

Katarzyna Stępień

Freedom and Religion: A Realistic Correlation

The lovers of liberty thought they were leaving it unlimited,
when they were only leaving it undefined.
They thought they were only leaving it undefined,
when they were really leaving it undefended.

G. K. Chesterton*

Nowadays, a very unusual interest indeed has been observed in, using Mortimer J. Adler's language, the great ideas of freedom and religion.¹ Freedom has been given a central position in the doctrine of liberalism, a movement based on the individualistic concept of person, with the aim to provide an individual with unlimited liberty of activity in social and political life. Liberty—along with equality and fraternity, adopted as the slogan of the French Revolution (in the full version: *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité ou la mort*)—forms the foundation of modern and contemporary civilization and culture. The idea of religion, in turn, has now been dismissed from its previously primary position as the focal point of the whole culture; it has been repressed from public life (by postulates or principles of secularity), from social life and practices, and from cultural life, to the intimate sphere.

Katarzyna Stępień — John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland
e-mail: stepkat@kul.lublin.pl • ORCID: 0000-0002-8549-4657

* Gilbert K. Chesterton, *Eugenics and Other Evils* (London, New York, Toronto & Melbourne: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1922), 148.

¹ See Mortimer J. Adler, *The Idea of Freedom. A Dialectical Examination of the Conception of Freedom* (Garden City, N.Y.: DoubleDay, 1958), 127–149.

The article points to voluntarism as a philosophical tendency consisting in the theoretical justification for the phenomenon of the absolutization of freedom. This phenomenon also occurs in practical life where freedom is no longer understood as freedom to truth and goodness enjoyed within the limits of natural law, but as negative freedom, i.e., a space of free choices made without any determination, limitation and coercion (sometimes understood as any external influence on the individual, even cultural or educational), as privacy, or ultimately as complete independence from one's own nature, from the world and other persons. The absence of natural limitations to human freedom leads to its absolutization and permissiveness, and consequently to attempts by the state and the law to limit it, which causes its negation.

However, the conflict between freedom and nature, nature and culture, freedom and law is illusive. This article points out: 1) the essence of human freedom, 2) the synthesis of the great ideas of freedom and religion in the form of the right to religious freedom, and 3) the threats to freedom and religion from voluntaristic atheism, fideism, sentimentalism and individualism. What defends against the reductionist understanding of freedom and religion is a realistic philosophy that reveals the rational and objective character of freedom and religion.

From Absolutization to Negation of Freedom

The analysis of the modern concept of freedom indicates that it is understood in an absolutistic way.² It is, according to Vittorio Possenti, “an expression of radical anthropocentrism, acknowledging the myth of a person who is a pure subject—autonomous and unconditionally free,

² See Servais T. Pinckaers, *Źródła moralności chrześcijańskiej* [*The Sources of Christian Ethics*], trans. A. Kuryś (Poznań: Wydawnictwo W drodze, 1994), 227–238.

a person understood as pure freedom.”³ The above means that it is perceived as the absence of any restrictions,⁴ as a complete freedom in shaping human nature (understood empirically, not metaphysically), or even as a source of value. Understood in this way, freedom is not oriented at or dependent on anything, it is distinguished by the autonomy of free choice in relation to other cognitive and appetitive faculties. This voluntarism has its theoretical sources in the history of philosophy: starting with Saint Augustine and Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, through Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure and Duns Scotus, and ending with its extreme variety in William of Ockham and Francisco Suárez.⁵ It seems that modern tendencies that absolutize freedom have their basis in the concepts of the two latter thinkers.

In Ockham’s view, freedom is a fundamental quality of person as a rational being.⁶ It is a power, thanks to which one can neutrally and incidentally bring about an effect in such a way that they can cause this effect or not cause it, which makes no difference in this power.⁷ Freedom lies entirely in the power of the will, in the power of defining oneself between opposites, between wanting and not-wanting, acting and not-acting.⁸ Ockham claims that free choice is ahead of intellectual judgment, is a primary capacity, prior to both the intellect (especially if we consider that no *potentiae*-powers of the soul actually exist as really

³ Vittorio Possenti, “Ku integralnej filozofii wolności [On the Integral Philosophy of Freedom],” trans. A. M. Popko, *Człowiek w Kulturze* 9 (1997): 34.

⁴ *Ibid.*: “A free entity is the abyss of pure indeterminacy.”

⁵ See Battista Mondin, “Wolność jako czynnik konstytutywny osoby ludzkiej [Freedom as a Constitutive Factor of the Human Person],” trans. P. Kawalec, *Człowiek w Kulturze* 9 (1997): 81.

⁶ See Katarzyna Stępień, *W poszukiwaniu podstaw racjonalności prawa [In the Search of the Foundation of the Rationality of Law]* (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu & Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 2015), 145–164.

⁷ See Frederick Copleston, *Historia filozofii [History of Philosophy]*, vol. 3, trans. H. Bednarek, S. Zalewski (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 2001), 115.

