

# WHY ATHEISM HAS NOT BECOME A SUBJECT OF PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

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Recently, this periodical published an essay by Peter Millican and Branden Thornhill-Miller, who attempted, through the synthesis of two different resources, namely a revision of Hume's philosophy of religion and an adaptation of the cognitive science of religion, to propose a simulacrum of religion that would be able to help a contemporary thinking person to accommodate 'traditional religions', or as they put it, the first-order religions, to the scientific and naturalistic worldview.<sup>1</sup> Since this position is effectively a continuation not only of the criticism of religion of the Enlightenment era — as represented by Hume — but also has parallels in the Ancient Greek philosophy, it raises the question as to why the genesis of atheism has not as yet attracted sufficient attention from philosophers of religion.

Responding to them, Janusz Salamon also appealed to multifold sources (including contemporary philosophy of pluralism and ancient practical philosophy) and proposed a positive reconsidering of traditional religions through such modernistic reconstruction that would make them more or less acceptable for a 'contemporary thinking' human being.<sup>2</sup> In spite of many differences between these two positions, they are united by the conviction that contemporary religious pluralism significantly challenges the rationality of 'supernaturalistic' religious beliefs. Nevertheless, Salamon's attitude differs from theirs more

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1 Branden Thornhill-Miller and Peter Millican, "The Common-Core/Diversity Dilemma: Revisions of Humean thought, New Empirical Research, and the Limits of Rational Religious Belief", *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 7, no. 1 (2015).

2 Janusz Salamon, "Atheism and Agatheism in the Global Ethical Discourse: Reply to Millican and Thornhill-Miller", *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 7, no. 4 (2015).

than Dariusz Łukasiewicz thinks about it.<sup>3</sup> While his position is close to a “second-order religion”, his opponents offer what is contrary to any religion, i.e. an amalgam of an ephemeral deism in their view of the world and (what is of more importance) robust atheism concerning the essence and origin of religion itself.

Salamon’s apology of the traditional religions is carried out by promoting the idea of ‘*agatheism*’ (from Greek noun *to agathon* — «the good», and adjective *agathos* — «good»), that understands an abstract Deity as Goodness capable of keeping in itself all key values of traditional religions. That the meaning of these symbols is substantiated by Goodness makes religious traditions more attractive to the contemporary person than atheism would be. Such an idea, in fact, develops and continues John Hick’s theology. His critics reproved and still reprove him emphasizing that his *Real in itself* is so abstract and unequipped for the dialogue with humans (just like Kantian *Ding an sich* that was a ‘model’ for it) even through the mediating symbols of the world religions (their ‘connection’ with it being not stronger than a ‘kinship’ between phenomenon and noumenon) that its ability to affect historical religions is rather problematic.<sup>4</sup> Salamon, in his turn, would like to make this *Real in itself* more ‘communicative’ through the identification of it with a more understandable *eidōs* of Goodness.<sup>5</sup>

First of all, Salamon’s portrayal of predecessors raises some objections. It is true, they are very diverse. Among them there are Plato, Augustine, Kant and Newman. These names are given without any clarification, although for the first figure of this row Goodness was a god, for the second (and he isn’t alone in this view) God was a goodness, while the third and fourth didn’t rely on this identity, but tried to prove that the main good habits of our soul can be best explained through the assumption of God’s existence. However, the last figure in Salamon’s list, Cardinal John Henry Newman, in fact, opens a line of those who elaborated a classical theistic moral argument for God’s existence. Among them there are William Sorley, Hastings Rashdall, and Alfred

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3 Dariusz Łukasiewicz. “Agathological Rationalism and First-Order Religions.” *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 9, no. 2 (2017).

4 The objections altogether with Hick’s responses are represented in John Hick, *Dialogues in the Philosophy of Religion* (Palgrave, 2001).

