

KS. BARTŁOMIEJ KRZOS  
The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin  
ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5589-1184>  
frbartk@gmail.com

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## On the Application of Philosophy in Theology Based on the Example of Nicholas Everitt's “Proof for the Non-Existence of God”

Everyone knows the phrase: *Philosophia ancilla theologiae* (Philosophy is a Servant of Theology).<sup>1</sup> Yes, philosophy plays a subservient and subordinate role to theology, but still philosophy is essential to the reliable practice of theology. Jerzy Kalinowski and Stefan Swieżawski, representatives of the Polish laity at the Second Vatican Council, reported on the Council's ongoing discussions on the mutual relationship between theology and philosophy.<sup>2</sup> The Church had to confront the alleged imposition of St. Thomas Aquinas' philosophy on all Christians in the encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (1879) by Pope Leo XIII. The Pope called St. Thomas “the prince and teacher of philosophers” (*Aeterni Patris*, 17). He calls the departure from the philosophy of St. Thomas “a great offense” and encourages all catholic thinkers to return and to restore the old meaning of the philosophy of Thomism (*Aeterni Patris*, 24–25). Swieżawski says the encyclical was misunderstood and he calls this error “the hump of the Church.”<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Pope Leo XIII wrote this encyclical during the era of Second Positivism, a direction that completely undermined faith and metaphysics. Therefore, it was necessary to defend classical philosophy in the Church, and not

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<sup>1</sup> This is a scholastic dictum that is not attributed to any particular author. It is mentioned by the founder of scholasticism St. Anselm of Canterbury, St. Bonaventure and many others. It happens that the genesis of this statement is seen in ancient times, for example, in Clement of Alexandria, who thus emphasized the superiority of theology over philosophy, but also in the non-Christian philosopher Philo of Alexandria. See: H. de Vries, *Philosophia ancilla theologiae. Allegory and ascention in Philo's De congressu querende eruditionis gratia*, “The Bible and Critical Theory” 2009, no 3, vol. 5, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> See: J. Kalinowski, *Philosophie à l'heure du Concile*, Warszawa, 1995.

<sup>3</sup> S. Swieżawski, *Określenie Tożsamości Kościoła. Ze Stefanem Swieżawski, rozmawia Anna Kaproń-Ostrowska i Józef Majewski*, in: *Dzieci Soboru zadają pytania*, ed. Z. Nosowski Warszawa, 1999, p. 11.

simply impose it as an ideology in the form of a crusade.<sup>4</sup> Thomistic philosophy was recognized by the Second Vatican Council Fathers as suitable for Catholic theology, although the Council also opened itself to more contemporary philosophical currents (*Optatam totius*, 15). The Church has never called any philosophy “Her own” but nevertheless recognizes Her right to distinguish between proper and harmful philosophies (*Fides et Ratio*, 57). The Second Vatican Council did not dethrone the philosophy of St. Thomas, but opposed against making it Her own ideology, for the reason that the Church dissociates Herself from any ideology. The Church directly encourages philosophical research instead (*Gaudium et Spes*, 44), as it was emphasized by philosophers looking at the Council’s deliberations.<sup>5</sup> If the conciliar call for a return to philosophy is to be mentioned, it should be specified that Vatican II specifically recommends philosophical anthropology – a kind of “metaphysics of a man” – which is also confirmed by the teaching of the popes (*Gaudium et Spes*, 20–22, *Message for the World Peace Day 1977, Redemptor Hominis*, 8). Although the role of philosophy in general was depreciated in the late 19th century, it is making a comeback among other branches of science today. Stanislaw Lem, speaking with the voice of contemporary postmodernists in his *Philosophy of Chance*, points to the necessary existence of philosophy either as a set of superior directives for general thinking or as a metaphysics. The choice of ways of thinking presupposes the existence of evaluations: one has been deemed relatively better than the other. In turn, evaluations suppose the existence of values. Thus, it is impossible to do science (including theology) without philosophy, for the very reason that it requires freedom, and that freedom presupposes dealing with values. One could try by force to quit any evaluations, but such a quitting is also a choice.<sup>6</sup>