⁸ See Pinckears, *Źródła moralności chrześcijańskiej*, 250–252.

separate from the soul itself) and its acts; “the will does not necessarily adapt to the judgment of reason”—this statement results in recognition of the independence of choice from the data of reason; although will “can conform to it, regardless of whether the judgment is true or false.”⁹ It is the pure will, not directed at all, being a self-imposed drive. At the same time, as by its very nature free, the will is able to resist skills and sensual inclinations, as well as the intellect.

Based on these statements, Ockham claims that free choice controls natural inclinations (due to a radical non-determination of the will) and desire for happiness as a human goal, because the will does not necessarily and absolutely crave happiness (natural inclinations fall below freedom, they become a subordinate biological sphere). The will has the freedom to want or not to want happiness, as the ultimate goal. Hence, if the will is free to want or not to want happiness, then it is impossible or difficult to link human actions with their goal, or to assess them from the point of view of good as the purpose. The purposefulness in the understanding of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas (whatever acts, acts for a purpose) falls: what is left instead of real good as the motivation for action is the principle of good. Duty is born out of a union of created free will with an external obligation.¹⁰ This understanding of will, together with the concept of God’s omnipotence and freedom, seems to condition the order of created things and unchanging natural law entirely on God’s creative and omnipotent will.¹¹

⁹ Copleston, *Historia filozofii*, 115–116.

¹⁰ See *ibid.*, 115–116, 118–119. The relationship between natural law and human nature has been broken. God’s free choice replaces unchanging natural laws and moral laws as the basis for positive law.

¹¹ Among the consequences of nominalism, J. Hervada mentions the negation of the essence and nature of beings, including human nature, which leads to voluntarism (the orders of natural reason are no longer considered reflections of the nature’s inclination but as reflections of the Divine Will) or subjectivism (a subjective conscience as a point of reference). Javier Hervada, *Historia prawa naturalnego [History of Natural Law]*, trans. A. Dorabialska (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Petrus, 2013).

The influential thinker F. Suárez also points out the will as having absolute power and law understood as an act of will.¹² He defines law as a universal, just and lasting order that has been promulgated accordingly.¹³ Law, as it exists in the legislator, is an act of just and righteous will with the power to oblige the subject to perform a specific act.¹⁴ Suárez attributes an order or *imperium* to the will, unlike Aquinas, whose *imperium* or command is an act of intellect (*ordinatio* and *intimatio*, respectively).¹⁵ According to Suárez, this act of choosing and commanding will constitute the essence of law. Consequently, Suárez defines law in its strict sense as an act of just and due (righteous) will in the legislator's mind through which the higher wishes to oblige the lower to do this or that.¹⁶ In Suárez, the commitment imposed by the will is true essence of law as such. The choice of the will containing a command or *imperium* is truly law *per se*. This reasoning opens the way to legal voluntarism.

The next stages of the absolutization of freedom in modernity are as follows: idealistic detachment of freedom from being and nature (as only empirical and phenomenal) in Kant,¹⁷ its understanding as identical to the existence of the individual, as the power to create the nature of being, to produce oneself (Nietzsche, Hegel, Sartre, Heidegger),

¹² See Vernon J. Bourke, *Historia etyki [History of Ethics]*, trans. A. Białek (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krupski i S-ka, 1994), 125.

¹³ Francisco Suárez, "De Legibus ac Deo Legislatore," in *De Legibus*, ed. L. Pereña, vol. 1 (Madrid: Instituto Francisco de Vitoria, 1971), ch. XII, 5: "[L]ex est commune praeceptum, iustum ac stabile, sufficienter promulgatum."

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1, ch. V, 24: "[I]n ipso legislatore esse actum voluntatis iustae et rectae, quo superior vult inferiorem obligare ad hoc vel illud faciendum."

¹⁵ See *S.Th.*, I-II, q. 14, a 1. See the scheme of cooperation between reason and will in: Jacek Woroniecki, *Katolicka Etyka Wychowawcza [Catholic Educational Ethics]*, vol. 1 (Lublin: Fundacja Servire Veritati, 2013), 162–166.

¹⁶ See Suárez, "De Legibus ac Deo Legislatore," in *De Legibus*, vol. 1, ch. XII, 5.

¹⁷ See Mortimer J. Adler, *Ten Philosophical Mistakes* (New York: Collier Books, 1987), 122.

where it is impossible to indicate any restrictions other than freedom itself, because its subjectivity is not bound by any external objective value (present today in the postmodernism project).

In the practical context, freedom is the key point in various forms of individualistic liberalism, and is understood as a negative freedom: a space of free choices, as the widest range of liberty in its external dimension, as a lack of any determination, limitation or coercion whatsoever (sometimes understood as every external, even didactic, influence on the individual), as privacy, and ultimately as independence from the world and other people.

Such freedom is at times confronted by law, which is perceived as restriction and external coercion, thus being its violation. Law, under the influence of legal positivism, has gained a kind of independence and is detached from the nature of being and understood only in a formal way as a systemic obligation: prohibitive or imperative. At the same time, if human freedom has no internal natural limitation, whether in the system of the metaphysically understood objective nature of things, or in the system of natural law and eternal law, then only positive law and coercion by the state are able to limit freedom so understood, which ultimately leads to absorption of morality by law, to the *elephantiasis* of legislation and to the expansion of the state's powers to interfere in individual and social life of a human, leading to an actual denial of personal freedom (from the totalitarian German and Soviet socialisms to the total democracy implemented today by social-demoliberalism). On the other hand, if freedom is boundless, then everything is allowed (as in the ideology of permissiveness), hence law becomes a tool to effect such a degenerated form of freedom (i.e., freedom to wrongdoing, to inflict death on others or oneself, to harm others). Naturalism and scientism as well lead to the negation of freedom, though in different ways.

