

## **Attainment of the Absolute as a Way of Human Being**

By

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### **Abstract**

Human existence is impossible without the movement to the Absolute as the limit that sets the tone for all our thoughts and actions, and it means truly human existence. In the broadest sense of the word, the “Absolute” is a synonym for the word “God”, primarily in a religious sense. The acquisition of the Absolute is procedural. It is not stimulated by doubts about the existence of God. Beginning with faith in God, this is a permanent questioning about how God-like (divinely) I am in my thoughts and actions. Another interpretation of the problem, reducing the seeking of God to theological scholarship,

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does not lead to an adequate solution of the question. Moreover, limiting oneself to acquaintance with theology as a set of knowledge without the existential experience of searching for God in essence, as we believe, is pseudo-religiosity.

**Keywords:** Absolute, God-seeking, existential theology, theological scholarship, pseudo-religiosity, religious exegesis.

## 1. Introduction

Religion, religiosity are the most important elements of modern culture, both in its local and global dimensions. A religious attitude to the world as a way of rooting in it is ambivalent in its results: it is known that it can lead people to victories over their existing being as well as to defeats (Nietzsche, 1990; Engels, 1961; Lenin, 1977). The reason for this multidirectional attitude, we see, first of all, in the quality of religiosity. It can be represented by at least two extreme positions: within one position, worship of theological scholarship, external criteria of religiosity dominate, while supporters of the other, not rejecting all this, prefer permanent communication with themselves and others, asking the main question - how much the "I" of a person is godlike in his thoughts and actions? This is an immersion in the endless process of the acquisition of God by man, which is indicated by the concept of "existential theology". The authors of the paper attempted a reasoned demonstration of existential theology as the only way to establish true religiosity.

## 2. Methods

Methods used in the work correspond, first of all, to the study of existential problems in general and, in particular, to religious existentialism. Hence, the appeal to the concepts and categories of religious existential philosophy, to its tools as a whole, looks quite justified. It was the juxtaposition of essence to existence that allowed the authors not only to distinguish between genuine and imaginary (pseudo) religiosity, but also to substantiate existential theology as a way to gaining Godlikeness by a man.

## 3. Results and discussion

Translated from Greek, the concept of "theology" means, at least, either knowledge of God or thinking about him. In the first case, it means the knowledge that is known in advance without the efforts of an ordinary person, while in the second case, it means the knowledge that is not only given through revelation, but which is meaningful. It is not only taken on faith as truth, but it also finds further ways of its development (understanding) through actualization in various issues.

If theology is presented only as dogmatic knowledge (i.e. as theology), then we encounter a problem when this knowledge cannot fully answer new questions that have not arisen before in history: for example, what is the relation of religion to organ transplantation, the creation of human clones, etc. Religious knowledge as independent or self-sufficient cannot provide a solution to these problems without a special approach to it, and this special approach is expressed in thinking about religious knowledge, which is reflected in the concept of "religious exegetics". For example, in Islam, a synonym for these procedures is *ijtihad*. In the traditional sense, *Ijtihad* is a doctrinal position, which implies the maximum effort of the mind to deduce any principles of religion. Of course, only those scientists who achieve a certain-high level in religious knowledge are entitled to deal with it. When their religious knowledge

cannot cover the new emerging problems, they come to the method of Ijtihad, which in fact will be their independent thinking (but mediated by religious dogmatic knowledge). This, in our opinion, is the main difference between theology and divinity. At the same time, the question of the difference between theology and religious philosophy is not fully removed: after all, the latter is also the thinking mediated by looking through religion. In a sense, theology can also be called religious philosophy. Even if the meaning we put into theology can be understood as divinity, the latter can also be regarded as a religious philosophy. In this sense, the issue of the difference between theology, divinity and religious philosophy is meaningless. Nevertheless, we can only talk about their identification in a relative sense - since the reflection on God is carried out with the aim of becoming god-like.

When talking about theology, we always mean as a theologian a believer who belongs to a particular religion. Through the individualization of religious knowledge, there is a distinction between theology and religious studies. The theologian looks at religion from within, in the first person, as a subject, while a religious scholar looks at it from the outside, in the third person. Perhaps, in some cases, the appeal to religion in theology and religious studies can change in its own way, to be both from the outside and from the inside. In these cases, religious studies and theology can use their characteristics mutually. For a religious scholar, religion is an object (subject), but for a theologian it is, as it were, himself.

