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ON TRENDS IN THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT
OF THE THEORY OF SCIENTIFIC ATHEISM,
AND THE INTENSIFICATION OF THE EDUCATION
OF THE WORKING PEOPLE IN SCIENTIFIC ATHEISM

The education of the working people in scientific atheism is undoubtedly an important aspect of their education in communism and as such has recently undergone a certain period of stagnation in this country. A symptomatic feature is the fact that in contrast to the former situation the number, for example, of lectures on scientific atheism has decreased and at the same time the interest in the subject on the part of various voluntary organizations, adult educational bodies and other organizers has also declined.¹ Although this may partly be explained by the decrease in religious feeling, resulting from the removal of the social roots of religion in the course of socialist construction, and also from the educational work carried out in the spirit of scientific philosophy by the Communist Party, the state (with its educational and cultural institutions) and by voluntary organizations, and further by the deliberate strengthening of the philosophical elements in the extension of knowledge of natural science, social science, technology and economy through various forms of extra-school education, so that the purpose of independent propaganda of scientific atheism at times loses its urgency, nevertheless we cannot ignore the fact that in a number of cases questions of scientific atheism are simply removed from the agenda, are omitted from the lecture cycles prepared by university extension schemes, etc. This is the case even when it is clear that the question of survival of religious beliefs among certain citizens or groups of citizens is by no means solved, and even although here and there revival and increase of religious feeling can be observed.²

This stagnation of scientific-atheist propaganda and education of the people must for the most part be attributed to the *failure of the theory of scientific atheism to keep up with the needs of the time*, along with the closely associated *lagging behind of methods of atheistic propaganda and education*. The main cause of this lies in the fact that some expressions of religious feeling cannot easily be reached by the methods we have so far used for influencing religious believers and so frequently all efforts to affect believers are relinquished, just as if the problem of religious belief no longer existed. While religious propaganda often succeeds very ingeniously in adapting its arguments to changed conditions, which have entailed considerable difficulties in spreading religion, theologians endeavour, and not without success, to find a new ideological weapon in the shape of all kinds of modernized explanations of faith, and the Churches intensify and try in many ways to make their pastoral activity more effective,³ the theory of scientific atheism is marking time, and so far as the methods of education are concerned, frequently not even the experiences we gained in

this country in the initial stages of the systematic development of atheist education are not sufficiently made use of. The progress made in philosophy and the specialist branches of social science towards overcoming the accumulation of dogmatism inherited from the period of the personality cult has not yet been adequately reflected in the conception of the aims and tasks of scientific atheism.

This can be seen very clearly in the basic literature of the subject, which, especially with regard to the number of publications, is by no means lacking. In the last few years a good number of original works dealing with questions of scientific atheism and atheist education have appeared. Although some of these successfully fulfilled their aim, especially when this had been very concretely fixed,⁴ it would be wrong to deny that quantity in this field of research perhaps more than anywhere else has not always signified quality. Sometimes authors succumbed to the belief that success in scientific atheism could be attained fairly easily and thus the work done was only superficial, elsewhere they failed to perceive accurately the *specific character of the subject* they were writing about and — in spite of endeavours to reach scientific thoroughness — they deviated into dealing with subsidiary problems and even problems of remote or of little importance. Thus not only definitely weak publications appeared, which often gave little information to atheists and of course brought no conviction to believers, but also a number of works which in spite of a very solid specialist foundation did not reach a wider public and had little effect on readers, since they could not show a sufficiently sensitive apprehension of the topical needs of the current ideological argument and thus could not react in a useful way to these requirements.