5 Salamon, “Atheism and Agatheism” 202.

Taylor.<sup>6</sup> They have many outstanding successors to this day. The most convincing emphasis on this idea can be found in the writings of the great apologist Clive Staples Lewis, who uses a moral argument as a starting point for the justification of theism's coherence.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless Salamon doesn't even mention them, probably due to his commitment to a 'theology of Ultimate Reality'. It is all too easy to share his hopes that (if I understand him well) agatheism is a more refined model of religious consciousness than theism because it delegates the function of foundation of all good that exist in the world to the Ultimate Reality or the Absolute.<sup>8</sup> It is hardly acceptable not only because these concepts belong to significantly different 'weight categories' in so far it is *ultimism* that could be recognized a conceptual opposition of theism, while agatheism can be only a particular accentuation of it. The fact is that even speaking the language of agatheism, only a theistic interpretation of the Absolute can assure a truly agatheistic understanding of it. As far as other interpretations are concerned, even those, more influential in the frames of monism, like various forms of panentheism or acosmism, acknowledge that a Deity that isn't a Good Person can either contain and manifest both good and evil (worldly evil as well), or step by step, 'with many reservations' overcome evil in itself, in the spirit of Böhme, Schelling or Berdyaev. To some extent it can also produce evil, for example, as a mystification of this world, as Advaita Vedānta teaches. One more remark is about Salamon's underestimation of the differences in the understanding of good in various religions. The idea of good in Buddhism differs significantly from Christian and Muslim visions of the same concept, so the notion of Good-in-Itself is no more able to assure dialogue between religious traditions than the Hickean concept of

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6 See: John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, Cambridge library collection. Philosophy (Burns, Oates, and Co., 1870), 105–15; William Ritchie Sorley, *Moral values and the idea of God*, Gifford Lectures 1914/15 (CUP, 1918); H. Rashdall, "The Moral Argument for Personal Immortality", in *King's College lectures on immortality*, ed. J. F. Bethune-Baker and W. R. Matthews (Univ. of London Press, 1920); Alfred Edward Taylor, *The Faith of a Moralist*, Gifford Lectures 1926/1928 (Macmillan, 1930).

7 See: Kathleen Edwards, ed., *The complete C.S. Lewis Signature classics* (HarperOne, 2002), 11–25. Review of the recent sources can be found in M. Linville, "The Moral Argument", in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. William L. Craig and James P. Moreland (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

8 Salamon, "Atheism and Agatheism" 202.

*Real-in-Itself* is capable of neutralizing contradicting dogmatic statements of the world religions.

Nevertheless, the value of Salamon's idea of *agatheism* seems rather significant. One of the hallmarks of the philosophical language is that, once being born, key terms can 'stay asleep' for a long time, until they will be awakened, sometimes in very unusual way. Thus, probably only a few historians of ethical theories know that the concept of *Agathologie* was coined for the first time by the Protestant theologian and philosopher Christoph Friedrich von Ammon (1766-1850),<sup>9</sup> a champion of 'supernaturalistic rationalism', as a name for a certain area of ethics. Afterwards this concept was forgotten almost for two centuries. It was mentioned only in some famous historical-philosophical dictionaries,<sup>10</sup> being completely displaced by the newer term *Axiologie*. However, in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century it was rediscovered by the Belgian researcher of ancient Greece Sylvain Delcomminette in his monumental work on Plato without mentioning Ammon.<sup>11</sup> I also coined this concept without any knowledge about Ammon's writings. The results of this research were recently published in a book, presenting an effort to show that ethics founded on the good has to have certain theoretical advantages over ideals of the big triune of ethical metatheories, i.e. utilitarianism, ethics of duty, and ethics of virtue.<sup>12</sup> Salamon's usage of the same term for the purposes of theology is highly justified due to the fact that the attribute of 'omnibenevolence' is the most important of all the *omni*-attributes of the real (not 'ultimistic') God. It is reasonable also because any real (not postmodern) religion proposes its adepts a way to achieve the ultimate good, although, as we said earlier, this good can be understood differently.

To my mind, the articulation of his own vision was much more important for Salamon than the controversy with Millican and Brandon Thornhill-Miller. I state it because it is clear that polemics with them requires not a

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9 See chapter 'Agathologie, oder von dem höchsten Gute' in Christoph Friedrich von Ammon, *Handbuch der christlichen Sittenlehre* 1 (Götschen, 1823), 215-259.

