

## Christian Humanism and Christianity-Inspired Atheistic Humanism

MARTIN VAŠEK, Department of Philosophy and Political Science, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovak Republic

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The aim of this study is to focus on two forms of humanism: atheistic humanism (or humanistic atheism) and Christian humanism. The first type is represented by Czech philosopher Otakar A. Funda, while the second type is represented by two Christian thinkers – Jolana Poláková and Richard Schaeffler. By examining humanistic atheism, we can understand the distinctiveness and uniqueness of Christian humanism. In particular, I will highlight two aspects of Christian humanism: the concept of heteronomy and the concept of hope. I believe that one of the important roles of religion, especially Christianity, today is to contribute to the development of a humanism that emphasizes hope and the liberating heteronomy of God. Additionally, we can question whether, in a time of potential threats or even the possibility of the extinction of the human species, the “earthly” reasons for “why keep on giving life?” are sufficiently convincing and valid, or if they require a deeper foundation.

**Keywords:** humanism – atheism – philosophy of religion – Otakar A. Funda – Jolana Poláková – Richard Schaeffler

### Introduction

Let us ask a key question at the outset: is one of the contemporary roles of religion, especially Christianity, to participate in the development of humanism? And let us ask further: what is specific about Christianity-inspired – theistic and atheistic – humanism? Or does any liberation from religion mean a path to true humanism – is religion rather an obstacle to humanism? Or are we to approach the question of humanism in an entirely different way and return to the presuppositions of its ideas?

Let us try to answer the above questions by comparing and contrasting two perspectives (approaches) – the first is that of humanistic atheism and the second that of Christian humanism. In this study, the first direction is represented by the contemporary Czech philosopher Otakar A. Funda (born 1943),<sup>1</sup> the second direction by Christian philosophers Jolana Poláková (born 1951) and Richard Schaeffler (1926 – 2019).

Otakar Funda describes his philosophical orientation as a rational-critical qualitative positivism oriented towards the independence of the external world, at the same time, as a biological humanism based on the biological fact of life in general. Funda takes up Albert Schweitzer's legacy and tries to update it. He sees respect for life as an interreligious and intercultural basis for the world in a situation of globalization. He writes: "Human respect for the drama of evolution has become the basis of my conception of biological humanism" (Funda 2009a, 201).

Funda speaks of the end of the era of Christianity and believes that the most important task is to answer the questions "Which way do we go? How do we go on?" (Funda 2022, 24). He refines these questions and asks: how do we combine critical rationality and humanity? He means a humanity that is factual, solidarity-based and not a pathetic euphoria without content, without naming the problems and finding concrete solutions to them. He believes that we have no rational alternative other than humanism, even if our humanism is failing:

Ambivalence and tragicity are our human lot. We are living on the ruins of humanism and looking for usable shards on those ruins. Be that as it may, I find the myth of Sisyphus to be truer, and I have placed it above the myth of Christ (Funda 2022, 31).<sup>2</sup>

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The texts from Czech and German have been translated into English by the author of the study.

<sup>1</sup> Pavlincová points out the difference between Funda's thought and that of two other Czech philosophers – T. G. Masaryk and F. Krejčí. Masaryk and Krejčí were looking for an authority to "support" their belief in the sense of life and history – they both needed a Guarantor. In contrast to their theistic humanism, Funda is a proponent of critical rationalism and atheistic humanism (Pavlincová 2015, 42).

<sup>2</sup> I will only briefly add that antinomies (thinking in antinomies) are characteristic of Funda's thought. He also argues that the experience of what transcends us and what we cannot grasp is antinomic; e.g. "Man is a noble and sublime creature. – Man is a beast. / History is a story of great and sublime struggles. – History is a heap of horrors, wars and senseless endeavors" (Funda 2022, 64, 65).