Thus, a believer, asking questions about God, about the world around him, trying to give answers to them, thereby gives rise to theology, therefore, becomes a theologian. Through a question, he goes to thinking. Therefore, the essence of theology is in the knowledge of this thinking, that is, in the process itself. This we have designated as the reflection of reflection on theology. Otherwise, it can be defined as thinking about thinking, which is mediated by religious dogmas.

Reflection of reflection of something forces this “something” to be removed. As in our case with a double reflection, the question of God disappears, since we turn our cognition to cognition. That is, its subject is not important to us, but the cognition is important in its essence and form. With this reflection, we strive for theology for its own sake. This happens when religious knowledge is adapted to scientific knowledge. If in reflection on theology we turn to religious knowledge, then in double reflection we kind of rationalize this knowledge, trying to logically reflect it. This includes the example of apologetics. Believing that God exists, then we perform reflection on this “knowledge” in order to somehow clarify this (for ourselves). The question of God is relevant. When we perform one more reflection on this reflection, we turn to the very cognition (clarification). That is, we rationalize this religious knowledge. To some extent, theology is scientified from this angle.

Returning to double reflection, we can consider it as a methodology to methods of cognizing God or comprehending religious knowledge. The method that we described above can be called a method from religion. With it, we proceed from religion itself, try to reflect on it and its knowledge, coming to some conclusions.

Along with this method, we can consider a way to religion, that is, from non-religious knowledge (empirical or speculative). Before starting to reflect on any knowledge that would lead to the question of God, we have to make a reflection aimed at searching for this question (to God). In this case, the reflection is also double.

For example, when studying physics, biology, and other sciences, a person is surprised

at the structure of the world. From despair to justify it somehow rationally (or surprise), he comes to the question of God. That is, initially he will have to come to this surprise and (or) despair, and only then with the paradigm of the question of God, then reflect on the cognition of God himself. He thinks of Him through purely empirical knowledge, theorizing it. The situation with speculative knowledge is in the same way.

In the case of an attempt at thinking, which is carried out on cognition itself with double reflection (as a speculative method), we return the question of God. However, this return will already be expressed not in a double reflection, but in a triple one. With a double reflection, the question of God is eliminated, but it returns with a triple reflection, since in the cognition of knowledge itself, which cognizes religious knowledge (of God), we come to a dead end of thinking itself. We understand that we think, but do not understand how this happens, and through this we come across *something*. This is something directly related to our existence. That is, there is something else in us besides our surprise, despair, our question, which leads us to think. In this case, it is expressed in secret or in the likeness of a miracle. This miracle is directly addressed to God (especially if we are believers). Perhaps this mystery lies in the soul, while in our thinking we produce a full-fledged act of our existence. "I think - I exist" - not just a consequence of one to the other, but also identical things.

The thought is connected not only with the subject that we are thinking about, but also with the state of the thinker himself or with some transformation and change in himself, so that he can think that he exists (Mamardashvili, 2019). Theology by its very nature is, in our view, obviously an existential activity, because in existential thinking the object is involved in it. In non-existential thinking, the object is detached.

Another method of reflection on theological knowledge can be distinguished through existence itself. It will be expressed through us, more precisely, through "I", through "My" personal existence. With theological reflection, the issue of faith becomes an important issue. Not just as a procedure of faith in God and in the acceptance of religious knowledge, but as something separate that would appeal directly to our existence. This method will not be from religion and not to religion, but as if by the very method, religion itself, faith (religious method). From existence itself, along with faith, we can also turn to an ethical way, which is directed through morality. Faith, goodness, love, etc. they are inherently transcendental subjects for our knowledge, therefore, by their nature, they can directly address the issue of God (ethical way). The question of God is also transcendental, from this we can "identify" our existence (through faith, love, goodness, etc.) with the question of God. Not in the sense that we are God, but in the fact that we are His manifestation in us. Through a religious and ethical way, we resort to God, to know Him.

We can say that the theologian knows that he is a believer because he is experiencing an act of faith. However, the problem is what he feels. Is what he feels really called faith, is it really that religious feeling? (Kierkegaard, 2018) Indeed, this may be a feeling of fear of reality, a feeling of weakness and an attempt to find the meaning, protection from death (suicide), madness. A person can determine the act of faith for himself, in particular, by comparing it with what other believers have said about this feeling and further study this feeling in himself through reflection. On the basis of faith, the theologian accepts religious knowledge unconditionally as true data. After that, he tries to comprehend and understand them, objectivizing through individual thinking. In fact, we can say that he is engaged in theology, which means to unequivocally state its existence. The theologian does not do it because it exists, but it exists because the theologian does it. He, in turn, begins to build his thinking

through surprise or despair, which, in the future, is expressed in a question that addresses itself to religious knowledge or to the problem of God. Consequently, the existence of theology is not in cognition of God, not in "Truth", but in the question itself, in cognition. If the reflection of theology comes from a person (the theologian), expressed in cognition, in its existence, then the reflection of reflection itself (reflection squared) of theology will turn to the cognition of this cognition - this is the nerve of theology, in our opinion.