In the course of this article, I would like to deal with the second of the temporarily recognized applications of philosophy, namely the evaluation of theses, in this case theological theses, and the evaluation of the whole theory, the whole theology in this case, which consists of the particular theses. I encountered this application when analyzing the syllogism, attributed to Epicurus, which was used by the English atheist Nicholas Everitt in his “Proof of the Non-Existence of God”. Nicholas Everitt is known, among other things, as the author of *The Non-Existence of God*.<sup>7</sup> In his essay *How Benevolent Is God? – An Argument from Suffering to Atheism* – included in *50 Voices of Disbelief. Why Are We Atheists*, edited by Russell Blackford and Udo Schüklenk, his thesis, which was the subject of a philosophical evaluation, was that the Epicurean “definition of God,” and evaluated theory would be any theology accepting that definition.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> S. Swieżawski, *Określenie Tożsamości Kościoła...*, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> S. Swieżawski, *Określenie Tożsamości Kościoła...* op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>6</sup> S. Lem, *Filozofia przypadku. Literatura w świetle empirii*, Warszawa, 2010, p. 22.

<sup>7</sup> See: N. Everitt, *The Non-Existence of God*, London, 2004.

<sup>8</sup> N. Everitt, *How Benevolent Is God? – An Argument from Suffering to Atheism*, in: *50 Voices of Disbelief. Why Are We Atheists*, ed. R. Blackford, U. Schüklenk, London, 2009, p. 16.

### An attempted description of a System of Theology

In order to evaluate the theological thesis mentioned above, and consequently the whole of theology as a theory, one must use a mechanism developed in philosophy, that is philosophical interpretation. That means first to standardize it, which is: to express the thesis in the most comprehensible and at the same time clear and unambiguous language, and then checking, at this comprehensible level of language, whether the thesis does not generate any absurdities.

In order to reproduce any theory and to demonstrate its validity, a first step is needed: a translation into more accurate language. To reach this goal one needs to apply a certain level of standardization which calls to mind a system of natural deduction.<sup>9</sup> Such a system is an ordered couple of sets: the first one (1) contains every a well-formed formula of a well-understood and accurate language which has been used to express the theory; and the second one (2) contains all the rules allowing for the derivation of a further demanded formulae from a demanded formulae previously accepted.

Let's start with step one, which is clear language (1). Theology uses natural language, i.e. the language that people speak. The postulate of clarity and unambiguity of a language, however, imposes certain limitations on the overabundance of natural language. For this reason, any colloquial declarative (which means either true or false) sentence of natural language, respectively Latin, Polish, English, etc., should be considered a well-formed formula of theology. Each true or false colloquial declarative sentence will be called: "proposition." The rule of construction of a well-formed formulae says that a well-formed formula is any one of a basic language propositions plus any proposition constructed by adding one prefix "not" to any proposition already constructed, plus any proposition constructed by joining any two propositions already constructed with one of these four conjunctions: "and," "or," "if... then..." and "if and only if." The meaning of a spoken prefix and four conjunctions is as follows: a proposition constructed by adding the prefix "not" is true when the original proposition is false and the reverse; the complex proposition constructed with "and" is true when both (all) of its factors are true, and it is false in other cases, the complex proposition constructed with the conjunction "or" is false when both (all) its ingredients are false and it is true in other cases; the complex proposition constructed with the conjunction "if... then..." is false when its antecedent is true and its consequence is false, and it is true in other cases; and the complex proposition constructed with the conjunction "if and only if" is true when its sides are either both true or both false, and it is false in other cases.

Moving on to step two (2), one must ask what are the expressions demanded in the theory? In classical logic, these are expressions which are logically true.<sup>10</sup> Clas-

<sup>9</sup> L. Borkowski, J. Słupecki, *Elements of Mathematical Logic and Set Theory*, Oxford–New York, 1967, p. 98.