However, the conflict between freedom and nature, nature and culture, freedom and law is illusory, and is a result of numerous errors of modern philosophies. According to Mortimer J. Adler:

Modern philosophy has never recovered from its false starts. Like men floundering in quicksand who compound their difficulties by struggling to extricate themselves, Kant and his successors have multiplied the difficulties and perplexities of modern philosophy by the very strenuousness—and even ingenuity—of their efforts to extricate themselves from the muddle left in their path by Descartes, Locke, and Hume.

To make a fresh start, it is only necessary to open the great philosophical books of the past (especially those written by Aristotle and contained in his tradition) and to read them with the effort of understanding that they deserve. The recovery of basic truths, long hidden from view, would eradicate errors that have had such disastrous consequences in modern times.¹⁸

It is therefore necessary, following Adler's advice, to analyze the relationship between freedom and human nature according to the classical tradition. What is human freedom?

Toward the Real Freedom of Person: Ontic Foundations of Human Freedom

Freedom in the tradition of classical philosophy is understood with reference to the nature of a person-substantial subject (hence Mortimer J. Adler calls it natural freedom) as a capacity of a rational individual to control their deeds in view of their goodness, to author once deeds. What does it mean?

The classical definition portrays human being as *dzoon logikon*, *animal rationale*—a rational living being. In this definition, the qualities essential for understanding free action of a human are: living being and rationality. Human being is understood here as a *compositum* of

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 200.

two dimensions. The fact of psychophysical unity must be philosophically described and adequately explained. Failure to do that results in disregard for any of the two dimensions reducing the perception of person to either purely spiritual sphere or material aspect where a human being is only a collection of atoms, organs, genes, parts and functions. While recognizing human unity of being against the background of complexity and framing it within the realistic philosophy, one must make a point that while one of the factors constituting human nature is the body-organism component, the other is the immaterial soul as a necessary ontic subject of personal life (but also, and what is more important and primary—a subject of personal existence-life, as well as a substantial form as compared to a matter organized into an individual human body). On the outside, the substantial soul (*essentia*) does not act alone *per se* but through the powers (*potentiae*) of the spiritual intellect and the will and through the sensual powers of cognition (senses) and action (feelings). Intellect and senses perform cognitive functions, and the will, called *appetitus rationalis* (rational desire), is in its structure directed toward good as such. We also find universal purposefulness and amiability in the activity of other living entities. Therefore, it is claimed that in every being there is a natural tendency for good that is corresponding to their structure. This inclination results from imperfection and contingency of being and of human nature (as being created or derived). Human person is a potential being, which means that when born they are not ready, shaped and able to live. Human existence is fragile, biological powers insufficient, and talents disputable. The fact of deficiencies in human being is a driving force for their eradication. Person as an subject-agent (*agens*) strives to develop and improve through their own actions. Person's goal is the fullness of being, which is a complete perfection achieved by acting in accordance with their objective natural inclinations. As Aristotle claimed, only this could give human being complete happiness as a state of optimal fulfillment (ac-

tualization of potentials). How is the “mechanism” of freedom explained?

The proper object of reason is being-truth. In order that action takes place, the intellect provides the will with judgments on objects of desire.¹⁹ The intellect acting for the will discovers and determines the measure of goodness in individual objects, by which it shapes its disposition toward the proper good. The will remains potent toward various goods, and after receiving information, that is, based on judgements of reason, it performs an act of choice. Choice of judgment leads to determination of the will to act toward the good presented by the intellect as appropriate. In action, that is the act of decision or choice of specific good, the intellect and will integrate with each other, which is why a human act, as human, is always performed consciously and voluntarily. Freedom is therefore an actual potency of choosing good and fulfilling one’s nature. At the moment of decision-making, person leans to a certain mode of behavior, decides of themselves (self-determination) and masters themselves (overruling lower faculties). Does the will itself not come before the acts of reason, as suggested in voluntarist theories? Cooperation between the two faculties takes place according to different causal ordering: reason is for the will a formal and exemplary cause, and the will performs for reason a function of efficient causality.

