

idea. And even now, there is no need to fear that by taking up the *Summa Theologiae*, the East will lose in the development of its theology. The scholastic work contains the quintessence of theological science and therefore serves as an unconditional basis for further work" [8, p. 112].

In the mid-1920s, a debate about this work and, in general, about the significance of Thomas Aquinas for Orthodoxy began between G. Kostelnyk and Y. Slepoy. It all started on December 19, 1924, when Slepoy presented a report, "On the Influence of St. Thomas on Oriental Theology," at the Theological Scientific Society. After that, specifically on January 4, 1925, Kostelnyk himself delivered a report, "St. Thomas Aquinas and Scholasticism," [1, p. 46], where he criticized Slepoy. This report was published in compilation of scientific works "Theological Scientific Society in Lviv in the first 10 years of its existence (1923–1933)" by Glinka L., & Chehovich K. in 1934. After report the polemic moved to the pages of religious publications. Kostelnyk used the newspaper "Niva." As a result of the polemic, Father Gavriil wrote extensive reviews of Y. Slepoy's works, "De principio spirationis in SS. Trinitate", "St. Thomas Aquinas and Scholasticism," and the work "Let There Be No Misunderstanding" (1926). Yosyp Slepoy, on the other hand, published on the pages of the newspaper "Theology" – works "More on Scholastic-Dogmatic Themes (Regarding Reviews of Fr. Dr. Kostelnyk)" [2] and "In Response" [3].

In this literary format, the debate ended. Perhaps there were personal contacts, but so far, nothing can be said for or against this. Later, in his "Memories," Slepoy sought the roots of the polemic initiated against him by Kostelnyk, primarily in his intellectual jealousy: "Kostelnyk

saw that he had jumped above his head and rudely attacked my works" [9, p. 132].

In our opinion, the question of the role of the polemic with Slepoy in Kostelnyk's transition to the criticism of Catholicism requires further research. It is possible to agree with Igor Zagrebely's opinion that this conflict increased Father Gavriil's personal aversion to scholasticism, which, in turn, led to "Eastern" tendencies in his work [4, p. 58]. However, even so, it seems an exaggeration to claim that this polemic made such a deep impression on Father Gavriil.

#### References

1. Glinka, L., & Chehovich, K. (1934). *Theological Scientific Society in Lviv in the first 10 years of its existence (1923–1933)*. Edition of The TSS.
2. Slepoy, Y. (1926). More on Scholastic-Dogmatic Themes (Regarding Reviews of Fr. Dr. Kostelnyk). *Bogoslovia*, 3, 306–317.
3. Slepoy, Y. (1925). In Response. *Bogoslovia*, 4, 341–343.
4. Zagrebely, I. V. (2019). *The problem of secularization in the creative heritage of Gavriil Kostelnyk: Critical analysis* [Unpublished candidate's dissertation of Philos. sciences]. NAS of Ukraine, H. S. Skovorody Institute of Philosophy.
5. Kostelnyk, G. *The new age of our church*. Niva, 1926. [https://shron1.chtyvo.org.ua/Kostelnyk\\_Havryil/Nova\\_doba\\_nashoj\\_Tserkvy.pdf?](https://shron1.chtyvo.org.ua/Kostelnyk_Havryil/Nova_doba_nashoj_Tserkvy.pdf?)
6. Okisuk I. F. (1987). Archpriest Gavriil Kostelnyk and his selected works. In Kostelnyk G. F., *Vybrani tvory* (p. 5–12).
7. Pereveziy, V. (2003). To the problems of Latinization of the UGCC in the 20s and 30s of the 20th century. In *History of religions in Ukraine* (pp. 429–434). Logos.
8. Slipy, Y. (1991). *Essay on the history of medieval (scholastic) philosophy*. Rome.
9. Slipy, J. (2017). *Memories* (I. Datsko & M. Horiacha, Eds.; 3rd ed.). UKU Publishing House.