<sup>10</sup> L. Borkowski, *Wprowadzenie do logiki i teorii mnogości*, Lublin, 1990, p. 360.

sical logic is an extensional language, so it pays no attention to the content of its sentences. So, there are other, more specific approaches. Aristotle noted that the expressions of language can describe not only states of affairs occurring or not occurring (i.e. true or false), but also necessary or possible states of affairs can be described.<sup>11</sup> Over time, more and more possibilities were discovered: there were states of affairs occurring always or sometimes, practical or impractical, permitted or prohibited, etc.<sup>12</sup> The Second Vatican Council's Constitution *Dei Verbum* says that certain theses (truths of faith, sentences of theology, whatever we call them) are useful for salvation and necessary to be accepted by an act of faith (*Dei Verbum*, 5). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* calls this value "revelation" (*Catechism of Catholic Church*, 50). The Church teaches that "revealed" means as much as stated by the Holy Spirit. It must therefore be recognized that the books of the Bible confidently, faithfully and without error teach the truth that God's will is intended to be perpetuated through Scripture for our salvation. Therefore, "every Scripture inspired by God is useful (for) instruction, for persuasion, for exhortation, for training in righteousness: that the man of God may be made perfect and unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3,16–17; *Dei Verbum*, 12). Let us assume, therefore, in general, that theology seeks the propositions that are necessary to be received with the obedience of faith in order to gain eternal salvation. Viewed in this way, this language, must be then enriched by a set of rules, which determines all possible propositions that are necessary to be received with the obedience of faith in order to gain eternal salvation.

Philosophy always distinguishes certain propositions and accepts them from the beginning as demanded without conducting a process of proof.<sup>13</sup> These propositions are recognized as self-evident, such as Descartes' *Cogito ergo sum*, or defined by a philosopher, such as Locke's statement: *all that appears in human consciousness are either impressions or ideas*, or Wittgenstein's one: *all that exists in the world are facts*. According to the Church's teaching, the theses of theology are, in the first place, revealed propositions, i.e.: those contained in Scripture and Church Tradition (*Catechism of Catholic Church*, 80). This is what the Catechism teaches: "God in His graciousness wished to reveal to His people what it is useful to know about this subject" (*Catechism of Catholic Church*, 287). As well as the Council statement: "The books of the Bible confidently, faithfully, and without error teach the truth which by the will of God was to be perpetuated through the Scriptures for our salvation." (*Dei Verbum*, 11). While all the sentences of Scripture are clearly defined, Tradition must already be described adequately. *Dei Verbum* states that what "in the things of God is of itself accessible to human reason, also under the present conditions of the human race can be known by all quickly, with firm certainty and without the admixture of

<sup>11</sup> K. Świrydowicz, *Podstawy logiki modalnej*, Poznań, 2004, p. 38.

<sup>12</sup> G. H. von Wright, "Deontic Logic," *Mind*, 1951, n. 60, p. 1–3.

<sup>13</sup> There are various CPL axiomatics. The most popular is the so-called Hilbert–Bernays axiomatic, Meanwhile, among Polish logicians, Jan Łukasiewicz's axiomatic is considered the simplest one.

any error” (*Dei Verbum*, 6). Thus, it is necessary to distinguish all the propositions that describe facts among all correct propositions of a natural language. Facts are all states of affairs that actually occur in the sense that their negations describe states of affairs that do not occur. Next, in the distinguished set of fact-propositions, we distinguish expressions related to religious matters. It can be grasped intuitively in various ways, but here I will assume, following Joseph Maria Bocheński, that the religious matters include issues of attitudes toward the deity, rituals, feelings, moral precepts, views of the world and existential questions.<sup>14</sup> The union of these two sets includes propositions that are demanded in theology, and therefore necessary for salvation. However, the theory cannot stop there, because it must provide such a rule by means of which it is possible to create absolutely all the propositions necessary for salvation that can ever be uttered in theology. As we know the number of these possible propositions is infinite.

The tool for creating such a rule, as already mentioned, is the system of natural deduction. A thesis of theology is any proposition that either belongs to the set of revealed propositions or has been derived from this set by means of one of the three inference rules: the rule of substitution (RS), which states that it is allowed in any thesis of theology to substitute any well-formed formula of theology for any other well-formed formula of theology, wherever and only wherever the substituted formula occurs in the thesis that is being substituted; the rule of detachment (Modus Ponens, MP) which states that, for any theological thesis A, B, when ‘if A then B’ and ‘A’ are theological theses, then ‘B’ is also a theological thesis; and the rule of conjunction’s attaching (CA), which allows for the joining of every theological theses with “and” that represents a logical conjunction here. A theological proof of a thesis is a series of numbered propositions in which the first element is the revealed or already proved proposition, the last element is the theological thesis that is being proved, and all other expressions (the so-called lines of the proof) are substitutions of revealed propositions, or have been derived from the previous lines on the basis of the rules: RS, MP, or CA.<sup>15</sup> The theses thus proved can be called theological conclusions, theological interpretation of Revelation, interpretation of theology, etc. In any case, all of them are propositions necessary for salvation and therefore desirable in theology.