Various determinisms lurk from the above described mode of action of spiritual faculties as specific ways of behavior and decision-making; material conditions, feelings, and finally imperfections of the faculties themselves (erroneous judgment or wrongdoing) may result in deformations. For example, when person does not reveal the truth of being, the intellect presents to the will a false image of reality as attractive. The action thus undertaken will be focused on a good that is only

¹⁹ See Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, *Ludzka wolność i jej granice* [*Human Freedom and Its Limits*] (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, 2004), 11–76.

apparent because it is inappropriate for an individual. Such deformations in action, resulting from the failure in learning the truth or from the reluctance caused by lower emotional faculties to follow the truth already learned, have always caused anxiety to moralists and educators. Countless treatises and theories of upbringing have been devoted to this very problem, especially philosophical theories of virtues (aretologies) as person's supportive improvements toward better realization of good and shaping moral character (characterology). Law also served this purpose as an inclining or restraining rule-measure of rational and free action.²⁰

Great Ideas of Freedom and Religion and the Human Right to God

The basic human rights (right to life, personal freedom, property, etc.), listed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 (basic document for the development of contemporary concept of human rights), include also the right to religious freedom. In fact, it is the closest merger of two great ideas: freedom and religion. Let us focus for a while on what elements it contains, which will provide us with information for a general characteristics of this extraordinary synthesis of freedom and religion.

The Universal Declaration includes the right to religious freedom in Article 18:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and

²⁰ See also Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, "Man in *The Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy*," *Studia Gilsoniana* 7, no. 4 (October–December 2018): 652–660.

in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.²¹

This provision places religious freedom first in the context of freedom of thinking (theoretical cognition), and then freedom of conscience (practical cognition, morality), and finally lists the basic rights with their content specified. The first is the right to change religion or belief, and the second is the right to preach one's faith or religion.

Analyzing Article 18 of the Universal Declaration, Zofia J. Zdybicka points out this non-accidental relationship, because freedom of religion is constructed on the freedom of thought and conscience.²² This link of thinking (cognition), whose proper object is being-truth, to conscience that provides assessment of action in the context of good (ethical norm) and determines the moral condition of a person, points to the anthropological, or personal dimension of religion, freedom and law. The fact that person has the faculty of intellectual cognition translates into their capacity to seek the truth about themselves and their ultimate source, model and goal, which is God. Founding one's life on the known and accepted truth allows one to recognize the true good as the goal of any action, which person freely decides to pursue in accordance with their conscience. Conscience (practical reason) is expressed through acts of judgement reflecting the truth about the good that is the motive for undertaking and completing an action.²³ Freedom of conscience consists in recognizing the truth about good and distinguishing it from wrong, and in the duty to act in accordance with this truth. The Universal Declaration, embedding freedom of religion in the freedom of

²¹ *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 18, United Nations General Assembly (Paris, 10 December 1948). Available online—see the section *References* for details.

²² See Zofia J. Zdybicka, "Wolność religijna fundamentem ludzkiej wolności [Religious Freedom as a Foundation of Human Freedom]," *Człowiek w Kulturze* 11 (1998): 129.

²³ *Ibid.*, 132.

thought and of conscience, shows not only anthropological foundations of freedom and religion, but also their truthful and moral framework.

Details on the right to religious freedom can be found in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which deals with the freedom of teaching and upbringing, especially in paragraph 3, in which parents' rights to raise their children and choose their religious and moral education are emphasized: "Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children."²⁴

Thus, freedom of religion is expressed in an internal and external aspect. Freedom of religion in the internal aspect enables person to undertake an act of religious choice and it manifests itself in their conscience, in which they discover the truth about good. Freedom of religion in the external aspect comprises freedom to manifest religious beliefs and freedom from external coercion in this sphere. This freedom is enjoyed by an individual in their private and public life, individually or in communion with other people. In turn, freedom in the individual aspect is realized in two dimensions: positive and negative. In the positive one, religious freedom means the right to worship God, in the negative, religious freedom protects human person against any pressure from the state or other people. This right, however, does not arise from positive law, but has its source in natural law (in the personal nature of a human being). Protection of religious freedom involves a possibility to change religion or beliefs, to persuade others to one's faith by teaching a specific doctrine (if one could not teach one's faith it would be dead letter), to manifest one's religious affiliation individually or collectively, in a community of followers or privately by worship, teaching, practicing and observance.²⁵

²⁴ *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 26, #3.

²⁵ See Zofia J. Zdybicka, *Człowiek i religia [Man and Religion]* (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, 2006), 360.

An essential part in the content of religious freedom is propagation of one's faith by teaching fellow believers or *ad extra* persons of different faith. It bears relation to the right to convince others to one's views and undertake the duty to gain new followers.

The state, acknowledging human rights, should first of all create conditions for shaping (promoting) rational freedom, that is, lead a political community toward the common good that respects the freedom and religion of every citizen. A rational and fair legal system should serve this purpose.²⁶ The vast content of the right to religious freedom prompts one to ask a question about whether freedom in the field of religion has no limits.

Between Secularism (Public Atheism) and Individual Atheism

The approach to religious freedom as one of the fundamental human rights of a person in the universal paradigm of human rights reveals that freedom is universal, natural, inalienable, equal and resulting from human dignity. Distinctive features of this right are consistent with the conclusions of anthropological personalism (Krapiec, Wojtyła, Zdybicka), a concept which recognizes religiosity as an attribute of human personal nature. Religiosity (as an attribute) of a person is grounded in their contingent existence which is not of or by themselves, and in their aspiration to pursue the infinite in their personal acts of cognition and love. This fact, as Zofia J. Zdybicka emphasizes,

transcends all historical forms of religion. The relationship between religion and the mode of existence of human being is decisive of making religion imperishable by the fact that it is a per-

