use of philosophical arguments in Theology was differently valued by different scholastics. On one side were the advocates of a widespread use of philosophical argumentation and different lexical means in theological thought. In particular, they were Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) and Berengar of Tours. On the other side, there were the so-called moderate anti-dialecticians. Lanfranc of Pavia (1010-1089) used dialectics in a limited way. When doing Theology, he tried not to use it at all, but sometimes he could not avoid it. Peter Damian (1007-1072) was another moderate anti-dialectician. He elaborated on the thesis of the leading role of Scripture. Dialectic arguments, according to Damian, cannot be uniformly applied to theological issues. He himself drew up the argument about *Ancilla theologiae*. Philosophy cannot command Theology, but in doctrinal matters Philosophy should unconditionally accept the authority of Theology. He was therefore against the use of philosophical dialectics for

commenting on the theological issues, but otherwise he liked to use dialectics (as an aid in argumentation). The last group were the fanatical anti-dialecticians who were a priori against any use of Philosophy in Theology. They were fully subordinated to Scripture and looked with contempt at any secular discipline. Such extremist attitudes were also insufficient for practical theology itself. On the other hand, it was thanks to these fanatical anti-dialecticians that some of the works from the period of patristics were preserved, as the anti-dialecticians helped to raise interest in them. Such antagonistic views were held by Othloh of Saint Emmeram (1010-1072) and Manegold of Lautenbach (1030-1103).

The *Doctor Angelicus* – Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), deals with the relationship between Philosophy and Theology, too. He posits the question of whether it is sufficient to study Philosophy to answer any serious questions. Aristotle perceives Theology as a part of Metaphysics (first philosophy), and this framework is sufficient to draw up answers. Aquinas worked during the time when there already existed Aristotle's translations by William of Moerbeke (1215-1286). Aquinas notes that the problems can be viewed from multiple angles. Questions regarding human salvation require revealed theology. Philosophy is of little (if any) help here. Nevertheless, the study of Philosophy is recommended to Christians. *“But when using Philosophy, theologian can commit errors in a few cases. Aquinas explained it on the example of an incorrect transposition of the arguments incompatible with the faith done by e.g. Origenes.”* [17] While revelation theology is necessary for salvation, Philosophy is useful for other wisdom, as well as to help us with better understanding Theology itself. Aquinas acknowledges that the dual truths, philosophical and theological, complement each other. Both truths are indeed independent, but do not contradict each other, and are even complementary. *“Thomas as the follower of Boethius and his layout of theoretical sciences clearly distinguishes between the Theology of the Holy Scriptures (theologia Sacrae Scripturae), whose subject is God and dealing with God, as a reflection of himself and philosophical theology (theologia philosophica), which deals with God to a measure we can know him.”* [18]

Aquinas places the human being among animals, but with one major difference: he has body and soul. The human person's soul is of *“of the same nature as an angel. Unlike the latter, it is incomplete. In a state of separation the soul cannot realize their rational knowledge in a normal, natural way.”* [19] The soul is connected with the physical form of the body.

The decades after the death of Aquinas were not friendly to Philosophy in a theological environment, especially if it referred in any way to Aristotle. Based on the ideological positions of the Latin Averroists, such as Siger of Brabant (1240-1284) and Boethius of Dacia (end of 13th century), the Parisian bishop Etienne Stephen Tempier (died in 1279) condemned 219 philosophical theses, mostly from Aristotle and Averroes. In a similar fashion, Robert Kilwardby of Canterbury (1215-1279) also condemned a selection of these statements. The arguments of the above mentioned philosophers in some cases actually worked against Christianity (the soul ceases to exist with the death of the body; the

human being has no free will; the world is eternal and was not created; the world is influenced by celestial bodies). Brabant condemned Aquinas, who was accused to have falsified Aristotle for the sake of faith. The intervention of the bishops was adhered to for years as antithomistic. The dissemination of *Summa theologica* was not authorized. “*It seems that ethical opinions of Boethius of Dacia, and reaction from theologians got into an argument because two types of wisdom encountered each other, together with the joint concepts of bliss or blissful life.*” [20] It is, on one hand, a philosophical wisdom and, on the other, the wisdom that comes from the New Testament.