A large part of new literature on scientific atheism has been characterized in recent years by *three* basic faults. First of all there was the tendency to a too great exaggeration of the *historic aspect*, which gave pride of place to *religious forms which have practically died out in this country*. Far too much space was devoted to the so-called lower religions, frequently not even European, to all kinds of ethnographic curiosities, etc. A result of this tendency was that contemporary forms of living religious feeling were neglected by the wide body of active propagandists, educational workers, teachers, etc., while the ideological front was badly prepared to deal successfully with the refined contemporary apologetics and propaganda of religion, which result from the adaptation of the traditional basis of religion (dogmas) to the conditions of human life today, the conditions of modern society, in which science has already secured its inalienable rights. It is no wonder that scientific atheist lectures have frequently been tilting at windmills, at opinions which no one upholds, and so, instead of convincing, they have rather aroused the unpleasant suspicion that Marxists know nothing about the religions they wish to refute.

The second fundamental fault lay in the fact that atheist publications — frequently, as we have said, with a historical trend — did not succeed in ridding themselves of an *oversimplified attitude to the problems of religion, which reduced everything to flat, sociologizing terms*. Religion is in many publications represented *only* as a more or less fated product of certain social conditions, *only* as a inevitable concomitant of class antagonisms and exploitation, while insufficient attention is paid to the analysis of the complicated intervention of religious consciousness, the role of the *activity of the subject* in this field of the psychological reproduction of reality. Such publications must naturally

have a puzzling effect, since they arouse the incorrect supposition that it is enough to remove the social roots of religion in order that religious feeling should die out automatically. They render it more difficult to grasp the important circumstances and precise moments which enable religion to live on more easily in a socialist society, in which its roots have been removed. They produce a feeling of inadequacy in their attempt to fight the influence of religious bodies (the Churches), which not only are not seriously threatened by such insufficiently grounded scientific atheist propaganda, but even succeed in using it to strengthen their own ideological position.

Finally the third basic fault of many scientific atheist works, closely connected with what we have already mentioned, has been the *narrowing and reduction of scientific atheism in theory and practice to merely a rational critique of faith, neglecting the highly complicated world of religious psychology*, the neglect of the fact that religious conviction for the most part is not (or, at least, not primarily) the result of rational thought, but arises from the whole complex of elemental emotional and free reactions, conditioned by the practical social position of the individual, from the conflicts of his inner life, etc. This, in a sense, dehumanizing of the concept of believers, who have been reduced to a kind of schematic abstract as holders of opinions which are mistaken, false (and as was generally asserted in the period of the personality cult, hostile) undoubtedly led to a situation in which the *style* of many scientific atheist publications was at logger-heads with their purpose; monotonous, crushingly boring, dry methods of expounding questions of scientific atheism were unsuitable enough for the instruction of propagandists, let alone for the purpose of attracting the interest of believers and helping to persuade them of the correctness of Marxism. We must state openly that such works tended rather to reawaken a sympathy for religion. From the point of view of the Churches some of our scientific atheist booklets and pamphlets were from this aspect not only harmless but even — against their authors' will — confirmed religious believers in the faith which they were intended to shake.

Taking as our starting point these main weaknesses in the development of scientific atheist theory and the fact that the causes of these weaknesses — apart from mistakes resulting from inadequate experience at the initial stages of working out a theory of scientific atheism in this country — lay mainly in the general stagnation of Marxist theory in the personality cult period and in the deformation of Marxist theory during that period, we may indicate the most important future trends of theoretical work in the field of scientific atheism and in the improvement in methods of scientific atheist propaganda and education. At the same time we shall examine some publications whose authors to a greater or less degree have already reacted to the necessity for a complete change in the setting out of the arguments of scientific atheism and to the further necessity of finding considerably more profound methods of affecting believers. These authors have made no small advances towards improving the present undesirable position.