²⁶ See Zofia J. Zdybicka, "Religia [Religion]," in *Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozofii [Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy]*, vol. 8, ed. A. Maryniarczyk (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, 2007), 731.

sonal form of life and a socio-cultural phenomenon that has diverse forms (forms of religion) but does not perish.²⁷

Thus, the great ideas of freedom and religion regain their roots in culture by way of the idea of protection of human dignity and rights. The relationship of religiosity with personal nature of human being (natural fact) together with its manifestation in most human cultures, whether ancient or contemporary (a historical and cultural fact), shows the utopianism of ideologies awaiting the advent of an era without religion. Failure to protect freedom of religion by the state means a serious violation of the natural right of a human person to God. Similarly, an attempt to eliminate religion from the social and public spheres (i.e., neutrality or secularity), or even hostility to religious motivations, leads to alienation of the institutionalized state itself and the lack of legitimacy of positive law.

In totalitarian states of the twentieth century, this right was denied, relativized or restricted, and the people of the Church were subject to systemic persecution. In communist countries promoting atheization of social life, it was believed that the essence of religious freedom was to keep silent about one's religious beliefs (it was a reduction of freedom of religion to a private sphere). Currently, Europe still functions in a post-revolutionary model of the state as neutral toward worldviews, even if the internal contradiction of such a formula has been pointed out (the state as laying down law that protects or forbids something cannot be neutral toward the standpoint supporting the protected value or refusing to protect it—so the purpose of this formula of self-excluding contradiction is the negation of Christian views still present in societies of Western civilization). Threats from supranational global organizations that use states and state laws to promote voluntarist atheism are being raised nowadays. It is observed that threats to freedom and reli-

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 721.

gion are associated with the abuse of human rights protection standards, for example, clauses imposing limitations to realization of freedom. These limitations do not apply to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, or the right to change religion or beliefs in their internal aspect, whose nature is absolute. Religious freedom is considered one of the non-derogable rights, that is, belonging to the inviolable core of human rights.²⁸ By this, the essence of religious freedom remains intact.²⁹ On the other hand, the right to religious freedom may be limited by the state within the area of freedom to manifest individually or jointly, publicly or privately, one's religion or belief by worship, teaching, practicing and ritual activities. The condition for the application of restrictions is that they must be provided for by law and necessary in a democratic society in view of the protection of public safety and order, health, morality and the rights and freedoms of third parties (for example, limitation of the right to religious gatherings due to the threat of an epidemic).

As in the case with other rights, one might observe attempts to abuse protection that stand in opposition to the fundamentals of human rights as being linked to good. For instance, in the Italian Crucifix Case *Lautsi vs. Italy*, the claimant complained that the presence of the image of the cross in the classrooms of Italian public schools attended by her children was contrary to the principle of secularism in line with which she wanted to raise her children, and therefore was a violation of her right to upbringing and teaching in accordance with her religious and

²⁸ See Marek Piechowiak, "Wolność religijna i dyskryminacja religijna—uwagi w kontekście rezolucji Parlamentu Europejskiego z 20 stycznia 2011 r. [The Freedom of Religion and Religious Discrimination—Remarks on the European Parliament Resolution of 20 January 2011]," in *Urzeczywistnianie wolności przekonań religijnych i praw z niej wynikających [The Implementation of Freedom of Religious Belief and the Rights Derived from It]* (Opole: Redakcja Wydawnictw Wydziału Teologicznego Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 2012), 116.

²⁹ See *ibid.*, 129.

philosophical (moral) beliefs, and thus a violation of religious freedom. However, the European Court of Human Rights pointed out that she did not provide a justification solid enough to recognize the radically understood negative religious freedom and an attempt to protect secularist beliefs as a subjective right, and it could even be considered as promoting religious intolerance, prejudicial to the freedom of public manifestation of religious and philosophical beliefs.³⁰ Yet the Court recognized the views that there is no place for religious symbols in the public space as deserving protection for the fact that they are in line with the postulates arising from human dignity.

According to Marek Piechowiak, analyzing trends in European law regarding religion, one might observe an increasing acceptance for religion as a valuable element of social life; however, in view of the latest case law of the European Court of Human Rights (in particular the above-mentioned *Lautsi vs. Italy* case), it is hard to take this tendency for granted. At the same time religion is not particularly distinguished from other values, such as culture in general.³¹

Ultimately, the natural boundaries for freedom and religion are the truth about the objective personal nature of human being and its connection to objective good, while conventional bounds are constituted by various state and international legal regulations.

³⁰ See Marek Piechowiak, "Negative Freedom of Religion and Secular View in the Light of the Case of *Lautsi vs. Italy*," in *Law in the Face of Religious Persecution and Discrimination* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2011), 35–78.

³¹ Piechowiak, "Wolność religijna i dyskryminacja religijna," 138. See also Marek Piechowiak, "Negative Freedom of Objective Good: A Recurring Dilemma in the Foundations of Politics," in *Dokąd zmierza Europa: przywództwo–idee–wartości* [*Where Europe is Going: Leadership–Ideas–Values*] (Pułtusk: Akademia Humanistyczna, 2007), 537–544.