The Epicurean “definition of God”, recalled by Everitt, serves as an example of such a theological thesis. However, this definition was not invented by Nicholas Everitt but is widely known and readily cited as Epicurean. The statement poses some difficulty in quoting, as Epicurus’ works have largely not survived. Epicurus was not an atheist, but he opposed the popular conception of gods or God. The definition first appeared and was attributed to Epicurus in Chapter XIII of Book VII of the *Divinae*

<sup>14</sup> J.M. Bocheński, *Między logiką a wiarą. Z Józefem Bocheńskim rozmawia Jan Parys*, Montricher, 1988, p. 161.

<sup>15</sup> H. J. Gensler, *Introduction to Logic*, New York–London, 2002, p. 146–148.

*Institutiones*, entitled *De Ira Dei*, written by the Christian writer Lactantius. It was similarly cited by Pierre Bayle in 1702, in his *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*. It was later referred to by David Hume in his work *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, published in 1779, in Book X. Since then, it has appeared repeatedly, without reference to the source for obvious reasons. Instead Everitt wrote: “God is standardly defined in terms of a string of metaphysical properties: he is omniscient, omnipotent, perfectly good.”<sup>16</sup> These are the qualities attributed to God in the Bible, as follows: God’s omniscience: “Thy eyes beheld my unformed substance; in thy book were written, every one of them the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them” (Psalm 139, 16); God’s omnipotence: “For to God nothing is impossible” (Luke 1, 37); God’s goodness: “For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jer. 29, 11), etc. Every Monotheistic theology seems to attribute God’s qualities to Him to a perfect degree and, therefore, either attributes or rejects all of them. The theological conclusion derived from the revealed “definition of God” would be the thesis proclaiming that “God knows everything, can do everything and wants to do everything good.” And so, after the step of standardization the step of philosophical interpretation comes, i.e. checking the veracity of the theory in the model.

### **The philosophical interpretation of theological thesis**

Theories, by their nature, speak about everything, and one can adjudicate the sense and validity of a theory if and only if one interprets it in a model that is a fragment of reality.<sup>17</sup> Each model in general will consist of some objects and some functions, that are ways of assigning certain objects to other objects.<sup>18</sup> What is still needed here is philosophy, which is a theory as well. Like any theory, it consists of language and rules that help the demanded propositions to be obtained. A philosophical theory uses natural language limited to simple declarative sentences and compound sentences built with logical negation, conjunction, disjunction, implication and equivalence. A philosophical theory must also contain a rule that allows to produce propositions from the propositions already accepted as demanded in the field of philosophy. Thus, one first distinguishes a set of propositions defined by some philosophical authority as demanded, no matter what one calls them: true, momentous, practical, useful, etc., depending on the philosopher’s preference. According to Everitt those would be “fact-propositions.”<sup>19</sup> Then the same rules as applied as I have already described for theology. A positive philosophical interpretation of a thesis is a series of numbered propositions in which the first element is the thesis

<sup>16</sup> N. Everitt, *How Benevolent Is God?...*, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>17</sup> B. Wolniewicz, *O sytuacji we współczesnej filozofii*, w: B. Wolniewicz, *Filozofia i Wartości*, vol. 2, Warszawa 2018, p. 14–15.

<sup>18</sup> L. Borkowski, *Wprowadzenie do logiki...*, op. cit., p. 360.

<sup>19</sup> N. Everitt, *How Benevolent Is God?...*, op. cit., p. 20.