If we have criticized the too great degree of historicism in scientific atheist literature, this of course does not mean that it is necessary to give up the *historical approach* to the problems of scientific atheism. Such an approach is not only essential as a *method*, and especially as a method of scientific examination of social phenomena,⁵ but it is suitable, useful and effective also as

a way of expounding, which more or less keeps to a chronological approach. Historical works have a basic significance for the development of the theory of scientific atheism, which we can realize especially in connection with the fact that we have practically no histories of recent and contemporary historical religious currents (ideology), movements and religious bodies (Churches). We already have thorough Marxist monographs on medieval Christianity, the medieval Church, the Papacy, the Reformation and Counter-reformation, but the modern and especially the most recent history of Christianity from the Marxist viewpoint has so far not been thoroughly treated, in fact we can scarcely find any signs of such treatment. This blank which has been left by historical science must — at least in part — be filled by other sociological disciplines, above all philosophy, as we see *inter alia* in the most recent studies of Milan Machovec, *The Utopias of the Visionaries and Sectarians* (along with Markéta Machovcová),⁶ *On the So-Called "Dialectical" Theology of Contemporary Protestantism*,⁷ and *Neo-Thomism*.⁸

The value of such excursions into recent and contemporary history of religion in these and other studies for the further development of the theory of scientific atheism is evident not only when we compare them with works which draw their conclusions about religion for the present time from medieval or only slightly more recent materials and facts. It can be seen above all from the way in which these historical excursions enable us to understand the *religiosity of contemporary man* with a many-sided, more profound and clearer sense for its specific character, and thus reveal more easily its causes and find a way to overcome them. Machovec's monographs of course also show that the history of religion, which should advance our knowledge of this form of social consciousness and especially of its contemporary aspects, cannot be that type of wrong-headed history which was capable only of jumping from the economic structure of society to the sphere of superstructural phenomena, or of illustrating some generally known Marxist truths about religion by means of a greater or lesser number of further more or less suitable selected examples. They demonstrate very convincingly that the historian of religion, if he really wishes to enrich our knowledge of religious phenomena and help us to penetrate into the fundamentals of the religious life of contemporary people, must in association with changes in the basis of society carefully examine the spontaneous movement of relatively independent fields of the various forms of social consciousness, with their mutual influence and the influence of tradition, which — as Engels already pointed out⁹ — is all the stronger, as the particular form of social consciousness is enabled to move away from the basis and is not *directly* bound up with changes in it.

Only in this way can history contribute to a greater extent than hitherto to the clearing up and solution of certain problems which at the present moment appear as the central problems of scientific atheism and to which therefore primary attention must be paid. Roughly, the problems are as follows (we present them without intending to indicate their importance by the order in which they are given):

a) *Questions relating to the specific character of various religious trends, Churches or sects.* Although it may in general be said that the principle of all religions is fundamentally the same, there do exist no mean differences between the individual religious movements, confessions of faith or religious denomina-

tions, provided by the peculiarities of their historical development, peculiarities of conditions and situations, in which their main features took shape. The studies by Machovec quoted on Protestant theology and Neo-Thomism give for example a very exact and convincing definition of the peculiarities of Catholic and Protestant theology, of the difference between Protestant and Catholic devoutness.¹⁰ Further there undoubtedly exist many different nuances, often very fine, but nevertheless not insignificant, between Catholicism in different countries, just as there are between Protestantism in this country, in Germany, France or the USA (in the case of Protestantism in addition there are the greater or lesser differences of the Protestant Churches in each country). Czech Catholicism is decidedly different from Polish Catholicism (or even from Slovakian), just as Czech Evangelicalism is very different from for example the American Baptist Church, etc.¹¹ The individual religious currents, movements and bodies (Churches) have a different degree of capacity to react to social and scientific advance, have differing strong or weak points, one or the other feature which is impressive (Catholicism perhaps by means of its age-old tradition, even directly by its conservatism, delight in backwardness), or on the other hand which antagonize (e.g. certain Protestant denominations by their moral prudery, some sects by the eccentricity or even perversity of their rules, etc.). These differences we must be well aware of, in order to assess objectively the tendency and possibility which the various religious ideologies and Churches have of being effective in certain circumstances, and to select accordingly adequate means of paralyzing and overcoming this effect.