10 See, for example, Rudolf Eisler, ed., *Wörterbuch der philosophischen Begriffe: Historisch-quellenmäßig bearbeitet*, (Mittler, 1910), 19.

11 Sylvain Delcomminette, *Le Philèbe de Platon: Introduction à l'agathologie platonicienne*, (Brill, 2006).

12 Vladimir K. Shokhin, *Agathology: modernity and classics* (Moscow: Canon + ROOOI 'Reabilitatsia', 2014), 19-118 (in Russian).

delicate rapier of agatheism (they hardly would be very sensitive to it), but much more simple weapons of argumentation.

Their basic idea is incredibly simple in itself, in spite of the innumerable literature references and footnotes. They believe that in primordial times religion was useful for animals called humans as a tool created by all-explaining and all-caring Evolution for the sake of their survival and adaptation to the environment. However later, in the course of the linear development of culture and knowledge (assured by the providence of the same Evolution, of course) religion gradually became an obstacle for the realization of the Evolution's purposes.<sup>13</sup> As far as it is too hard for humanity, accustomed to this old-fashioned, harmful, authoritarian, exclusivist and non-tolerant phenomenon, to get rid of it, the resistive organism of religion has to be 'sterilized' and channelled into a 'naturalist religion', and we have nothing to do, but patiently wait until human beings are able to get free of this prejudice completely.

This general approach to religion triggers evident associations with main points of Soviet 'scientific atheism'. In both cases epistemological ('parasitizing' of religion on realities of the world temporarily not explained by science) and social (the tendency of religion to separate people from each other) aspects of religion are denounced. However some significant differences between Soviet atheistic approach and one proposed by Western censors of religion can be discovered as well. First, Soviet 'scientific atheists' would nev-

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13 This doctrine of Evolution, substituting God in the contemporary naturalist theories, i.e. playing a role of Nature of Holbach's philosophy, reminds me of the doctrine of *Prakriti* (*Pradhāna*), i.e. active and all-explaining primal matter of the ancient Hindu philosophy Sāṅkhya. The opponents of this system always wondered, how unconscious (like clay, using the image of the followers of Sāṅkhya themselves) primal matter is able to unroll and roll again a universe, thus realizing its purposes, in fact the purposes of the pure spiritual subjects (*puruṣa*) that can't have any purpose by definition. At last, quite late, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D., under the constant pressure of criticism, a concept of *Īchvara* was introduced into Sāṅkhya. This deity took upon itself the function of coordination between primal matter and pure subjects. Nevertheless, there are at least two reasons pointing out that even before the rationalization of this doctrine it was less irrational than contemporary naturalistic evolutionism. First, the self-revealing of *Prakriti* as an endless variety of world forms developed only from the higher principles towards lower ones. Thus this idea of involution (the same as the doctrine of emanations in Neoplatonism) could better conform to the law of sufficient reason. Secondly, in spite of all its unconsciousness, *Prakriti*, according to this theory, acts 'teleologically' for the sake of the spiritual beings external to it (the same as unconscious milk feeds the child or woman serves her lover: Sāṅkhya-kārikā, vss. 56-61), while no one sets Evolution any task fulfilled by her so carefully.

er agree to substitute (even temporarily) any real religion even by its 'naturalistic' copy. Second, for them the main social fault of religion was its harmful intention to distract the people from the construction of a glorious collective future, and to lead them into the world of illusions, but not non-tolerance, just because Soviet society hadn't any idea of what tolerance really means.