Between Fideism, Sentimentalism and Individualism

Other threats to the ideas of religion and freedom emanate from the condition of religiosity in contemporary societies. There are often present such phenomena as fideism, sentimentalism and individualism.

Fideism (from Latin *fides*—faith) is an current born in the nineteenth century after the French Revolution that gave rise to the cult of human reason. Rationalism of the age of the Enlightenment denied all religion, all faith “in anything that crosses the limits of human reason and forces person to recognize something higher than themselves.”³² In the post-revolutionary period, the revival of religious life was, as Jacek Woroniecki writes, initially

overwhelmed by great distrust toward reason and horror at the atrocities it brought about. It was apparent for the generation that saw these crimes that reason is essentially a destructive element, an element of pride and denial to the point that it is simply unable to cooperate with faith and serve God’s cause.³³

Attempts to perceive faith as independent from reason and founding it on different ideas, or on itself, were to make it safe and protected from attacks of the wrongful reason. However, reason comes ahead of and leads to faith and can prove the truths of faith, hence the assumption of the harmonious cooperation of reason and faith.³⁴ Fideism with its influence on broad social groups has not always represented the rebellion against the gravity of religion, but rather a persistence “in the un-

³² Jacek Woroniecki, “Życie religijne współczesnej inteligencji polskiej [Religious life of the Contemporary Polish Intelligentsia],” in *U podstaw kultury katolickiej [At the Basis of Catholic Culture]* (Lublin: Fundacja Servire Veritati, 2002), 42. Although author’s remarks refer to a specific group of people in other time, they signal universal and current tendencies occurring in the religious life in Western civilization.

³³ *Ibid.*, 42.

³⁴ See *ibid.*, 44–45.

conscious belief that such separation of faith from reason is a condition of its perfection.” Meanwhile, fideism is

if not thoughtlessness raised to the dignity of principle, then definitely thoughtlessness toward what is most important to person, that is, toward the truths of faith! It is also very often a mental laziness, aversion to spiritual effort, and sometimes even cowardice toward these struggles that may be necessary before a person cleans their mind of various influences of the surrounding mental atmosphere in order to be completely absorbed in God’s truth.³⁵

Fideism makes enfeebled Christian communities unable to defend their faith against any threats and attacks.

Fideism is affiliated with sentimentalism, whose origins Jacek Woroniecki explains in the following way:

With such a radical rejection of reason as a participant in religious life, one had to rely on some other constituent of psyche, and at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the element that gained primary role and was ready to guide entire spiritual life was feeling.³⁶

At the same time, he indicates that in modern languages everything that occurs in human psyche is named feeling. Although sentimentalism continued to strengthen throughout the nineteenth century, only when it became one of the philosophical foundations of modernism did it appear to threaten the ideas of religion and freedom. Although after condemnation by Pope Pius X, sentimentalism as a doctrine has not been upheld, it still persists as a mindset, and in language, which solidifies the misconception that religion belongs to the sensual-emotional field (for example, the offence of religious “feelings” instead of beliefs). This overlaps with the broader background of anthropological error, that is, identifying the phenomena of spiritual life with bodily and sensual feelings. Yet the emotional sphere being sensual and mate-

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 51.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

rial carries such features as subjectivity, egoism, inertia and individualism.

According to Woroniecki, sentimentalism should be questioned not by way of promoting pure rationalism, but by bringing out the importance of the will (subordinate to reason) for the moral life of human person. The distinctive features of the will involve objectivity derived from the cognitive faculties of reason to learn about reality, and capacity for creative acts (which do not result from feelings alone which in fact restrict human freedom), and therefore religious life should be based on the will not feelings whose role should only be ancillary toward the spiritual powers of the will.³⁷ Karol Wojtyła also emphasizes its indispensable importance:

The final and highest level in the sphere of our aspirations is, however, the will. It confers the fundamental direction to our internal experiences. The whole expression of our human “I” is shaped by it. The deepest functions of personal life concentrate in it. Notwithstanding this, the will does not somehow lie “on the surface” of the acts of our lives and the will’s processes—although we discover them in so many experiences of ours—run their course as if hidden in emotional experiences and even the reactions of the organism. And a certain penetration and inference is required in order to draw the will out from the depths of experience and establish the simple fact of its real existence and essential distinctiveness.³⁸

Another phenomenon negative for religious life is individualism, as a primary focus on individualistic forms of spiritual life and piety, with neglect of their social forms. The response to the individualistic liberalism of the nineteenth century emerged in the form of socialism, which in turn emphasized social forms of life to the point where human

³⁷ See *ibid.*, 46.