b) *Questions connected with the mutual relationships of various religious bodies and Churches, especially under conditions of the general decline and regression of religious feeling (all over the world) and under the conditions of the socialist countries, after the removal of the social roots of religion and as a result of putting into practice the principle that religion is exclusively the private affair of the citizen.* From the past it is well known that the relationships between the different faiths and religious organizations were often, in fact usually, very hostile and full of tension. Differences in religious conviction (often very slight) divided people as if by an unbridgeable gulf, giving rise to dislike, intolerance and frequently to fanatical hatred between the members of different faiths and religious movements. At the present time it is possible to observe rather striking changes in these relationships. This indicates the need to examine the cause of these changes, the degree to which the removal of the contradictions and barriers between the different religious currents and Churches has had a positive effect, in the direction of weakening the religious inclination of the inhabitants of the country in question, and to what extent and why on the other hand it affects the extension of religious faith, strengthens the position of the religious organizations and helps to increase their effect. These are immeasurably serious problems, if we consider that it is really a question of the degree to which the ecumenical movement of the Protestant Churches and similar attempts which are very strong and lively in Catholicism (as appeared especially during the pontificate of John XXIII) may form a *really open attitude of the religious movements, Churches and the individual believers towards progressive social movements and currents, towards the Peace Movement, communism and Marxist ideology*, and on the contrary, to what extent the ecumenical movement, the attempt to unite the whole of Christianity (and possibly, later,

even the non-Christian faith) conceals an actual or a potential danger of strengthening the resistance of the religious movements and organizations especially against socialism and the communist ideology.¹² As Milan Machovec again shows in the study *Will the Catholic Church Rehabilitate Jan Hus?*¹³ it is certainly not possible to ignore these facts, nor is it possible to accept premature conclusions whether positive or negative, as to these or other new movements in the relationships between the individual Churches and their relationship to Marxism. For the Churches, and the Catholic Church in the first place, are very closely concerned, in fact, as to their very basis, as to the *raison d'être* of their existence.¹⁴

c) *The group of problems relating to changes in the traditional religious structures, Churches, their methods and practice, traditional forms of religious life and forms of spreading religious ideology under the conditions of advanced modern (technological) society and under the conditions of socialism.* By their fundamental character religious structures are all units which developed under social conditions completely different from those under which religion and the Churches carry on their work today, they are the products of people whose mental habit and way of psychological (mental) reproduction of reality showed considerable differences compared with that of mankind today. Catholicism, as we know, is fundamentally a thoroughgoing feudal religion (it long fought stubbornly against bourgeois forms of organization and social life and frequently adapted itself only with difficulty — and exceedingly unwillingly — to these forms). In other words it is necessary to examine in detail and with great care the way in which processes are taking place within the traditional religious structures, the Churches, in the way of religious life, and — while the various religious faith frequently show little attempt to disassociate themselves from the blacker moments of their past and revise at least those aspects of their teaching which are most markedly in contradiction to the modern style of life, to scientific knowledge, etc. — to enquire whether these religious structures and organizations are functioning without difficulty (or only with slight difficulty) in the midst of technological influences, the miracles of modern science, and under such types of social relationship which should, according to anticipation, mean for them an insurmountable obstacle. If these processes remain neglected, we lose the opportunity of explaining more thoroughly the contemporary position and influence of religion (the Churches), as is clear from the weaker spots in what are otherwise the excellent studies, well-founded on material, by Luděk Matysek, *In the Name of God and the USA*¹⁵ and by Václav Vyšohlíd, *The Vatican and the USA*.¹⁶

d) *Questions relating to the forms taken by religion as a parasitic growth and the possibilities of its becoming a parasite on the non-religious activity of mankind and on the non-religious products of this activity.* Current explanations of problems of religion have often set out from the assumption that religion is a completely independent form of social consciousness, in no way non-dependent on other forms of social consciousness. As a result on the one hand the concept of religion was made to include phenomena which need not and do not have anything in common with religion as a *specific reflection of reality*, on the other hand the fact was ignored that religion, — as are idealistic philosophic opinions — is a typical phenomenon of spiritual parasitism on the sound activity (practice) of the human subject and its products. Religion, as Karel Stejskal shows in the article *Art and Religion*¹⁷ and the present author in his