being subjected to interpretation, the last element is one of “fact-propositions,” and all other propositions (the so-called lines of the interpretation) are substitutions of philosophically demanded propositions once accepted, or have been derived from the previous lines on the basis of the rules: RS, MP, or CA.<sup>20</sup> A negative philosophical interpretation of a thesis is in turn the interpretation as defined above but its last element is a “counter-fact-proposition.” Everitt would therefore interpret the Epicurean “definition of God” as follows: The content of Epicurus’ definition of God is considered as revealed. On the basis of a spoken definition, a theologian can conclude that God knows everything that happens in the world, can deal with all the affairs of the world, and wants to deal with everything that is not good. This general theological claim would have to be interpreted in a real-world model and a certain substitution would have to be made: God knows about the existence of evil in the world, can deal with it (as omnipotent) and wants to deal with it (as all-good), so evil in the world does not exist, which is contrary to objective facts. To think of God contradicting objective facts would be, according to Alvin Plantinga, “positively irrational,”<sup>21</sup> and therefore not contradictory but incoherent, and therefore not completely crossing out its logical possibility. On the other hand, according to Bocheński, philosophy serves theology to remove superstition, i.e. incoherent thinking<sup>22</sup>. Thus, any thesis of theology that has a negative philosophical interpretation can be considered superstition in the light of this philosophy.

Stanislaw Lem noted that a hierarchy of mutually similar wholes allows comparisons to be made between their levels. This similarity makes it possible for the systems being compared to serve as models for each other.<sup>23</sup> Thus, every theory, including a theological theory, contains both constant and variable elements. The latter are abstract names, such as, “knowledge,” “goodness,” “omnipotence,” etc. The former, on the other hand, are everything that is invariably adjudicated about the variables, such as, “knows,” “wants,” “deals with,” etc. It should be noted that there are constants that equally occur and operate in every theory, so they have their place in every model. They are needed to test the truth of a theory, which can only be considered as objective truth when it is verifiable and indeed works in all possible models. To point out that theology does not refer to reality, it is necessary to look closer at the subject of philosophical interpretation of theology. Let me then – according to Joseph Maria Bocheński – compare the relation of theology to its philosophical interpretation with the relation of syntax to semantics in logic.<sup>24</sup> In the field of syntax, one talks about axioms, logical consequences, and theses (tautologies), and proves the completeness of the system, in the sense that there must be a proof that is constructible for every

<sup>20</sup> H. J. Gensler, *Introduction to Logic*, op. cit., p. 146–148.

<sup>21</sup> J. Mackie, “Evil and omnipotence,” *Mind*, 1955, no. 254, p. 200.

<sup>22</sup> J.M. Bocheński, *Światopogląd a filozofia*, in: J.M. Bocheński, *Sens życia i inne eseje*, Kraków, 1996, p. 186–188.

<sup>23</sup> S. Lem, *Filozofia przypadku...*, op. cit., p. 28.

<sup>24</sup> J. M. Bocheński, *The Logic of religion*, New York, 1965, p. 17.

proposition with a valid truth table. In the field of semantics, one already talks about logical consequences and true sentences and can provide a proof of the fullness of the system; that is, showing that all true propositions are its theorems, which means, able to be proved. Just as theology leads from a set of revealed propositions to its consequences, so philosophy should lead from a set of its philosophical theorems to a set of objectively true propositions (fact-propositions). I believe that Everitt linked theology and its philosophical interpretation in a similar way.

Modeling is the establishment and detection of some similarity between things and their interrelationships, which similarity, when established, reduces the absolute diversity of the world. Such a reduction in diversity is called ordering. To model, therefore, means as much as “to find out something about the world,” and “to find out something about the world” means to introduce just such an ordering.<sup>25</sup> Bogusław Wolniewicz, who always began by saying that philosophy serves to illuminate human thought, stated that modeling is the application in practice of the principle of *dictum de omni*, discovered and introduced by Boethius. A model of a theory would be some fragment of reality, while a theory is a model of a fragment of reality in a domain of language.<sup>26</sup>

The theory is tested by substituting some constants for variables, i.e. substituting for abstract expressions the names of concrete objects from the fragment of reality that is the model of the theory.<sup>27</sup> According to Wolniewicz, if the interpretation arrives at preposterous statements, it means that the preposterousness of the theory itself has been revealed.<sup>28</sup> Joseph Maria Bocheński believed that carrying out a similar interpretation for the claims of a religion whose creed is treated as a theory for the purposes of this interpretation, in the model that our real world should be, is needed to combat any superstition. The absurdity revealed in the interpretation of religion would have us conclude that we are not dealing with true religion, but with superstition, etc.<sup>29</sup>

This is what Everitt wanted to do for any religion that recognizes the aforementioned definition of God. Using a theological conclusion derived from Epicurus’ “definition of God” as a theory with three abstract variables, under which, also following Epicurus, he substituted corresponding constants related to the existence of evil in the world. God concerning propositions, such as “God knows everything,” “God can deal with everything,” and “God wants to do all that is good,” were replaced by precise and particular statements: “God knows about the existence of all the evils of this world,” “God can deal with all the evils of this world,” “God wants to deal with all the evils of this world.”