The reaction of Duns Scotus (1266-1308) can best be described as an approach to the issue based on the separation of Philosophy from Theology. Scotus reduced Philosophy to Ontology – i.e. the examination of being-as-being. Philosophy has not in its capacity to deal with God. Theology itself is not considered a theoretical science, but a practical science that deals with matters of faith. The relationship between them is complementary. “*Complementarity of Theology and Metaphysics is based in the notion of being and its modal explication. The concept of an infinite being culminates in metaphysical polling and our theology that naturally acquired notion is expressed by contents sourcing from revelation because in Metaphysics the concept of ‘infinite being’ remains relatively empty.*” [21]

William of Ockham (1287-1347) saw an even greater gap between Philosophy and Theology. In his opinion, Theology is not any science, since something that is based on faith, cannot be a science. Philosophy and Theology are separated disciplines that cannot help each other out with argumentation. Theology in and of itself refers to faith. It has no verification function and in terms of knowledge it is agnostic. Its importance lies in the role it plays in the believers’ lives, it is completely practical and useful. Articles of faith that cannot be proved can be postulates, in which the faithful people believe, but those cannot be the subject of Science. Pure theological examination must be separated from Philosophy.

This critical ‘separationist’ view was not shared by everyone, however. The so-called ‘reformation humanists’ of the 16th century – Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536), Phillip Melanchthon (1497-1560), Leonard Stoeckel (1510-1560), etc. – believed in a closer relationship between sciences and Theology. This is especially obvious in Stoeckel’s concept of ‘docta pietas’, clearly discernible in his school regulations *Leges Scholae Bartphensis* [22]. In fact, “Stoeckel placed education, including the study of sciences, among good works, arguing that nothing really compares in value to it, and that the person who trusts in God needs nothing more” [23]. In his *Catechism* (1556), Stoeckel argued: “what is most important in all of this – *they are our guides and aids in relation to a real power, that is, the true knowledge of God and the imparting of knowledge to others.* This unique usefulness and immense dignity of sciences should also exhort the parents themselves to lead their children to sciences from an early age and to express their piety to God in the teaching and cultivation of sciences. For though people serve God by performing other duties, when they do them for

God's sake, yet, in comparison with this way of life there cannot be a more significant one, nor a more needed one, nor one that pleases God more; and those, who hold on to it, should not be lacking sustenance, if they trust in God." [23, p. 169].

4. Comments from the side of modern philosophy

As a crucial theological topic, the relationship of God and man is examined by some philosophers of the modern era, too. Within the teaching of religion in schools, selected counter-examples to Christian positions may be presented. One of them is Arthur Schopenhauer's opposing view on the issue of the meaning of life. While Christianity refers to the meaning of human life in connection with salvation and communion with God - when humans rest in God's presence in Paradise, being perfected by His glory - Schopenhauer asserts that human life has no meaning. Life has no meaning and we live in the worst of all possible worlds, according to Schopenhauer's grim view of reality. The world is controlled by a blind will and has no meaning of its own, no the starting point, or any destination. Though neither effective, nor desirable, Schopenhauer recognizes suicide as one of the possible ways of resolving this situation. As is commonly known, Christian religion condemns suicide as sin in any form. It represents a complete antipode to the Christian view of the meaning of life as an interplay and communion of man and God.

In contrast to Schopenhauer, the philosophy of Soren Kierkegaard is in close agreement with the Christian theological approach to the meaning of life, maintaining that the optimal way of life's fulfilment can only be found in the relationship between the human individual and God. "*A development of interest in Kierkegaard can be observed in the 1960-s.*" [24] Although he did not perceive himself as a philosopher, the nescience of his work in Philosophy of religion today would amount to a great ignorance. In his work, Kierkegaard anticipated the emergence of existentialism. Human existence according to this type of thinking does not mean to exist in terms of one's physical being. Neither was he a philosopher of a system, nor a scientific thinker, but his philosophical analysis of the relationship of God and man brought the first core benefits. Kierkegaard appeals to man's formation as a series of discrete moments, events. "*The event is normally understood as a time slice, as something that would forever remain in the memory of us or what is yet to come; we see it as some time episode.*" [25] The change in consciousness of the human being takes place similarly to the Hinayana philosophical school of Sarvastivada. There are many discrete separate elements of perception here that form a consistent stream of consciousness.

How does Kierkegaard perceive existence? To exist is to seek, want, worry, love, hate, fear, rejoice, try, be bored, etc., thus he is aware of the different activities that are unique to humans and that shape one's human identity. One should concentrate on philosophizing about one's own existence, though it may also be applied to other persons (examination and results).