study *The Religious and Artistic Reflection of Reality*¹⁸ is such a reflection of reality as can be realized as an ideology only with the help of and by means of higher, more advanced forms of reflection (philosophy, morals, art, etc.). Therefore religion as an ideology, which has always been the expression of undeveloped vital forces of mankind and as such has always narrowed down the space available for the development of man, could develop and spread only under the assumption that at the same time it left a certain space for his healthy, in no way erroneous or false activity (including cognition), and so the Churches to a certain extent — even though very unwillingly — allowed even the development of scientific research, supported artistic creative work, etc. Under conditions which generally render more difficult the possibility of preserving and spreading religion, naturally the significance of these parasitic links becomes particularly prominent, the Churches seek the most various ways in which to strengthen these links and to forge new links in the field of philosophy, morals, art and even in science.¹⁹ For we cannot ignore how, in every circumstances, such links appear and are capable of continuing; at the same time we must not ignore especially the *socio-psychological element in religion*, which is more resistant than the ideological element and whose importance for religion and the activity of the Churches increases especially at the moment when these must pass more or less permanently to the defensive.²⁰ The processes whereby religious psychology is linked also with sound moral feeling, aesthetic (artistic) experiences, etc., are so far very remote from being thoroughly examined, although many people quote in defence of their religious opinions or faith precisely arguments from the field of morality or art.²¹

The history of religion alone is not however enough to solve the complex of problems here mentioned, even although an historic approach to these problems is essential and history as a science (not merely descriptive, a-theoretical history), can contribute to it considerably. For religious structures must be followed not only in their genetic, vertical connections, but also horizontally, seen from the moment of their relative stability in a given historical and social context. Here it is necessary to seek the aid of the special disciplines of social science, ethics, social psychology and others, especially the *sociology of religion*.²² For at the present time we can no longer dispense, even in the field of scientific-atheist theory, if we want to develop it as a really scientific theory, with profound scientific social investigation by means of thoroughly worked-out methods, nor with the acquisition of a sufficiency of empirical material and its evaluation. Such investigations are of course very difficult and exacting matters, since as a result of the backwardness of Marxist sociology during the personality cult, when dogmatism, subjectivism and voluntarism reigned supreme in theory, any wealth of experience in this field of research is lacking and many research workers are only now making the acquaintance of modern methods in sociology, but nevertheless it is not possible that these methods should lag behind.²³

When we speak of the necessity of sociological investigations and of the need to intensify considerably work on empirical material, we do however realize that sociological investigations, even the most advanced methods (e.g. statistical) of attaining important data about religious feeling at the present time will not be sufficient in themselves to cure the ills of scientific atheist theory. Sociology can lead us to objective conclusions, so far as we can carry out the *quantitative analysis* of the collected *phenomena* examined. However, social phenomena

can never be completely qualified, formalized, without deforming certain of their aspects, whose character rejects quantitative analysis. Even when the social phenomena investigated occur according to regular laws, we cannot eliminate the unique moment, since we would thus be denying the possibility of the independent activity of the human subject, who is no mere fatal product of given social relationships, but also participates in their creation, and is an individual who cannot be reduced merely to given social relationships. The investigator dealing with research into religious feeling, will in any case — especially if he keeps under consideration the fact that religion is one of the ways of *psychological* reproduction of reality and its effects are never consumed in external expressions of religiosity which can be measured — will gain material to which the methods of quantitative analysis cannot be applied, will come across phenomena which sociology alone cannot explain.