The emerging question arises, "why is the theologian engaged in theology?" leads us to the conclusion that it is not for some reason, but because he wants it so (at will, freely). Because theology for him is the intention of his consciousness, which is always aimed at something, and the theologian's choice is to direct his consciousness to certain things. Therefore, theology for him is a choice, a desire. The intension of his consciousness is precisely in the sense of a double reflection of theology; it refers to the knowledge of knowledge itself, that is, to the consciousness of the reflexing one - from which the genesis of the singularity inside the "consciousness-cognition" comes from - when consciousness, existence, knowledge, etc. of a person interconnect and converge at one point, make up one whole. Thus, a person comes to religion, theology through existential problems, among which the problem of the meaning of life is the main one.

Sartre wrote: "A man has a hole in his soul the size of God, and everyone fills it as he can" (Sartre Jean-Paul, 2006). In the case when an attempt to fill it (that is to find the meaning of life) is not crowned with success, a person comes to the question of God. However, a paradox arises here: turning to the material automatically leads a person to the material" God. Therefore, such questions as "why I don't see God?", "if He exists, where is He?" are not surprising. Consequently, to know the problem of God requires a different qualitative (categorical) thinking, which provides a way beyond the limits of one's own material existence. In other words, transcending is necessary, in which, from the point of view of philosophical anthropology, the essence of human existence is concluded (Frankl, 1990). Similarly, the question of God requires the use of transcendental categories in cognition. Therefore, in raising the question of God in the material category, a person may never be able to come close to his true knowledge. Therefore, the words of Nietzsche: "God is dead! We killed him!" one can consider in the sense that people really "killed God", raising Him into the material category, thinking in their world, defining Him as what He is not.

The ability to transcend is laid out through loneliness, for a man is alone as a single being. The root of loneliness - the very being of a person, the way of existence of his "I" and therefore to say about him that he is not sociable - is essentially equivalent to praise. As A. Schopenhauer wrote: "For a highly intellectual person, loneliness is of two kinds: firstly, the fact that he remains with himself, and secondly, that he is not with others. We will understand the high significance of this last circumstance if we recall the numerous coercions, inconveniences and even dangers that all communication entails" (Schopenhauer, 2018). From the point of view of existential theology, a man, proceeding from being, enlightens it with his consciousness. The question of loneliness refers us to the problem of the meaning of life. The first thing that a person pays attention to in the process of self-reflection is the value of his life and the justification of wasting efforts so that it was lived - was it not in vain? Loneliness and solitude are the way to God.

## **4. Summary**

Thus, we have expressed the essence of theology in the thinking of a believer about  
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God. The first pressing problem of theology is the problem of God. All other questions are projected through it. Among the various ways of knowing / gaining God, the existential one (from a believer's own existence - religious, ethical) is the leading, from our point of view, because the internal act of faith and thinking is intimate for him, it is individual. This is a clear manifestation of existentialism in theology. In theological reflection, a person, trying to know himself, does this as a subject, albeit clearly with an attempt to personalize it, since he still uses rational thinking for this. In this manifestation, theology (along with philosophy) combines existential religion and non-existential science.

## 5. Conclusions

The analysis of the problem of God-finding, His true attainment assumes the presence of faith in a person striving for the God: faith is already working in him, otherwise he would not even know that it exists. Therefore, a mystery is hidden in a person from his being, which makes faith faith, it makes a thought a thought, conditioning their existence in us so that we can join them (or they can join us). Otherwise, for example, it would not have been possible to talk about goodness without a sense of goodness.

To cognize the problem of God, for His true attainment, another qualitative (categorical) thinking is required. When posing the question of God in the material category, a person may never be able to come close to His true cognition - this requires a transcendental category. Attaching oneself to this category, as we have noted, is possible only through self-transcendence. The path to self-transcendence originates from reflection, for which loneliness is a necessary state. However, the reflection in complex forms inevitably leads us to "absurdity". The act of self-transcendence takes place through this absurdity - a "leap of faith" is being made - a kind of approach to God, His cognition. As we have indicated, art can also help fulfill self-transcendence, in that it is precisely the point of expression of the absurd, as a person's reflection of its reality.

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