However a trial of real religion, presented in the mentioned article and illustrated with many antireligious stereotypes, resembles not only atheism of the Soviet kind. Striking similarities with very archaic patterns of argumentation are also evident. To begin with, Millican's and Thornhill-Miller's initial thesis that the very 'diversity' of the historical religions and their 'mutual opposition undermines their evident force'<sup>14</sup> thus making them untenable, has no evident force itself. I stress this statement due to many logical inconsistencies when we compare religion with other forms of human activity. Could we say that permanent mutual opposition of huge variety of scientific theories, that is crucial for the development of them makes untenable science itself? Or could we state that the economy becomes untenable due to the competition, generally essential for the technical project, or that politics dies because of the mutual opposition of political programs and parties, the opposition making a core of any open society? Or would it be wise to suggest that the diversity of artistic styles and movements urgent for the development of culture kills an art itself? Or, at last, would anybody affirm that the main pattern of the philosophical practice, i.e. permanent controversy between different philosophical schools and trends, dating back to the first professional philosopher in the history of humanity, Xenophanes of Colophon (the 6<sup>th</sup> — 5<sup>th</sup> centuries B. C.), and his slightly younger contemporaries in India, threatens the existence of philosophy? Do we need to name also other practices, or will these examples be sufficient? Or maybe an exception to the rule is to be made only in the case of religion, where prosperity should emerge not from richness but from poverty? Or maybe contemporary criteria of truth, including the most important of them, i.e. flourishing diversity, must be neglected in this single case? Or isn't the evil of double standard, i.e. of uneven scales, one of the most formidable obstacles for rationality? If for the authors of the article history of philosophy would start earlier than from Hume, they, no doubt, would

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14 Thornhill-Miller and Millican, "The Common-Core/Diversity Dilemma", 3ff.

discover that their foremost argument against religion was proposed already in the epoch of ‘primitive naturalism’. Thus, some of the older sophists, living in the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C., as well as many followers of Democritus and the Cynics, divided the world into the ‘true’ things existing according to the nature (*physis*), and ‘false’ existing according to the human ‘institutions’ (*nomos*), ‘custom’ (*ēthos*) and opinion (*doxa*). According to them, religion definitely belongs to the second group. If religion would be true itself, all nations would worship the same way and the same gods.<sup>15</sup> However, being consistent enough, they, on the same ground, have proclaimed ‘false’ all state establishments, and morality itself, proposing for instance, to follow justice as ‘institution’ in the public eye, while to ‘follow nature’ privately.<sup>16</sup>

The second key argument against real religion proposed by Millican and Thornhill-Miller (don’t forget, they would like to substitute it temporarily with a non-real one) is also amazing. Living, unlike Hume, in the time of highly developed empirical science, they succeeded in making a rather significant collection of quotes from contradictory sources. Some authors mentioned in the article state that during ‘controlled studies’ of intercessory prayer they could make sure that ‘there is no scientifically discernible effect’ for it. Others suggest that this effect is rare and dubious, while the third group has discovered its ‘substantial, significant *negative* effect on health’. As far as generally ‘medical miracles’ are considered to be the ‘most evident for the veracity of supernatural belief’, the failure to verify them empirically as well as their plurality (sic!) significantly shakes faith in them.<sup>17</sup> If the authors of

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15 Plato explicitly wrote about it in his last work: Plat. Leg. 889 e. At the same time, had these naïve philosophers thought that the nature itself can be to some extent individualized, different local ‘institutions’ about gods, also would have been considered rather ‘natural’ by them. Thus Xenophanes mentions the sophist Hippias (V cent. B.C.) who believed that ‘institutions of nature’, unlike those of humans, ought to be uniform in everything (Xen. Mem. IV, 4, 19-20). As Plutarch (46–127 C.E.) witnesses, the ideal of the universal uniformity is present in the thought of the founder of stoicism Zeno of Citium (334–262 B.C.), who was close to the Cynics. In ‘*On Fate and Virtue of Alexander*’ Plutarch emphasizes that according to Zeno’s ‘State’, written as an alternative to the great Platonic dialogue, humans have to live not in different towns and settlements, but all have to have common life and common order like a herd on the common pasture (I.6).

16 As it follows from the most important witness about his thoughts presented by Oxyrhynchus Papiros (Oxyrh. Pap. XI, N 1354), this was the honestly expressed position of Antiphon the Sophist (ca. 470–411 B.C.).