In the first part of the study, I will focus on clarifying Funda's humanistic atheism. In the second part, I will attempt to answer the key questions above – and thereby also answer the central question of this monothematic issue – what should be the role (one of the roles) of religion, especially Christianity, in our time? I will formulate the answer against the background of Funda's thought and attempt a dialogue between Funda and Christian authors. With this study I want to continue my intention of comparing the thought of Otakar A. Funda with other European philosophers. Funda believes “that the non-identical in each of us' is the potential for understanding listening and an open dialogue with oneself and with others” (Funda 2022, 194). He is a proponent of dialogue, which he understands as perceptive questioning and listening – when we listen to why the other thinks the way he thinks and why he thinks differently than we do. This dialogue can be enriching, a shedding of preconceptions, even if it cannot and will not eliminate the radical contradiction of differing perspectives (Funda 2013, 117 – 118).

### **I. Funda's Humanistic Atheism**

Funda believes that religion can be understood in multiple senses, and ultimately religion is merely a construct of our desires, wishes and feelings and is based on emotional irrationality. We can naturally explain, clarify and understand the origin of religion. Religion is a human construct, an error, a fiction and an illusion. Throughout history, man has reshaped the idea of a deity-god, and it is very likely that he created it, too. At the same time, Funda admits that religion (without its negative elements) establishes the depth of human relationships, life for the other, and for this reason is worthy of reverence and respect (Funda 2022, 134). He appreciates the positive aspects of religion, speaks of its “heights,” and from his point of view Christianity is a religion of love. However, he ultimately rejects religion as a great human fallacy and considers this belief to be the result of his lifetime of philosophical and religious study. Religion is one of those erroneous and mistaken concepts that may be useful for a time, but as long as religions are based on fiction, delusion and lies, they cannot be useful permanently. Religious systems serve for the stability of the family and society and the reinforcement of moral norms, but only temporarily. It makes no sense to base the idea of humanity on something fictitious, illusory and unreal – humanism does not need religion; liberation from religion is liberating (Funda, 2009a, 31).

When religion has been shown to be senseless and mistaken, all that remains is the human being with his possibilities, which are ambivalent and

fragmentary. The key and crucial possibility is that of humanism, not guaranteed (not grounded) metaphysically. Insofar as the supernatural does not exist, the human being is to strive by reason to recognize what is natural and to form life attitudes of rationality (Funda 2022, 85). Humanistic atheism, that is, humanism without God, is not a negative nihilism, but a rational-positive response to the question of human life. If humanism without God were not possible, it would be the greatest defeat and hopelessness for human beings (Funda 2022, 153, 165).

Humanism, according to Funda, originated earlier than the Christian faith, in Chinese and ancient philosophy, and it was a humanism of rational solidarity, rationality and wisdom, not of euphoric self-sacrifice. The Czech philosopher emphasizes that humanism without God must satisfy itself with provisional answers because that is the lot of human beings. It cannot be promoted as an ideology; the other can only be invited to it. Humanistic atheism originated in Judeo-Christian culture, and according to Funda's interpretation, atheism is a presumed (presumptive) Christianity initiated by Jesus – Jesus, by his exclamation on the cross, foreshadowed (marked out) the path to atheism for future Europe. Funda writes, "Humanistic atheism did not arise in the culture of any other religion, only in the Judeo-Christian culture" (Funda 2009a, 22). He sees Christianity as the only religion from which atheism could have been born as a legitimate human non-religious alternative.<sup>3</sup>

Funda does not identify with Slavoj Žižek's left-wing philosophical orientation; he comments against it – an anti-left-wing, anti-idealist and anti-religious commentary. He thinks that great ideas and dreams harbor a negative potential – "instead of heaven, they establish hell" – ideas and visions of something absolutely good are contaminated by their own absurdity. He argues that Christianity has also embezzled its ideas, but we cannot speak of an exacerbated embezzlement, of horrors on a mass scale, and that is why it has not "drowned" in its own marasmus and, despite its many failures, has not perished. Communism, however, exacerbated its embezzlement of humanity with Stalinism, failed to preserve the original ideas, and therefore disappeared. Funda considers communism – as the great dream of a just society – to be as

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<sup>3</sup> Funda's work was concerned with twentieth-century German Protestant theology, focusing on the interpretation of the Christian faith to contemporary secular people. The question of the non-religious interpretation of the Christian faith was key for him. He believes that of the German theologians concerned with non-religious interpretation, Bonhoeffer "saw the furthest," and he most radically posed the question of interpreting the gospel "in entirely new coordinates" (Funda 2003, 180; Funda 2006).