As mentioned above, Everitt does not claim that God’s definition is self-contradictory, but that it would rather be contradicted by facts. Thus, everyone who accepts

<sup>25</sup> S. Lem, *Filozofia przypadku...*, op. cit., p. 144.

<sup>26</sup> B. Wolniewicz, *O sytuacji we współczesnej filozofii*, op. cit., p. 14–15.

<sup>27</sup> S. Lem, *Filozofia przypadku...*, op. cit., p. 144.

<sup>28</sup> B. Wolniewicz, *O sytuacji we współczesnej filozofii*, op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>29</sup> J.M. Bocheński, *Światopogląd a filozofia*, op. cit., p. 186–188.



both the definition of God and facts, as all theologians seem to do, becomes self-contradicted. Let us consider fact as a state of affair that occurs. In the second section of this article, I considered all declarative propositions – so-called: “fact-propositions” – in the language of theology. I have also considered another subset of propositions – so-called: “religion-propositions.” This subset contains all propositions related to religious matters. This subset can be grasped intuitively in various ways. Here I will assume—following Joseph M. Bocheński—that the religious sphere includes issues of attitudes toward the deity, rituals, feelings, moral precepts, world views, and existential questions.<sup>30</sup> Then, the proposition stating that “all the evil of this world exists” would also be one of the “religion-propositions.” As I mentioned above, Revelation is to be a set of true propositions, that can either come directly from holy books or oral religious tradition (*Catechism of The Catholic Church*, 287; *Dei Verbum* 11).

However, some atheists (including Everitt himself) have decided to focus on providing supposedly irrefutable proof of God’s non-existence, as it would be difficult to enumerate all the proofs and refute them one by one.<sup>31</sup> This would involve demonstrating, by the same definition of God, that the God cannot exist. This is the opposite of what occurs in the well-known ontological proof of the existence of God by St. Anselm of Canterbury recorded in his *Proslogion*<sup>32</sup>, where the existence of God is contained in His notion, or, in its semi-ontological Cartesian interpretation, where it is less of an insult to human reason to accept God as the cause of His own idea than to accept the appearance of that idea out of nothing.<sup>33</sup> The ontological character is also carried by Avicenna’s view, according to which existence is the essence of God and, so, it needs nothing else for its justification.<sup>34</sup> Quite a bit has already been written about the Anselmian ontological proof and its criticism by Gaunilon, Immanuel Kant, and many others. I would like to draw attention only to the apologetic work of Alvin Plantinga *God and Other Minds*, which has also received some critical analysis.<sup>35</sup> I think that Everitt’s proof was to be ontological at its starting point and it came out as containing an ontological or *a priori* part, that refers to justification of the existential thesis – negative in this case – flowing from the terminological analysis of the accepted definition of God.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>30</sup> J. M. Bocheński, *Między logiką a wiarą...*, op. cit., p. 161.

<sup>31</sup> N. Everitt, *How Benevolent is God?...*, op. cit. p. 17.

<sup>32</sup> M.J. Charlesworth, *St. Anselm’s Proslogion*, London – Notre Dame, 1979, c. 2.

<sup>33</sup> P. Slama, “Phenomenology of Immanence: Doxography on the ‘Idea of God’ (Descartes, Kant, Schelling, Levinas),” *Religions*, 2022, no. 13, p. 4.

<sup>34</sup> I. Lala, L. Alwazzan, “Necessary Existence and Necessary Mercy: Ibn ‘Arabi’s Reformulation of Ibn Sina’s Ontological Proof,” *Religions*, 2022, no 14, p. 2.

<sup>35</sup> A.G. Lind, “God’s Presence within Henry’s Phenomenology of Life: The Phenomenological Revelation of God in Opposite to Plantinga’s Affirmation of God’s Existence,” *Religions*, 2018, no. 9, p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> N. Everitt, *The Non-Existence of God*, op. cit., p. 15.