17 Thornhill-Miller and Millican, “The Common-Core/Diversity Dilemma”, 21–23.

the fundamental article on religion would have any kind of personal religious experience themselves, they would know that the effectiveness of prayer depends not least on *who* is praying. If they would respect religion, I would dare to remind them of the necessity to be more attentive to the witnesses of the basic religious sources, at least of the most known, the Bible, bringing out clearly that God of monotheistic religions *doesn't like* experiments with Him.<sup>18</sup> Finally, if it would be possible to discuss their position seriously, I could give a plenty of examples of the effectiveness of intercession of 'one who worships Him and obeys His will' (John 9:31).<sup>19</sup> However, in our case it would be meaningless, because both the authors and scholars to whom they are referring belong to the group described by the same texts as those who 'neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead' (Luke 16:31). As far as they are 'those educated who disdain religion,'<sup>20</sup> as one of the younger contemporaries of Hume wrote, I'd like to propose them to join a retrospective journey into history. This time it will be Buddhist antiquity; the last note of their article allows to presume that they scorn it a little less than Christianity.<sup>21</sup> Those scholars whose authority Millican and Thornhill-Miller invoke, remind me of prince Payasi from the extensive *Payasi Sutta* included into the *Dīgha Nikāya* collection of longer sermons. Sutta tells us about the discussion between Payasi and the Buddha's disciple Kumara-Kassapa which happened soon after the death of the Buddha. Payasi, an atheist and materialist, was curious not about the effectiveness of prayer, but something more serious; he doubted the existence of a human soul, and could even find out strictly scientific 'refutation' of it. Once he put a sentenced thief into a large pot, bound and gagged. Then he sealed over the top of the pot with damp skin, covered it with unheated clay, placed the pot in an oven and light a large fire. Once the man was dead, the pot was opened, but he couldn't observe

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18 See, for instance: *Do not put the Lord your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah* (Deut 6:16); compare with: *He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarrelled and tested the Lord, saying, 'Is the Lord among us or not?'* (Ex 17:7).

19 It would be enough to mention, for instance, that through intercessory prayer of Russian archbishop St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco (1896 — 1966) numerous people were healed from terminal diseases, and some of them are still alive.

20 See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* (Unger, 1799).

21 Thornhill-Miller and Millican, "The Common-Core/Diversity Dilemma", 48–49).



how the soul comes out of the body and escapes. The second experiment with another corpse confirmed ‘non-effectiveness’ of soul — Payasi again couldn’t observe how the soul escapes. The third ‘test experiment’, when Payasi demanded to skin in his presence one more miserable victim, finally convinced him that it is impossible to see the escape of the soul from the body, and it means that the soul itself is completely invented.<sup>22</sup> Sure, educated and probably even sympathetic informers of Millican and Thornhill-Miller can’t be compared with the monstrous Payasi. Nevertheless, one similarity between them exists. It is their common belief in the effectiveness of the methods of ‘experimental physics’ in the domain of meta-physics.

The third main rebuke delivered by Millican and Thornhill-Miller to real, primarily ‘supranaturalistic’ religions is their intolerance and xenophobia.<sup>23</sup> This statement is more serious than those previously discussed. It is true that history of Christianity knew Crusades, inquisition and bloody inter-denominational wars. Islam also was associated with active intolerance, but nowadays it thrills not only the outer world, but from time to time also itself with jihadism and religious terrorism. In the history of the Oriental religions, I mean, Buddhism and Hinduism, there weren’t too many of such black pages, but their attitude, taken by Hick and his followers as a pattern of religious openness<sup>24</sup> is very typical and very skillful missionary strategy of exactly the

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22 Dīgha-Nikāya II.316-358 (volume and pages are referred to according to the classical edition of Pāli Texts Society).

23 Thornhill-Miller and Millican, “The Common-Core/Diversity Dilemma”, 40–41.

24 Thus, in his major work on theology of religions Hick, on the one hand, says that different empirical religious traditions guarantee their ethno-cultural communities almost equal access to the reception of rays of *Real in itself* (probably he had a kind of measuring device), while on the other, he suggests that Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism succeeded to move further than religions of the Semitic origins ‘in the development of pluralistic worldview’, and we can expect that they will significantly contribute to the spreading of it. See John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent*, (Yale Univ. Press, 1989), 373, 375, 378. One of the numerous followers of Hick, indologist and theologian Harold Coward also considers that in contrast to the ‘Western religions’ Buddhism is characterized by the unique openness to the huge variety of beliefs, readiness to welcome any achievements of others and self-criticism, in the spirit of the contemporary science. See Harold G. Coward, *Pluralism: Challenge to World Religions* (Sri Satguru Publications, 1985), 32, 84-86. Earlier I referred to numerous Pāli sources to make it clear that at least, the orthodox Buddhists demonstrated rather critical and even contemptuous attitude to the representatives of other religious communities together with a lack of criticism towards themselves. See Vladimir K. Shokhin, “On Some Features of Bud-