“diabolical a phenomenon” as fascism and therefore rejects intellectual sympathy with the “humane” idea of communism and sees it as dangerous. He does not doubt the sincerity, purity and genuine humanity of intellectuals who re-thematize the great communist ideal, but this affinity for communism is a form of “playing with fire” and a dangerous dream, because it has no protection and immunity from collapse and abuse. Funda also differs from Žižek in that he sees Stalinism not only as a tragic distortion of the idea of communism, but as its necessary outcome (Funda 2009a, 116).

After the collapse of many systems and ideologies and in a time of a crisis of truth, we have no great hope or idea, from Funda’s point of view. However, we can and are able to build on three motifs of the European tradition: on the reality outside us, which provides us with solid ground; on rationality with an attitude of wisdom, and on humanity, based on the value of life (Funda 2009a, 119). In doing so, Funda does not rule out the possibility that our global civilization will also perish, just as civilizations before it did, but the consciousness of extinction should not be a reason for resignation, but for the search for positive solutions. For these reasons, the ethics of humanistic atheism and critical rationality is an ethics of moderation, a factual ethics, an ethics that seeks to eliminate extreme solutions, an ethics of responsibility. It is not an ethics of sacrifice, martyrdom and dying for ideas (Funda 2009a, 164).

Funda nevertheless asks the crucial question: is humanism without God and without transcendence not also an illusion (only an illusion)? He admits that humanism without transcendence, derived from the order of nature and rationality, is sufficient for ordinary situations where we do not have to sacrifice everything for the sake of the other – it is a “humanism of decency.” But is the rational humanism of decency sufficient for “radical evil” (Funda 2009a, 194)? Funda is aware that humanism is losing, increasingly and in all directions. Humans are placed in absurd situations: we witness genocide, aggression, suffering, violence, untruth – here humanity is devalued, trampled upon, ignored by the mockery of radical evil. “We are confronted with the demonic absurdity of triumphing evil” (Funda 2013, 111).

From Otakar Funda’s point of view, it is true that without transcendence, humanism is shipwrecked. Humanism often becomes superficial; it cannot resist consumerism, and so shallowness, egoism, callousness and vulgarity prevail. So, what is left for us? He writes:

We are left to bear our defeats humbly and not to give up ... in spite of them, striving for non-pathetic, provisional and never crowned with any victory,

unfinished, positive, rational solutions to the real problems of the world, of life and of human beings (Funda 2009a, 195).

Funda regards the ultimate victory of the good as a dangerous eschatological delusion. It is dangerous because it is unfounded, misleading, and also because in some cases it can mobilize negative forces, saving the false illusion by means of power and dictatorship. Critical rationality therefore rejects religious and secular forms of messianism; there will never be an ideal state, a state of solved problems and the triumph of the good. This rationality knows that there are no ideal, final solutions; only provisional solutions remain, and the effort to eliminate completely wrong, bad solutions.

Therefore, from the position of critical rationality, the myth of Christ is unacceptable, frightening in its difficulty, and to follow it is to end up in this world on the cross – absurdly, uselessly, without hope. The myth of Sisyphus is a more realistic answer than the myths of Christ and Prometheus. Funda writes:

Sisyphus knows that no one will save him, that there will be no resting in salvation or in the ultimate goal and meaning of history, but he cannot give up the never-ending, no victory wreath crowned, perpetual solution to problems. Sisyphus soberly, rationally accepts his lot and rationally bears it and resolves it ceaselessly (Funda 2017, 85).