## Conclusion

The Second Vatican Council recalled the diverse role of philosophy in theology. One of its uses is to examine for the correctness of theological theses and of the whole theology taken as a theory, which consists of particular theses. This process takes place in two steps. First, philosophy helps to express the whole theory in clear and unambiguous language. Thus, it determines which formula can be considered correct and how such a formula to be created. Then one needs to find a certain value that the theses demanded in theology must have. This value may be logical truthfulness, but it may as well be a “being necessary for salvation,” etc. Philosophy is helpful to theology in finding the rule by virtue to which individual theses this value can be assigned or denied. The rule allows for the formulation of a potentially infinite number of theses. After all, more and more statements and conclusions are being formulated in the field of theology. Further on, a particular thesis is taken into account and two sets of its elements are distinguished: the first one contains all the terms that adjudicate the relations occurring between objects, and the second one contains variables, i.e. all the abstract names. In order to examine the thesis in a model, a model suitable for the theory is selected on the basis of similarity. A model is a certain set of objects connected with each-other by certain relations. Names representing the elements of the model (i.e., concrete names) are substituted for the abstract terms of the thesis (i.e., variables). It is then examined as to whether, after such a substitution, the thesis generates nonsense or does not, i.e. whether it contradicts the facts or not. Nicholas Everitt evaluated the Epicurean “definition of God,” in a way that also should be accepted in theology. The definition says that God is “omniscient, omnipotent and omnibenevolent.” The application of philosophy led him, like Epicurus many centuries earlier, to conclude that a definition so constructed would deny the existence of evil in the world, and that the existence of evil in the world would undermine that definition. This statement was regarded by Everitt as irrefutable proof of the non-existence of God. Of course, in my opinion, such a conclusion is too far-fetched and premature – I have dedicated another article to this issue. Nevertheless, the application of philosophy to theology remains valid, and indicates that earthly reality is not suitable as a model for the Epicurean definition.

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## **On the Application of Philosophy in Theology as Exemplified by Nicholas Everitt's "Proof of the Non-Existence of God"**

### **Abstract**

The Second Vatican Council noted the importance of St. Thomas Aquinas' philosophy for Catholic Theology. Although The Church also opened Herself to more contemporary philosophical currents. The Church has never called any philosophy "Her own," but nevertheless recognizes Her right to distinguish between a proper and a harmful philosophy. Although the role of philosophy in general was deprecated in the late 19th century, it is making a contemporary comeback among other branches of science: either as a set of overarching directives for thinking or as a metaphysics. The subject of this article is the first of the applications. In this way Nicholas Everitt attributed the "definition of God" to Epicurus and accepted it on the bases of theology. The application of philosophy led him to conclude, that a definition of God constructed in this way would contradict the facts. The application of philosophy to theology described here is valid, but rather indicates that earthly reality is not suitable as a model for Epicurean definition.

**Keywords:** philosophy, theology, interpretation, model, proof

## **O zastosowaniu filozofii w teologii na przykładzie Nicholasa Everitta „dowodu na nieistnienie Boga”**

### **Abstrakt**

Sobór Watykański II zwrócił uwagę na znaczenie filozofii św. Tomasza z Akwinu dla teologii katolickiej, choć otworzył się także na bardziej współczesne mu prądy filozoficzne. Kościół nigdy nie nazwał „swoją” żadnej z filozofii, niemniej jednak uznaje swoje prawo do rozróżniania filozofii właściwej od szkodliwej. Chociaż pod koniec XIX w. deprecjonowano rolę filozofii w ogóle, to współcześnie powraca ona wśród innych gałęzi nauki: bądź to jako zestaw nadrzędnych dyrektyw myślenia (nauki), bądź to jako metafizyki. Przedmiotem niniejszego artykułu jest pierwsze z zastosowań. W ten właśnie sposób Nicholas Everitt oceniał przypisywaną Epikurovi i akceptowaną na gruncie teologii definicję Boga. Zastosowanie filozofii doprowadziło go, do stwierdzenia, że tak zbudowana definicja Boga zaprzeczałaby faktom. Opisane tu zastosowanie filozofii w teologii jest aktualne, ale wskazuje raczej na to, że ziemską rzeczywistość nie nadaje się na model epikurejskiej definicji.

**Słowa kluczowe:** filozofia, teologia, interpretacja, model, dowód