Thus for example the particular moments and circumstances which to a greater or less extent cause or influence people who basically have found a rational solution for the religious question, to undergo a certain regeneration of religious attitudes, as the actualization of some kind of need for “the divine”, “the absolute”, etc., even in a developing socialist society, are so individual and manifold that here we can scarcely arrive at any generalization. Similarly the course of such processes of the regeneration of religious consciousness and its very quality (content) are so different according to the different individualities of people that it is not possible to draw any general conclusions. Investigation to be sure has, for example, ascertained that such — often apparently incomprehensible — re-conversions to religious belief are potentially induced by a certain feeling of crisis in the thought and emotions of people on the verge between capitalism and communism, by a certain “vacuum” in the consciousness of people undergoing a rebirth in the field of philosophical outlook, morals and emotions, when such people *already* practically lost their faith in their youth, and either spontaneously or consciously by means of reason already have rid themselves of a Christian outlook, but have *not yet* become firmly anchored in communist moral feeling, in socialist humanism. In this situation, at times of lessened control by the intellect (and in some cases even against the so-called rational censor), religious attitudes to reality may be renewed in people from the most varied causes, and these often lead to very intensive and mistaken intellectual activity typical of religious introversion. There may even develop suppositions that communism will require religion for the satisfaction of the psychological needs of people just as it will require an advanced material technical basis for the satisfaction of their material needs, that precisely under communism a great future is waiting for religion, since, it is alleged, religion will then carry out the task of the factor ensuring a rich inner life for mankind, etc.²⁴ However, these causes, resting undoubtedly also on phenomena susceptible of examination by sociological methods, are at the same time so greatly modified by the individual expression of the human subject, that here we will not find sociological methods alone sufficient. And naturally too these religious experiences themselves, religious ideas, religious emotions, etc., whose nature we wish to ascertain, escape from our efforts to attain this only by quantitative analysis.

Thus not even in scientific atheist education can we be content only with explaining religious phenomena (i.e. by rational analysis and criticism of reli-

gion), even although this rational explanation as one of the methods of scientific atheist education will always retain its place. Nor can we be content only with this even should we conceive it in a much more profound way, than as merely showing at the most general level the social and economic conditioning of religion, stating the harmfulness of religious ideology and its surviving relics, etc. If we want to attain any considerably greater success it will be necessary for us along with a thorough analysis of the socio-historical contexts of religion and the survival of relics of religion, to examine no less thoroughly the complicated processes which take place in the psychology of people, so that we may penetrate into the labyrinth of their inner life and seek there often apparently slight and insignificant subjective inhibitions which are decisive for errors in the direction of human thought, for its inner crises, usually providing fertile soil also for backsliding into religious feeling.

This again presupposes a completely or almost completely *new approach to believers* and to explanatory and persuasive work among them, it demands often that we should fundamentally reassess the methods so far used in scientific atheist propaganda and education, as is pointed out by the studies of Josef Macháček and Milan Machovec *On the Meaning and Methods of Atheist Education*²⁵ and *Is Our Scientific Atheist Education on the Right Lines?*²⁶ If under socialist conditions and generally under the conditions of modern technological society the problem of the break with religion generally appears *above all as a problem of inner regeneration*, meeting with different subjective obstacles, emotional barriers and conflicts, moods nourished by feelings of isolation, of the emptiness of life, the most various personal indispositions, (the need to attain success in work and in social position, to acquire good friends, etc.),²⁷ then a fundamental conversion from religion to a scientific philosophical outlook, to an atheist conviction, cannot be achieved merely by external means. Such a conversion is of course always speeded up by certain external shocks, i.e. also by discussion and polemics, but the most important of these is the polemical discussion carried on by the believer with himself, his own self-persuasion. As Milan Machovec writes in his study *On the So-Called "Dialectic" Theology of Contemporary Protestantism*, "Knowledge can be spread, but each man must fight his own way through to *truth*".²⁸ Propagandists of the scientific philosophical outlook should thus above all have the gift of inducing sensitively and tactfully this self-persuasion, of sensitively and tactfully encouraging and developing it. At the same time every Marxist atheist should behave as a "dialectically working neurologist, respecting the individuality of the contents of consciousness: slowly and patiently make his way into the delicate involutions of consciousness of the affected individual, help him to find there those crossroads and blind alleys which were the source of the developed neurosis. Thus the sick element of consciousness is not 'removed', but in fact 'cured', the individual rises *above* his mistaken and erroneous ideas, and thus gets over his illness".²⁹