Funda's humanism is biological humanism. Respect for life is fundamental across religions; the value of life is a universal, all-human, intercultural ethical value; it is not dependent on our moral consciousness and does not need to be explained away. Funda privileges biological humanism, placing it above Christian as well as secular humanism. He believes that to base humanism on the value of life and on nature is not to empty or ignore the spiritual and moral dimension of the human being. He is also aware that rationality has its limits; it often fails and loses, but it is the only option and power that human beings have.

As noted, Funda's critical rationalism diverges from Žižek's philosophy, yet Funda sees several overlaps between the two. He agrees with Žižek that humankind is probably approaching some final point; like Žižek, he employs a non-religious account of God, and he is also close to the idea of "reality as a multiplicity of multiplicities" (multiplicity as the last ontological category). Funda also shares the idea that capitalism cannot be the horizon of humanity permanently and, despite its prosperity, is incapable of truly addressing the global problems and pains of the world. He writes:

So, what then? Here I find it more honest to say with Adorno: 'I don't know', or with Heidegger: 'Only a God can save us', of course, there would have to be one – than to play out a dangerous messianic vision with Žižek" (Funda 2009b, 290).

The Czech philosopher Michael Hauser describes Funda's humanism as follows:

Even if for once we recognize that the world and history have no meaning, human life is still worthy of respect. This reverence for human life is the enduring basis of Funda's philosophy, even if he does not express it very obviously because of his lack of ostentation. At the same time, of course, one might ask what it is possible to base respect for human life on when there is so little reason to be proud of being human (Hauser 2014, 146).

According to Hauser, Funda's philosophical motives have an underlying "melodic line" forming an organizing principle – non-illusory humanism. Funda admits that there will always be those who will accuse rationality of shallowness, descriptive and pragmatic superficiality, an inability to be passionate about a vision, an unwillingness to sacrifice one's own life or a general incapacity for action. Critical rationality is also required – if it is to be sufficiently critical – to engage adequately, sensitively and without dissecting the phenomenon of religion (Funda 2017, 91). What does it mean for him to engage with religion? Neither the biblical text nor religion ultimately addressed Funda; neither the biblical text nor religion nor reality itself lead him to transcendence. This situation and position are very strange, not only because Funda was originally an evangelical pastor, but also because he appeals many times to humility and awe before reality. He thinks that everything we encounter can be passed over or even "kicked away," whereas the opposite is also possible – in humble awe of reality, not to overlook or bypass what we encounter. Not to miss reality is the starting point of ethics – the ethics of reverence before reality.

Undoubtedly, the reader of the Funda's texts will ask: why was what came before him – the biblical text, religion – not appealing to him? Why did these – such powerful realities – lead him not to the idea of transcendence, but to its radical rejection? Can one overlook and not see even what is before one's own eyes? Why is he certain that God, resurrection and eternal life are not statements about real entities and events, but mere metaphors, constructs of human self-projection, man-made ciphers, deceptive creations, symbols, fictions? So, why is it that what the believer "sees" is not even admitted by Funda as possible? Why is his critical rationality not an open rationality?

These questions are obviously unanswerable. Still, Funda would have answered like this:

It remains an open question why two people are led to opposite conclusions by the same experience. Why did a Nazi or Communist concentration camp lead one to atheism and the other to faith? Why does rational argument convince one person and not the other? Why does one person's confession of transcendence appeal to one and not to another? (Funda 2013, 110)

## **II. Humanistic Atheism in Dialogue with Christian Humanism or Christian Humanism on the Background of Humanistic Atheism**

The view of humanistic atheism and the religious view are different – they differ in their view of the whole of reality, of the world and of human beings. How to speak of the role of religion in our time, when there are many in the world who regard religion as nonsense, its contents as fiction, and call for liberation from it? Certainly, we can see its role in the usual areas, such as charity, health care, education and service to society in general. Is there another role for religion in our time, apart from the areas mentioned? Should we divide the role of religion in our time into a “role for non-believers,” a “role for believers” and a “universal role for all”? Is there a specific “role” of religion for philosophy (or for thought)? And what is the role of religion, especially Christianity, in relation to humanism today? It is understandably impossible to provide a complete characterization, definition and critique of Christian humanism at this point. I will therefore focus only on two aspects of it – heteronomy and hope.