³⁸ Karol Wojtyła, *Considerations on the Essence of Man—Rozważania o istocie człowieka*, trans. John Grondelski (Lublin–Roma: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu & Società Internazionale Tommaso D’Aquino, 2016), 99–101.

individuality dissolved in the ontologized social organism. In view of the radical antagonism of these two concepts, it is necessary to underline the social nature of human person, which manifests itself in the external dimension of religious freedom having an extremely communal character, this being a preventive measure against the dispersion and division of religious communities endlessly, and against impulsive, whimsical and erroneous individual interpretation of the truths of faith. Social forms of worship preclude individualistic distortions and support the integral development of spiritual life.³⁹

On the Rational and Objective Nature of Freedom and Religion

Realistic interpretation (philosophy) provides a defense against reductive approaches to freedom and religion. It neither designs these phenomena nor detaches them from the reality of human activity; instead it describes and explains them adequately, pointing to their reasons.⁴⁰ Freedom appears as a property of every human being, consisting in their capacity (potential) of self-determination for action and free choice of good as a motive. Its subjective causes are spiritual powers of person: the reason and will, while its objective cause—good as a goal-motive of action (objective hierarchy of goods). This freedom (in Mortimer J. Adler, the natural or inherent “freedom of self-determination”) demonstrates itself in various areas of human life: in science, morality, politics (as “political liberty”) and economics, in artistic and technical creation, and finally in the field of religion where it touches upon the choice of the ultimate goal of human life. This manifested and realized freedom is called by Adler an “acquired freedom of self-perfection” as

³⁹ See Woroniecki, “Życie religijne współczesnej inteligencji polskiej,” 47, 51.

⁴⁰ See Krapiec, *Ludzka wolność i jej granice*, 11–76; Zdybicka, *Człowiek i religia*, 199–344.

dependent on spiritual struggle and moral effort, and above all on the state of consciousness of an individual. Difficulties in its realization are visible in the category of Adler's "circumstantial freedom," associated with the context of human action that may or may not be compelling regardless of the internal attitudes of the acting individual. Freedom is not tantamount to absoluteness or arbitrariness, that is why for centuries societies have penalized false and morally wrong choices. Furthermore, freedom actually develops through the choice of objective and true good. The greater number of right judgements and choices of objective good, the freer person becomes.⁴¹

Freedom is directly associated with morality and responsibility for the effects of free choice, which are constantly experienced by every acting person; as Karol Wojtyła points out:

Man experiences it endlessly; he feels himself constantly driven internally to make decisions, to choose. He is incapable of avoiding the yoke of that above all internal responsibility that hangs over him. He must constantly use his freedom, even when these or those external conditions press upon him or when some or another internal habits bind him, even then it is only that they limit the scale of possibilities for employing the freedom of the will, but the very fact of that freedom does not leave him as long as he is aware of himself.⁴²

What is demonstrated here is the drama and the greatness of freedom, which ultimately fulfills itself in the love of the objective but contingent good of a human person and the absolute good of the Divine Person.

Religion in realistic and personalistic interpretation, explained by pointing out the ontic reasons-causes of natural and social religious fact, reveals its ontic foundations:

⁴¹ See Bogdan Czupryn, *Prawda o człowieku fundamentem rozwoju osobowego [The Truth on Man as a Foundation for Personal Development]* (Lublin: Fundacja *Servire Veritati*, 2015), 47.

⁴² Wojtyła, *Considerations on the Essence of Man*, 111.

[T]he ontic status of a person, the real existence of a personal Absolute (God) and their mutual ontic relations, which lay the grounds for conscious and free personal relations. In human personal structure and personal action, person is open to infinity, they desire infinity. Open to truth, they crave truth, seeking it constantly. Focused on good, they desire good and constantly strives for it, remaining insatiable with goods that do not have the quality of perfection. Person shows unquenchable desire for happiness as an unconscious desire for God. All this makes them capable of knowing and loving the Truth, Good and Beauty—personal Absolute—transcendent You.⁴³

The objective dimension of religion therefore concerns the relationship between a human person as a religious being and the Person of the Absolute, capable of fulfilling human insatiable desire for happiness, while at the same time religious faith (namely religious cognition accepted under pressure of will) reveals the deepest foundations of the rationality of all reality, repeals the senselessness and absurdities of voluntarist atheism, scientism and naturalism. At the same time, in this field we discover the deepest and mysterious connection of freedom and religion:

The Personal Absolute (God) is the first source and the highest Good—a purpose that brings meaning to the life of every human person. And in this most important area of life [as Zdybicka emphasizes], person remains a sovereign: they can say “yes” or “no” to God—which has consequences for their whole life.⁴⁴

We may as well notice that it is religion that ultimately founds and guarantees the true freedom of human person in relation to impermanent and unnecessary goods.



⁴³ Zdybicka, “Religia,” 722.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Freedom and Religion: A Realistic Correlation

SUMMARY

The article points to voluntarism as a tendency in the history of philosophy, which consists in the theoretical justification for the phenomenon of the absolutization of freedom. This phenomenon also occurs in practical life, where freedom is no longer understood as freedom to truth and goodness enjoyed within the limits of natural law, but as negative freedom, i.e., as a space of free choices made without any determination, limitation and coercion (sometimes understood as any external influence on the individual, even cultural or educational), as privacy, or ultimately as complete independence from one's own nature, from the world and other persons. The absence of natural limitations to human freedom leads to its absolutization and permissiveness, and consequently results in attempts by the state and the law to limit it which, in turn, leads to its negation. However, the conflict between freedom and nature, nature and culture, freedom and law is illusive. The article points out: 1) the essence of human freedom, 2) a synthesis of freedom and religion in the form of the right to religious freedom, and 3) threats to freedom and religion from atheism, fideism, sentimentalism and individualism. What defends against the reductionist account of freedom and religion is a realistic philosophy that indicates the rational and objective character of freedom and religion.