The image here quoted, which Machovec uses to indicate the direction of work and choice of methods in scientific atheist education, shows how much higher a level must be attained by ideological activity in this field as compared with the situation up to now. So far scientific atheist propaganda has largely worked with means and methods far *below the level of the processes* which take place in the consciousness of believers. As the undercurrent of the arguments with which we approach our fellow-citizens who are still believers, there still runs,

more often than comprehension and sincere sympathy for a human being who is *in his own way* an invalid.³⁰ something which can be felt as a sharp point of hostile prejudice, contempt, and admonition. (For this reason at lectures on atheism, even although the level of many of them is from several aspects very high, there is often such a low attendance of precisely those who would require effective help in their errors, doubts, and ideological searchings.) Scientific atheist propaganda must get rid both of its insensitive spoon-feeding of the watered-down statements of the classical Marxist-Leninist writers on religion, its historical role, etc., and also of the admonitory tone, which not only antagonizes the believer, but often even insults him. To a much greater degree it will be necessary to give it the character of an *exchange of opinion between atheists and believers*, the character of a *dialogue*, whose guidance will of course be firmly in the hands of the educated Marxist with his richer inner life. This method not only corresponds to the fact that the overwhelming majority of religiously believing citizens in our society have no basic conflict with Marxists in the sphere of practical social activity, are not against the building up of a socially just order, against the raising of the standard of living (in all these matters believers for the most part actively assist communists), but would also be the best way of eliminating the above moments in ideological activity, which have a disturbing effect on the work of persuasion, if not a definitely negative effect.

It enables us not only to give — once more we quote Milan Machovec — what will be no mere “historical — however true — explanation and demolishing of theological categories”, but also and above all to attain a situation where “the Marxist in the eyes of people still under the influence of theology fully appears in the light of a Marxist, i.e. giving an all-round scientifically based and yet not merely theoretical, but above all practical solution of all the problems of human society, human social organization and the human individual, of the existing reality and perspectives of human life”.³¹ Thus a way is prepared for the most important thing, which is really decisive for a fundamental conversion from religious belief to communist conviction and which must become a direct part of scientific atheist education: *the direct participation of believers in the process of building up communist life*. Scientific atheist education, if it is to be really effective, must directly induce the consciousness — and this applies equally to the Barthian Christian as to the sincerely believing Catholic — that “the best, the most valuable, the most human, that in which man is most himself, the departure from religion in no way takes from man”, but on the contrary enables him fully to develop it, to rid it of mystification, to bring it into life, into practice, into social relationships, into the life not only of the handful of the “last to be chosen” in the ranks of the existing Churches, but into the lives of millions of people who are building a new life for themselves. . . .³²

This means fundamentally to change in scientific atheist education *from leading religious believers to understand the ideas of scientific atheism, to leading them into atheist activity, in which the living reality of the communist collective will become such a strength for them that they will no longer need the support of any mystificatory and false illusions*. From the criticism of religion, that is more or less from the *rational negation of religion*, we must in scientific atheist education move towards the *organization of a communist way of life, a communist style of human living*, as the author of the present paper

pointed out in his study on ecclesiastical religious and socialist social traditions,³³ i.e. to the positive victory over religion and religious relics by creating such conditions for the all-round fulfilment of human beings, that the existence of religion loses any meaning. Naturally even with this conception of scientific atheist education the spoken and written word of the Marxist propagandist must play a big part.³⁴ But not, of course, any word whatever. It must be a word not only comprehensible, but also inspiring people to use their heads in a creative way, a word which is lacking neither in inner truth, nor in the capacity, for example, to interest and win enthusiasm for truth through its freshness and originality. We consider this to be no small task, to give back to the word of the Marxist propagandist of scientific atheism to the fullest extent its character of an act which will change the world.