same inclusivism that champions of religious pluralism criticize vehemently in the Catholic Church.<sup>25</sup> However our authors go even further by stating that non-tolerance, xenophobia, and authoritarianism are not only a reality of ‘basic religions’, but their essential and distinctive features. Referring to new informants, who were able to ‘calculate’ necessary data, they suggest that these ‘religious diseases’ can infect even non-religious population.<sup>26</sup> Well, but how to interpret in this case a variety of the historical facts, telling about repressions of ‘supranaturalist’ religions by ‘naturalist regimes’ and persecutions outweighing in cruelty all what we know about religious wars? What to do with the executions of clergy in revolutionary France, both during the three years of the *Convention nationale* and the two months of the *Commune de Paris*? How to explain genocide of Armenians that started with blood torture of priests and monks and Greek Christians, committed not by Islamists, but by Turkish secularists? What explanation can be found for many decades of persecutions and executions of clergy and laity of all confessions in the Soviet Union? What can be said about outrages committed upon believers by the communist regimes in Spain and in Latin America? What about the explicit ban of religion which took place in some Balkan countries? Presently in the West (unlike Asia and Africa) there are, certainly, no open religious persecutions, but atheistic exclusivism and worldview xenophobia are flourishing. Let me give just two examples. Recently the Parliamentary Assembly of EU adopted the resolution demanding the exclusion of creationism as an antiscientific position from public spheres not only because it contradicts evolutionism as the only true scientific worldview, but due to the reason that ‘the creationist movements possess real political power’.<sup>27</sup> When not so long

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dhist Missionary Work and Double Standards in Religious Studies”, *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 15, no. 2 (2005).

25 One of the prominent indologists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Paul Hacker (1913—1979), while studying Buddhist and Hinduist texts came to the conclusion that inclusivism (he was one among those who introduced this term into religious studies) is a specific feature of Indian mentality. A fruitful discussion about ‘exclusiveness of inclusivism’ in India is presented in the fundamental collection of articles Gerhard Oberhammer, ed., *Inklusivismus: Eine indische Denkform*, (Brill, 1983).

26 Thornhill-Miller and Millican, “The Common-Core/Diversity Dilemma”, 42.

27 Resolution 1580, approved October, 4, 2007 (by the 35<sup>th</sup> session). Such ‘hybrid’ “scientific” and political argumentation evidently reminds strategies of the Soviet antireligious polemics,

ago the former world-renowned atheist Anthony Flew converted and proclaimed himself a philosophical theist, his former ‘brothers in trade’ started to draw caricatures of him, atheistic sites declared a ‘witch hunt’, and Richard Dawkins explicitly stated that Flew’s change of mind is not only an apostasy, but a result of senile dementia.<sup>28</sup> Contemporary cases of such ‘hunts’ from the theistic side aren’t known, at least for me, although according to Millican and Thornhill-Miller all supernaturalists seriously threaten the world pluralistic civilization. It is significant enough that referring to many atheists they are ‘ashamed’ to mention ‘the Four Horsemen of Apocalypse’ with whom they have many commonalities in the view of religion.

Nevertheless, it ought to be said that some strategical differences between them also exist. ‘The Horsemen’ demand in practice to ‘crush the vermin’ (*écrasez l’infâme*) of religion, while the two scholars to whom we refer consider that it can still be useful for some purposes, especially taking into account, for instance, that there are more autists among atheists than among believers. However, in their understanding of the origin of religion they are very similar to the ‘horsemen’. The latter think that there are certain memes, responsible for religion. These memes are hardly comprehensible but have more or less ‘noble roots’, generating most probably from the realities called by Jung ‘archetypes of the collective unconscious’. Millican and Thornhill-Miller recognize all three basic concepts of the genesis of religion existing presently in what is called the cognitive science of religion, i.e. (1) religion as ‘directly biologically based adaptation promoting cooperation’; (2) religion as a by-product, incorporating a set of results of other cognitive processes; (3) religion as initially a by-product of evolution, stepdaughter of it, who after ‘cultural selection’ became a good daughter.<sup>29</sup> It is worth mentioning here that they don’t pay the necessary attention to the fact that the proposed ‘lift

