

Affirmative theophilosophy emerging from the religious writings of Kierkegaard and its dialogue with modern Christian thought

The research conducted within this project concerns a problem fundamental to philosophy of religion and theology – the self-realization of the individual in relation to God and the consequences thereof for the possibility of defining the essence of humanity and its fulfillment in the life of the individual.

The aim of the research is to discover and present the affirmative theophilosophy emerging from the religious writings of the Danish writer, philosopher, and theologian, Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) as a new interpretive perspective in scholarship concerning Christian revelation. In order to show in exactly what the originality of this perspective lies, the research results will be compared with the most important trends in modern Christian thought (dialectic theology – K. Barth; Neo-Thomism and personalism – J. Maritain; Christian phenomenology – J.L. Marion; analytic philosophy of religion – A. Plantinga).

The originality of Kierkegaard's considerations in this area consists in his maximally serious treatment of the human spirit which can show in what way a person's stance to his own spiritual essence influences his understanding of reality and his existence in it. It is exactly this spiritual relation with God that makes a Christian able to turn into a personal good that which an ordinary person sees as his greatest misfortune. In this sense, the realization of the individual truth of creation that is assigned to each person makes him immune to evil, and human suffering in turn acquires an upbuilding power in God rather than a destructive force in temporality. On such an account, human salvation after death depends fully upon the individual's life in temporality and within temporality is fulfilled. This affirmative perspective demonstrates that the realization of Christian truth in human existence leads to a complete fulfillment of the individual in God without any negative elements whatsoever, which is identical with the fulfillment of the meaning humanity.

Affirmative theophilosophy is an approach to interpreting Christian revelation in which the greatest importance is attributed not to conceptual proofs (the classic position), but to the analysis of the phenomena of spiritual life, that is, to phenomena that allow the individual to experience God in his own existence. Affirmative theophilosophy can thus be likened to research from the field of existential anthropology, which brings together elements bordering on the history of philosophy, philosophy of religion, and theology.

The research will focus on Kierkegaard's religious writings, the core of which is constituted by his upbuilding discourses, which have been explicitly overlooked in Kierkegaard scholarship up to this point. The Danish philosopher has been read and commented on primarily from the perspective of his philosophical texts, known as his pseudonymous works. It is thanks to these works that Kierkegaard was placed into the canon of the history of philosophy. He himself however designated a special role for his upbuilding discourses as works of a strictly religious nature. It is in the upbuilding discourses that one may find the affirmative theophilosophy posited here. On the theoretical base of the pseudonymous writings, whose negative dialectic reveals the impossibility of discovering the essence of Christianity by way of the intellect, the upbuilding discourses introduce a positive dialectic while presenting how to realize Christian truth in one's existence in a practical way. It can be said that the pseudonymous writings constitute the philosophical basis of what Kierkegaard wanted to say about the essence of Christianity in the religious upbuilding discourses. Unfortunately, in the reception of Kierkegaard's work no such connections can be found, and for this reason the big picture remains distorted. In this dim light the Danish philosopher is still read stereotypically as the author of *Fear and Trembling*, *The Concept of Anxiety*, and *The Sickness unto Death*, hence the view that Kierkegaard is a gloomy thinker who talks about how terrifying and incomprehensible faith in God is for ordinary people engulfed by despair.

The results of this research should usher into the scholastic arena a new way to read Kierkegaard. The confrontation of the affirmative theophilosophy drawn from his works with the most important trends of modern Christian thought may open up new interpretive perspectives on Christian revelation in philosophy of religion and theology.