### **A. God and Heteronomy. Funda in Dialogue with Poláková**

According to Otakar Funda, we cannot claim that the “God theme” is a “discarded theme” (Funda 2022, 146). “God” is the most remarkable and supreme human creation, a rhetorical archetypal figure, and we must ask why people have created and continue to create this idea. Despite being an atheist, he uses the term God – when we do something positive and hopeful, we create God. When we do something positive and hopeful, when we believe in this “project” and engage in it even though we gain nothing by doing so, we are acting on faith – and where we act out of faith and hope, that is “where God happens,” the atheist God. Funda's God is not transcendent, supra-natural, redemptive; he does not act in history; he is a God created by human beings. His atheistic humanism is a humanism without God – and yet with God.



Surely, we may ask: why does Funda retain the concept of God at all? Why does he not exclude it from his conception altogether? After all, the concept of God denotes the deepest dimension of humanness, the dimension when (in which) we manifest the maximum of our humanness, when we transcend ourselves, when we love in the midst of absurdity. God is the cipher of this dimension. When Funda asks why people create the concept of God and what they “project” into this concept, we can also ask him: why live with self-transcendence? Why love in the midst of absurdity?

Funda speaks of the human being’s ability to transcend ordinary, usual humanity, and in this sense, I think, we can speak of the trans-human in him. But the trans-human cannot be understood in a threefold sense: 1. to transcend our humaneness does not mean to enter the realm of the supranatural; 2. we have made this transcendence on our own, without the help of a transcendent power (or the grace of God); and 3. the trans-human does not mean the technical perfection of human beings. All that we are, all that we have and all that we can do comes from us alone.

I agree with Czech Christian philosopher Jolana Poláková, who says that

Christianity will always be carried by the strong idea of heteronomy. We owe everything we are, even the most basic awareness of what we are to do, to God. We did not create ourselves; we do not determine the terms of our salvation; we are not our own source of redeeming love. We receive everything – being, law, and grace – from God. There is a profound dependence on God and at the same time a profound demand on us (Poláková 2007a, 85).

This idea of heteronomy – which is essentially regulative for Christian thought – is both demonstrably more original and more promising than the idea of human self-determination. According to Poláková, church and religion can only fulfill their mission in the world if they accept God’s gifts and conditions; without this real relationship, Christianity is meaningless; it loses its identity. Poláková believes that Christianity is certainly capable of integrating an element of autonomous criticality and creativity, but only as a corrective, only to the extent that it is able to serve the fundamental transcendent reality of religious life: the absolute and unconditional subordination of human beings to the living God. This submission, because it is submission to God, can raise the person and the world far higher than they can rise by their own efforts.

Understandably, Funda does not think in this way; human beings do not receive anything from God, because there is no God; human beings act of

themselves; they are creative of themselves; they are the creators of their own laws, and nothing comes to them from the “other world”; nothing is the work of God’s grace. In contrast to Funda, Poláková speaks of a different human experience and a specific life dynamic – the dynamic of heteronomously and dialogically inspired creativity. From her perspective, what is important for human beings is their being connected to an unlimited source of personal creativity; or in other words, the hallmark of persons is their ability to co-exist with God in dialogical communion. As persons, we can establish and create dialogical, helping, loving and creative relationships primarily because we are rooted in God together with others. Humans persistently bring to human circumstances and relationships the qualities discovered in dialogue with God – truthfulness, justice, selflessness, self-sacrifice, fortitude (Poláková 2001, 68).

Poláková distinguishes two culture-creating impulses that have shaped our civilization:

The first comes ‘from below’, from created realities. Culture in its broadest sense – art, science, technology, the organization of human relations – is created here in relation to nature in its broadest sense: as imitation and development of what is beneficial to us in our natural environment (Poláková 2007b, 113).