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starting with ‘science has proved that there is not any God’ and ending with assertions that the Church is ‘the internal fifth column’ promoting the interests of the external enemies of the state. Some formulations of the resolution, like an idea that creationism is dangerous because it is able to assume a likeness of science, thus adopting itself to evolutionism, are very akin to the quotes from the Soviet antireligious propaganda of 1970s and 1980s. Some other more general parallels were mentioned in the beginning of this paper.

28 See Antony G. N. Flew and Roy A. Varghese, *There is a God: How the world’s most notorious atheist changed his mind* (Harper Collins, 2007), 171.

29 Thornhill-Miller and Millican, “The Common-Core/Diversity Dilemma”, 35–36.

cranes' of evolution are rather weak and not more convincing than the hypothesis that a giraffe has a long neck because it has to reach tasty fruits growing on high trees.<sup>30</sup> Anyway, all three options require the *naturalist faith* that airproofs minds of its adherents much stronger than any supernaturalistic belief. It goes, first of all, about the faith in pure animality and 'occasionality' of human being that excludes its belonging to any 'kingdom of Forms'. It is exactly the faith that was propagated by Lucretius (1<sup>st</sup> century B.C.), who was a successor of Archelaus (5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.) and Democritus (5<sup>th</sup> — 4<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C.) as well as the forefather of the evolutionist anthropology, forgotten by his ill-informed successors.<sup>31</sup>

It seems, such atheistic fideism has also explicable psychological roots. Indeed, someone able to read the score, but incapable of hearing and perceiving real sounds, can create a pragmatic theory of the genesis of music from the 'true needs' to which it responds. A blind man is able to construct the same pragmatic theory of art, while a eunuch can 'guess' why 'indeed and not in name' men and women desire each other. Analogically, a person having no spiritual ear, vision and Eros, but sure that such abilities aren't necessary for the understanding of religion and mystical experience, or even subconsciously jealous of those who have religious intuitions, nevertheless believes that he can investigate what religion has to be 'in reality'. Sadly, it is a common belief that whilst mathematics, simultaneous translation, or sports require special gifts and abilities, religion, as well as philosophy and politics, can be easily 'understood' by anyone.

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30 I give this example just because other fruit-eating animals have no such long neck as giraffes. 'Social togetherness' also can be achieved by much more simple and effective mechanisms, although many contemporary anthropologists doing their best to reduce a human being to animal and elevating animals to humans, would hardly find religion in the alveary, as well as in a colony of ants or penguins.

31 Lucretius explained the origin of social life and civilization by the necessity of adaptation and competition in the environment, surrounding human tribes, initially knowing only how to copulate and kill wild animals with cudgels. Later through the imitation of animals' sounds they learned how to speak. It is significant that while despising religion personally Lucretius, nevertheless, considered it to be one of the first steps of civilization that preceded even metal-working. The detailed description of his whole social anthropology can be found in his famous poem. See: *Lucr. De nat. rerum* V. 925-1450.

These constituents of the atheistic psychology altogether with the phenomenon, which I have described elsewhere as an ‘underlying paradox of atheism’,<sup>32</sup> as well as the constant repeatability of the same ‘memes’ (both on the level of the same intellectual patterns and anti-numinous feelings, to use Rudolph Otto’s idiom), parodic imitation of religion both in personal fideism and in public ideological institutions<sup>33</sup> can be observed throughout the course of history of thought. Thus, the question is bound to arise — why the origin of atheism still doesn’t attract any attention of philosophy of religion.