Marija Todorovska, DSc (Philos.), Assoc. Prof.  
University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius", Skopje, Macedonia

## THEORIES OF RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION COURSES AT THE FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY IN SKOPJE

This text is not a scientific article, but a brief presentation of the teaching of philosophy of religion at the Faculty of Philosophy, at the University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius", through an overview of the relevant courses' didactic objectives, goals, and contents. Philosophy of religion, understood as the systematic and wide-encompassing examination of concepts relating to religious beliefs, sentiments, and practices, and involving a metaphysical inquiry of concepts such as the sacred and the divine, is taught through two main academic lines: Theories of religion (or variations thereof), and Philosophy of religion, the former usually being a prerequisite for the latter.

Teaching philosophy is quite a complex task, and when an area of teaching and learning, that largely includes ineffable concepts, transcendent categories, and inexpressible experiences is added to the endeavor, it is understandable that things get progressively difficult to explain and learn. However, the very method of philosophy of posing questions that lead to more questions sustains and elevates itself in the complex area of philosophy of religion: a baseline of substantiated knowledge of philosophical conceptions is necessary, but the explanations, discussions, inquiries and meta-inquiries, and the ineluctable auto-reflexivity make for a wonderful field of study and research. Teaching is a performance in

itself – quite similar to the cultic telling of myths, the reenactment of sacred rituals, or the singing of (teaching) ballads and epics, which gifts a certain sacredness to its very core. Teaching is not meant to purely entertain (although, if we are lucky enough, sometimes it does, indeed, entertain everyone involved), as it is bound by the course syllabus, and the degree's study program, so there must be a predetermined content deemed suitable, in order to lead to the efficient and effective achievement of the educational goals at hand. Teaching is not meant to entertain, nor is it meant to merely inform, and teaching philosophy aims at nurturing the students' critical thinking skills and argumentation capabilities; at honing the students' abilities for successful association of abstract ideas; refining and perfecting their correct use of concepts, categories, causal connections, their ease and sensibility about the material's practical applicability (when possible), their improvement in respectful communication, and many more. Teaching and learning philosophy of religion does all this, in a framework of the most complex and daunting metaphysical questions, the limitations of religious language, the immediate and subjective nature of the religious experience, and the complexity of religious belief and practice, and the communication of faith.

In the first part of this brief exposition some general information about the courses will be outlined, followed by an overview of the courses' didactic goals and main topics. The courses Theories of religion and Philosophy of religion are part of several academic profiles and levels at the Faculty of Philosophy, but their "base" is the Institute for philosophy, where they stand as obligatory (6 ECTS) courses in the fourth and fifth semester of the bachelor's degree program in Philosophy, respectively. The course Philosophy of religion, envisaged as an introduction to the problems of religion, is offered as an elective course to several academic profiles at the faculty (psychology, history of art and archeology, and others), and uses a more pluriperspective, and less technical approach, tailored to the specific academic needs of the particular academic background of these students.

At the master's program (MA) in Philosophy at Institute for philosophy there used to be a module "Philosophy of religion", comprising of the usual general obligatory courses (such as History of philosophy, Methodology, etc.), and at least three courses pertaining to, or adjacent to the discipline, such as: History of the notion of God, Theories of the existence of God, Theodicy, and, for example, the elective Eastern philosophy. This module has been since discontinued, after the shift to a one-year program, instead of the previous two-year program. For a period, MA students who wanted to obtain a master's degree focusing on philosophy of religion were able to choose the courses Theories of the nature of religion and History of God as their main field of study [1]. Starting this academic year (accreditation 2023-), the new MA program "Theoretical philosophy" includes the course Theories on the nature of religion as one of the field-specific electives in the first semester, as well as the course History of the notion of God as one of the main obligatory courses in the second semester [2].