The second culture-creating impulse is the offer to transcend the natural framework, captured primarily in Jewish and Christian traditions, coming from “above.” A culture following God brings something completely new into human life. Sincerity, honesty, reliability, self-sacrifice and other ethical values more or less collapse on the ground other than the “rock” of the primary relationship with God. This culture has high standards for what can truly be considered a full human life and knows of its potentialities, which can only develop in relationship with God.

Poláková notes that in today’s historical situation, many point to a fundamental analogy between the current decadent trends of our civilization and the long-term process of the disappearance of ancient Rome. She writes:

Back then, Christianity refused to let itself get mixed up in the colorful cultural mix of all other opinions, beliefs and faiths. It then became the lifeblood of the future culture. If Western civilization today abandons its original vertical inspiration, it is voluntarily parting with that strong component of itself which remains alive independently of our civilization and transcends it in time and space (Poláková 2007b, 113).

## **B. Tragedy or Hope? Funda in Dialogue with Schaeffler**

Humanistic atheism is atheism without hope; Funda does not hide its tragedy. As stated, we have no great hope or idea; we can only follow the three motifs of the European tradition: the reality outside us, rationality with an attitude of reasonableness and a humanity based on the value of life. According to Funda, natural death is not a tragedy; martyrdom is a tragedy, because it is not natural; it “lacks the rationality of the *logos* of cosmos” (Funda 2009a, 165).

Dying for ideas is not a reason to glorify heroes and a call to follow them; it is a tragedy because critical rationality and rational effort failed to eliminate the conflicts that led to martyrdom. Martyrdom is a sign of the failure of critical rationality; it is “a sacrifice brought to absurdity” (Funda 2022, 193). Tragedy, according to this Czech philosopher, arises when a person is placed in a situation not of his or her own choosing and when he or she must make extreme or absurd decisions that he or she ultimately does not want to make. Nevertheless, Funda does not understand humanistic atheism as a negative nihilism, but as a different, rationally sober, positive and creative answer to the question of human life.

Funda’s philosophy leads to a number of considerations and questions. Dead migrants, dead soldiers in various contemporary conflicts, dead people who have died of cancer, including children, as well as other dead people of our time and throughout history – their lives were ultimately tragic and contingent because they did not decide their own lives; they could not decide. Projects that have failed, intentions that have not been realized, conflicts that have not been resolved, mistakes of the past and the present that cannot be corrected – all this testifies to the radical finitude of human beings. We have failed, as individuals and as societies or institutions, to avert tragedies, to save lives, to fulfill resolutions, to eliminate conflicts, to achieve goals, to take part in dialogue and to reach consensus – failures we see every day in various fields. Humanist atheism is a tragic type of atheism and humanism, one without hope; it is humanism in the midst of the tragic and absurd condition of human existence. But from Funda’s perspective, the idea of the senselessness of suffering is more human, more understandable and more bearable than the idea of suffering associated with belief in God.

Do we really have nothing but our critical rationality and humanism without hope? Is the only hope we have an insecure earthly hope that may not come true at all? German Christian philosopher Richard Schaeffler presents a different view. He distinguishes between hope as a passion and hope as a divine virtue. For hope as a passion, the question of whether it will find

fulfillment, whether the hungry will find bread, the seeker will find truth, the lover will find love reciprocated, remains open. But the very act of hope, the passionate longing for such fulfillment, inevitably flows from our human nature. "Hope as a divine virtue is different. Not only whether what we hope for will actually be given to us, but the very fact that we are able to hope is a gift we cannot force. That is why this virtue is called 'divine' and not 'human'" (Schaeffler 1982, 20). He writes moreover:

It gives us the courage to be gifted with ever greater, new creative works of God, in the midst of our own human endeavors. To the extent that we become sensitive to experiences of this kind, we also gain the ability to see signs of hope in the midst of this world and to create new signs of hope (Schaeffler 1982, 21).

Such signs of hope, according to Schaeffler, may be the "seven works of mercy" – "feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked..." Certainly, this will not eliminate the problems of hunger, thirst and abandonment of people in this world, and it may even cause new disappointments. But where such works take place, they enable others to experience that the promised salvation is already becoming evident and effective today. God's promised future is thus anticipated in the present.