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32 Paradoxically, divine essences, non-existing as reality for atheistic mind, quite often become objects of rejection, offense and even fierce hatred for the adherents of atheism. This inherent irrationality (typical for supranaturalists, as Millican and Thornhill-Miller believe), can be found already in the ideas of one of the ‘fathers’ of the ancient Greek atheism Diagoras of Melos (the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.) as well as of Theodorus the Atheist (340 — 250), Lucian of Samosata (circ. 125-180 C.E.) and some other Greek naturalists wherefrom the first one took revenge on those Olympic gods whom he denied. The same phenomenon is also present in the thought of some Buddhist and Jaina philosophers, who enjoyed humiliating of the god Īçvara, as well as in the writings of a former priest Jean Meslier, Paul Holbach, in the sarcasms of the founders of Marxism and Friedrich Nietzsche, who fiercely ‘reduced to ashes’ seemingly non-existing God, and this his constant hatred was accompanied with psychic attacks. One more example are some French existentialists whose passion in rejection God made their Soviet critics to suspect that they recognize his existence. Finally, it can be found in the writings of John Schellenberg’s follower Theodore M. Drange, who edited ‘argument of non-belief’ in such a way as to insult God of Christians, while at the same time denying the existence of Him, as well as in the works of the ‘New Atheists’, whom Schellenberg sincerely despises. I wrote about this phenomenon in: V. K. Shokhin, ‘Methodological Pluralism and the Subject Matter of Philosophy of Religion’, in Sebastian T. Kolodziejczyk and Janusz Salamon, *Knowledge, Action, Pluralism: Contemporary Perspectives in Philosophy of Religion* (Peter Lang Publishing Group, 2014), 328.

33 It goes, first of all about the substitution of Church by quasi-Church institutions with their detailed imitations of Scripture, Tradition, church councils, dogmas, heresies, hagiographies, etc. Such substitutions often happened in time of atheistic dictatorships, particularly during the Communist dictatorship in the USSR, that was the longest of all. Pure speculative efforts are also of much interest. Thus it is commonly known that Auguste Comte had scolded ‘old Holbach’s atheism’ for its failure to produce a positive substitute of religion. For him such substitution could be realized in the form of a new universal unity in common service to Humanity. This Humanity understood as a Highest Being (Grand Être) was, in fact, his deity that substituted Holbach’s Matter. In 1848 Comte created a pseudo-ecclesiological structure ‘Positivist Society’, and in the end of his life proclaimed himself Pontifex Maximus of the new cult. Erection of Positivism on the ruins of Catholicism inspired many of positivist thinkers. Thus, for Émile-Auguste Chartier (Alain) the history of humanity was a substitute of the sacred history, while Comte was deified by him not less than Epicurus by the same ‘Holbach of antiquity’ Lucretius Carus. There were also many other adherents who were inclined to see in Comte ‘the apostolic soul of the universal France’ and to consider positivism ‘the only salvational teaching’.

To my mind, it can be explained by the lack of the social request for such a research. The average modern man, more and more desiring to be just one of the animals, reducing his or her being only to psychosomatic needs easily satisfied without any ‘agatheism’ (it partly explains why evolutionism seems to be so attractive<sup>34</sup>), atheism is the best worldview and psychological norm. It is also known from the intellectual history that in most cases the origin of a norm is considered to be less interesting than the origin of deviant phenomena. Medicine deals with medical histories, not with histories of health.

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34 I’m speaking about attractiveness because evolutionism as a worldview has a non-scientific origin, although one of the most powerful myths of our times tries to prove otherwise. There is no experimental basis that would be able to demonstrate the origin of species many centuries ago. C.S. Lewis in his essay ‘The Funeral of a Great Myth’ (published in 1967) wrote that attractiveness of evolutionism is based on the romantic desire of people of Modernity to be absolutely free from any obligations towards universe as well as on their hope in infinite self-improving of mankind in future. No doubts, he was not mistaken, but I think that the motive of the substantiation of human rights for the overall animality as well as a contempt for spirit presently play a key role. One of the best testimonies for such a shift to ‘legal animalism’ is that zoophilia is becoming quite a legal area of applied ethics where even a rivalry takes place between two ‘schools’, one of them insisting that coupling between humans and animals transgress on the latter’s rights while another emphasizes the romantic ethos of these relationships. See e.g. Nick White, “Issues of consent in human-animal sexual relations”, 2008. <https://njw.name/consent/> (accessed 14.03.2017).

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