The course Philosophy of religion was being offered at the interdisciplinary program for Interreligious studies in the 2018-2023 accreditation (for 60 and for 120 ECTS) [3; 4] and is being offered re-labelled as Theories on the nature of religion, in the transformed interdisciplinary program for Religious studies (2023-). Additional courses that include some themes from the field of philosophy of religion are offered as electives in the PhD programs: Philosophy and religion, and Religion and morality [5].

The course objectives for Theories of religion at the Institute for philosophy (fourth semester) center around the basic and broadened acquaintance with the theories of the origin and the nature of religion as one of the fundamental human phenomena; the development of the awareness about the necessary interdisciplinarity of the field; and the ability to incorporate the religious categories and beliefs into a broader metaphysical discussion, in preparation for the course Philosophy of religion. Some of the topics covered in the course Theories of religion are: the different theories of the origin and the nature of religion, their main points, plausibility and suitability (and/or discreditation), such as animatism, animism, natur(al)ism, totemism, ancestor worship; the sources and functions of religion, such as the role of religion in the foundation of custom law; the role of religion in the life and identity-forming and identity-affirmation of homo religiosus, and with that, of the religious man's claimed position in the world. Heavy attention is paid to the theories on the sacred (the relationship sacred-profane, mana/sacred-taboo, sacrificial rituals), through the theories of the status and significance of myths as sacred tales, the

importance of sacred rituals in the religious cult, the complexity of the numinous experience and the limitations of language (the problem of ineffability of religious sentiments), the transformation of the sacred and its persistence in the world (myths vs. fables, rite vs. performing art; the use of mythological material in visual arts and literature, the contemporary ritualization of everyday life), leading to the problem of the decline of (the importance of) the sacred and the re-enchantment of reality through other means. Other themes include the relationship between religion and magic, magic and science (and magic as proto-science); the problem of the (in)compatibility between reason and faith; the main points of critique of religion from the last two centuries, and the challenges of the presence and manifestation of religious sentiments (or lack thereof) in the contemporary world [6].

After the material of the Theories of religion course has been successfully covered, and also relying on the fact that the students have finished the courses Medieval and renaissance philosophy and Byzantine philosophy, thus gaining all the necessary categorial framework enabling a substantiated study of the questions of God, the goals of the course Philosophy of religion (fifth semester) are: gaining competences for the identification, analysis, and critical approaches to the different concepts of the divine/God; and perfecting the capabilities for comparative analysis of different philosophical and theological systems, themes, and issues. The course focuses on topics such as the history of the notion of God, from the first ancient reflections, to the contemporary philosophical and theological tendencies to ponder and understand the nature of God; the problem of knowability: the ways in which God can (or cannot) be known; the problem of ineffability of religious experiences, focusing on the negative theology in the Platonist tradition; the intricacies of personal faith and the manifestation and communication of religiousness; the arguments for the existence of God (ontological, cosmological, teleological, the moral order as a reflection of a supremely good deity); arguments against the existence of God (or a good God) faced with the problem of evil, and the various approaches and arguments of theodicy [7].

The MA course Theories on the nature of religion at the Institute for philosophy (theoretical philosophy) offers an in-depth exploration of the different theories of the origin and nature of religion; of religion's functions on an anthropological and societal level, and its connections to other aspects of both archaic and contemporary cultures. The idea is to use the knowledge gained at the undergraduate level, and expand on the relevant topics, with a heavy emphasis on individual research.

This course at the Religious studies interdisciplinary program (where it features as an obligatory course), as it is not a part of a philosophy degree, offers a more individualized approach, depending on the academic profiles and scientific preferences of the students, allowing for different emphases, be they sociological, political, cultural etc.

The MA course History of the notion of God in the theoretical philosophy program at the Institute for philosophy has several didactic goals, or competences/learning outcomes: gaining a confident ability for independent identification and study of, as well as critical approaches to, the different concepts of the divine / God; as well as attaining capabilities for substantiated comparative analysis of different