Schaeffler, inspired by Kant, also believed that we can today defend the doctrine of rational postulates – when the postulates affirm (testify to) the hope that every claim that reality makes on us reveals to us the possibilities of surrendering to that claim. For the unity of the Self, world and history, for experience to be possible and for a reason to fulfill the tasks it sets itself, regulative ideas – *Idee der Einheit des Subjekts*, *Idee der Einheit der Welt*, *Idee der Einheit der universalen Geschichte* – are necessary, which become the three postulates, that is, the contents of hope, without which the Self, world and history cannot be protected from self-dissolution. The postulate of God (*Gottespostulat*) – as the fourth and the most important of the postulates – is an expression of hope which is necessary if reason is not to succumb to skeptical doubt.

The interest of reason becomes the source of the postulates, and the postulates become the justification of hope. The postulated hope leads us to decipher in all the contents of experience the anticipatory presence of the One on Whom this hope is oriented. The German philosopher considered that the postulates of reason are expressions of hope, and the two forms of faith – religious and rational – are, he believed, two ways of persevering in what we hope for and proof of what we do not see. Schaeffler thus legitimizes both

forms of faith – religious and rational – as two ways leading to the ground of human hope, to its justified acceptance. He, therefore, speaks of the “kinship” of the philosophical doctrine of the postulates and religious experience. Schaeffler was one of the philosophers who did not associate the idea of God and hope exclusively with faith and certain religious convictions, but also with reason, rational faith and rational hope.

### III. Conclusion

“The aim of this monothematic issue is to examine from a philosophical perspective what is, or should be, the role of religion in our time,” as stated by the editor. I give and present two roles of religion in the present day (among many others).

One of the key roles today of religion, especially Christianity, is to inspire the formation of a humanism of heteronomy and hope, to be its source and promoter. It is a humanism that does not remain enclosed within the world and for which life, love and sacrifice do not take place in the midst of absurdity. We can ask the question: is humanistic atheism or atheistic humanism sufficient today? Is humanistic atheism enough? Christianity-inspired theistic humanism is aware that God can open up to our humanity previously unimaginable dimensions of life, and something truly new (we may perhaps call it “trans-human”) can emerge in the human environment, but only on the presupposition of divine assistance to human beings. Christian humanism cherishes these ideas and is aware of the importance of a dialogical relationship between human beings and God, for the sake of the full development and fulfillment of their humanity.

The second role of religion and religious thought is to continue to inspire philosophical thinking, to engage in dialogue with atheistic philosophy and to seek a potential “meeting point,” since religious texts remain a constant source of stimulus for philosophy – even in the case of reflections on humanism. I can only very briefly hint at and illustrate this second task here with just one example (other than Funda) – that of the aforementioned philosopher Slavoj Žižek, who considers himself a materialist theologian and a Christian atheist. I will quote his thoughts from an interview with Czech philosopher Michael Hauser:

Humanism is not enough. In the same way that Freud talks about meta-psychology. There must be a dimension above it. Theology is another name for meta-psychology, for something that is in Man more than Man, the inhuman core of Man, etc. These are very precise terms. It’s interesting how

many American theologians with whom I debated, they were very close to what I'm saying. They accepted this. They told me 'If this is materialism, I'm a materialist.' That is to say that God is not an old man sitting up there pulling the strings, etc. God is just a name for this void, openness, this inhuman, more than human. I think that we should rehabilitate, and we all agree here with my friends, Badiou, Agamben, me, of course not in the sense of "Let's kill them" inhumanity, more than human, trans-human dimension. This is for me what Christ stands for. A man who is inhuman, in the sense of more than man. So, it's absolutely crucial to radically reject this Feuerbach/young Marx theory (Žižek 2007, 19).

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Martin Vašek  
Department of Philosophy and Political Science  
Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra  
Hodžova 1  
94901 Nitra  
Slovak Republic  
e-mail: [mvasek@ukf.sk](mailto:mvasek@ukf.sk)  
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7326-0047>