KEYWORDS

Freedom, religion, human nature, person, religious freedom, human rights, fideism, sentimentalism, individualism, realistic philosophy.

REFERENCES

- Adler, Mortimer J. *Ten Philosophical Mistakes*. New York: Collier Books, 1987.
- Adler, Mortimer J. *The Idea of Freedom. A Dialectical Examination of the Conception of Freedom*. Garden City, N.Y.: DoubleDay, 1958.
- Aquinatis, S. Thomae. *Summa theologiae*, vol. 1–2, edited by P. Caramello. Torino: Marietti, 1963.
- Bourke, Vernon J. *Historia etyki [History of Ethics]*. Translated by A. Białek. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krupski i S-ka, 1994.
- Chesterton, Gilbert K. *Eugenics and Other Evils*. London, New York, Toronto & Melbourne: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1922.
- Copleston, Frederick. *Historia filozofii [History of Philosophy]*, vol. 3. Translated by H. Bednarek, S. Zalewski. Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 2001.
- Czupryn, Bogdan. *Prawda o człowieku fundamentem rozwoju osobowego [The Truth on Man as a Foundation for Personal Development]*. Lublin: Fundacja *Servire Veritati*, 2015.
- Hervada, Javier. *Historia prawa naturalnego [History of Natural Law]*. Translated by A. Dorabalska. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Petrus, 2013.
- Krapiec, Mieczysław A. *Ludzka wolność i jej granice [Human Freedom and Its Limits]*. Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, 2004.

- Krapiec, Mieczysław A. "Man in *The Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy*." *Studia Gilsoniana* 7, no. 4 (October–December 2018): 597–664. DOI: 10.26385/SG.070431.
- Mondin, Battista. "Wolność jako czynnik konstytutywny osoby ludzkiej [Freedom as a Constitutive Factor of the Human Person]." Translated by P. Kawalec. *Człowiek w Kulturze* 9 (1997): 79–98.
- Piechowiak, Marek. "Negative Freedom of Objective Good: A Recurring Dilemma in the Foundations of Politics." In *Dokąd zmierza Europa: przywództwo–idee–wartości* [Where Europe is Going: Leadership–Ideas–Values], 537–544. Pułtusk: Akademia Humanistyczna, 2007.
- Piechowiak, Marek. "Negative Freedom of Religion and Secular View in the Light of the Case of Lautsi vs. Italy." In *Law in the Face of Religious Persecution and Discrimination*, 35–78. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2011.
- Piechowiak, Marek. "Wolność religijna i dyskryminacja religijna—uwagi w kontekście rezolucji Parlamentu Europejskiego z 20 stycznia 2011 r. [The Freedom of Religion and Religious Discrimination—Remarks on the European Parliament Resolution of 20 January 2011]." In *Urzeczywistnianie wolności przekonań religijnych i praw z niej wynikających* [The Implementation of Freedom of Religious Belief and the Rights Derived from It], 103–139. Opole: Redakcja Wydawnictw Wydziału Teologicznego Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 2012.
- Pinckaers, Servais T. *Źródła moralności chrześcijańskiej* [The Sources of Christian Ethics]. Translated by A. Kuryś. Poznań: Wydawnictwo W drodze, 1994.
- Possenti, Vittorio. "Ku integralnej filozofii wolności [On the Integral Philosophy of Freedom]." Translated by A. M. Popko. *Człowiek w Kulturze* 9 (1997): 33–40.
- Stępień, Katarzyna. *W poszukiwaniu podstaw racjonalności prawa* [In the Search of the Foundation of the Rationality of Law]. Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu & Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 2015.
- Suárez, Francisco. *De Legibus*, vol. 1, edited by L. Pereña. Madrid: Instituto Francisco de Vitoria, 1971.
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. United Nations General Assembly. Paris, 10 December 1948. Available online at: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>. Accessed Nov. 18, 2020.
- Wojtyła, Karol. *Considerations on the Essence of Man—Rozważania o istocie człowieka*. Translated by John Grondelski. Lublin–Roma: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu & Società Internazionale Tommaso D'Aquino, 2016.
- Woroniecki, Jacek. *Katolicka Etyka Wychowawcza* [Catholic Educational Ethics], vol. 1. Lublin: Fundacja Servire Veritati, 2013.
- Woroniecki, Jacek. "Życie religijne współczesnej inteligencji polskiej [Religious life of the Contemporary Polish Intelligentsia]." In *U podstaw kultury katolickiej* [At the Basis of Catholic Culture], 23–54. Lublin: Fundacja Servire Veritati, 2002.
- Zdybicka, Zofia J. *Człowiek i religia* [Man and Religion]. Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, 2006.

-
- Zdybicka, Zofia J. "Religia [Religion]." In *Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozofii [Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy]*, vol. 8, edited by A. Maryniarczyk, 720–732. Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, 2007.
- Zdybicka, Zofia J. "Wolność religijna fundamentem ludzkiej wolności [Religious Freedom as a Foundation of Human Freedom]." *Człowiek w Kulturze* 11 (1998): 127–137.