Experience processed through an inner reflection is crucial here. There is no true understanding without this experiential awareness. Thus, along with many intellectuals of the 20th century, we can consider “*Kierkegaard’s attack on idealism to be his key legacy for the religious-philosophical reflection of the 20th century*”, which will help us face the challenge of forgetting the significance of one’s own existence [26]. To be is actually becoming (our human identity is ‘emerging’). Becoming a human being involves a constant change. The human being becomes always something new, it is a discrete process. Short times spans are irrational moments in the process of becoming; they are God’s gift to the believer. As the lightning illuminates the sky, such moments illuminate the dark depths of the soul. Only a deeply religious human being can truly experience such moments. This human individual does not bother about the worries of everyday life. Important to him is his formation, his future. Human freedom is a constant, and its action is the Kierkegaardian ‘either – or’ [27]. There is no need to seek the truth. One should instead perceive life in an acute experiential awareness. The specificity of life and all the problems of life are to be preferred to the scientific evidence. Unlike the prevalent philosophical outlook of his day, “*Kierkegaard rejects Hegelian deductive intellectualism, emphasizing instead a concrete, personal human individuality in its immediate existence. The alienation on existential level might be overcome solely in an encounter with the reality of God in a ‘leap of faith’, that is, in a painful inner decision to belong totally and unreservedly to God, who meets man in the divinely pronounced Word (as Logos incarnate).*” [28]

The highest passion of man is faith. Human life without God is empty. Faith in God enables one to move forward, to go on. Therefore, faith is not to remain undeveloped. The relationship with God will not be disclosed either by the Church or the priests, but it must be personal. Before coming to faith, one feels anxiety in the religious sense. This personal despair is caused by the awareness of one’s own imminent death [29, 30]. The awakened consciousness of sinfulness leads one through anxiety to despair, which can only be overcome by faith. One decides to live close to God. One knows that sins are deadly, but he or she knows that nothing is impossible for God.

Kierkegaard contemplated the development of life in three stages, through which a person can go. The first is the aesthetic stage. The attitude here is *carpe diem*, take advantage of your day and savour it. Every day should be taken advantage of to the fullest, so we can enjoy it. Man focuses on the things around him, lives only in the present and only for beauty. Such a person is naturally irresponsible. All his days are similar to each other. The ethical stage is to live by the categorical imperative. Life is dominated by moral laws and duty. Then the purpose of life is to help others and sacrifice. This stage should be preferred to the aesthetic one but it does not truly bring authentic existence. The either – or choice is ultimately a false one because neither the aesthetic, nor the ethical stage brings fulfilment to human existence. Besides, the philosopher reminds us that if a person stands before his death, a decision is always right. The religious man is at the top, surpassing the dichotomy of either – or. In faith, one can

embrace the aesthetic as well as the ethical with a new (liberating) attitude and quality. Abraham is presented as a pattern of behaviour in faith. Faith, however, is not something that the human individual is able to induce into his life. God is beyond the limits of human cognition and experience. God alone, therefore, must be the initiator of the event of faith in one's life.

5. Some aspects of the didactics context

This background provides only a few examples of the relationships between religion and Philosophy can be conceived and illustrated, while exploiting the opportunity of maximum possible dissemination, including seminars and a four-year school curricula designed for the church high schools. Generally speaking, the use of cross-curricula relations develops not only an overview in a holistic perspective through the prism of context, but also elements of critical thinking, because it concerns relations of religion and Philosophy. Critical thinking requires a general systemic perspective for the possibility of an overview that is given by selected disciplines of Philosophy. Educating the future intelligentsia in the field of religion requires an understanding of the given philosophical context. A holistic examination of the historical development of relations between the two disciplines shows a variety of changes interactions between them. In the present time, however, we can talk more about the dialogue between Science and Philosophy on the one hand, and between religion and Philosophy on the other. The links within the different subjects as well as across disciplines with Philosophy provide a richer experience of education in its multifaceted nature. Meaningful connections between Philosophy and other subjects give rise to new opportunities of complex, holistic thinking that includes the area of religion. Various academic disciplines, such as Biology [31], Ecology [32], Pedagogy [33], or various medical fields, for example Neuroscience [34], can thus be studied in on a deeper and existentially more meaningful level.

6. Conclusion

The issue of cross-curricular relations does not belong among the commonly discussed areas within Didactics. The study of the relations between religion and other subjects within the high school education context is limited to merely a few publications. Even fewer authors discuss the relationship of Philosophy in that context. Teachers of religion in schools, but also those teaching philosophical disciplines, are aware of acute concerns that are present across both disciplines. In the context of teaching, interpretation, evaluation, strengthening the curriculum through exercise, etc., it is necessary to adequately point out the need to explore the cross-curricular relations between religion and Philosophy. The existing pedagogical methodological centres that help develop training designed for high schools could focus more on this important question. First of all, however, the professional didactic trainers and supervisors will have

to take the issue of cross-curricula relations into account, and include this topic into training for subjects like the Didactics of religious education and Didactics of philosophy. Though the current system generally requires a relatively narrow specialization, there is room to explore cross-disciplinary themes. In any case, narrow specialization should not interfere with the freedom to holistically grasp the diverse intricacies and consequences of one's intellectual formation at the level of high school education.

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