Translated by Jessie Kocmanová

NOTES

- ¹ Thus in the Southern Moravian Regional Organization of the Czechoslovak Society for Propagating Political and Scientific Knowledge the proportion of scientific popularization in the field of scientific atheism amounted to about 3.6% of the entire range of activity (mostly lectures) in 1960, while in 1963 it formed only 1.3% (see Report of the Second Regional Conference of the Society, Brno, 1963, table 1).
- ² This may be assumed *inter alia* from the still high attendance at Church services (and that not only in the country districts), from evidence of the numbers of Church christenings, weddings and funerals, which are decreasing only very slowly and in some periods even show a slight tendency to rise, etc. Although these figures cannot of course be taken as the only index of the degree of religiosity, nevertheless certain conclusions can be drawn from them. The real degree of religiosity of course is generally somewhat higher, since the religious opinions and beliefs of the population in their whole range cannot be completely indicated by these figures.
- ³ On this see e.g. Milan Salajka, *Nemocní v církvi*, (*Invalids in the Church*), *Náboženská revue církve československé* (*Religious Review of the Czechoslovak Church*), XXX, 3 and 4; Jan Blahoslav Sourek, *Boj s nemocí* (*The Fight Against Illness*), *Křesťanská revue* (*The Christian Review*), XXVIII, 9, etc.
- ⁴ Such works are for example Alois Glogar, *O výchově k vědeckému světovému názoru ve škole* (*On Education in a Scientific Philosophical Outlook in the School*), Prague, 1959 (2nd ed. 1962), collection of Slovakian papers, *Výchova k vědeckému světovému názoru v škole* (*Education in a Scientific Philosophical Outlook in the School*), Bratislava, 1960, Jan Kyselý, *Moderní člověk a náboženství* (*Modern Man and Religion*), Prague, 1962, etc.
- ⁵ On this see too Jiří Loukotka, *K problematice účinnějšího překonávání přežitků buržoazní ideologie* (*On Problems of More Effective Treatment of Relics of Bourgeois Ideology*), *Sborník Janáčkovy akademie múzických umění* (*Journal of Janáček Academy of Music*), II, Brno, 1960, p. 127—134.
- ⁶ Published CSAV (Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences), Prague, 1960.
- ⁷ Published CSAV, Prague, 1962.
- ⁸ Published Nakladatelství politické literatury, Prague, 1962.
- ⁹ See Friedrich Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, Prague, 1949, p. 270, 271.
- ¹⁰ See Milan Machovec *O tak zvané „dialektické“ teologii současného protestantismu*, Prague, 1962, p. 12—29; the same, *Novotomismus*, Prague, 1962, p. 13—30.
- ¹¹ The specific character of Czech Catholicism was already pointed out by Zdeněk Nejedlý, among others, in his study *Spor o smysl českých dějin* (*The Dispute as to the Meaning of Czech History*), in the collection *O smyslu českých dějin* (*On the Meaning of Czech History*), Prague, 1952; see too his *Slovo o náboženství* (*A Word on Religion*), in the collection *Za kulturu lidovou a národní* (*For a Popular and National Culture*), Prague, 1953. So far however we have no special studies which would deal fully with this problem or with the specific character of Czech Evangelicalism. Milan Machovec partly treats this

- problem in the study quoted on contemporary Protestant theology, esp. in the passage on the significance of the Czech Evangelical theologian J. L. Hromádka (p. 75–93).
- ¹² On this see e.g. Blahoslav Kovář, *Devátý mezinárodní kongres pro dějiny náboženství v Tokiu (Ninth International Congress on the History of Religion in Tokio)*, in *Náboženská revue církve československé*, XXX, 3.
- ¹³ Published by Nakladatelství politické literatury, Prague, 1963, p. 100, n.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 100, n.
- ¹⁵ Published by Naše vojsko, Prague, 1964.
- ¹⁶ Published by Vydavateľstvo politickej literatúry, Bratislava, 1964. See also Julius Tomín's review, *Amerika a katolíci (America and the Catholics)*, *Kulturní tvorba (Cultural Creative Work)*, 1964, 17, p. 14.
- ¹⁷ See *Dějiny a současnost (History and the Present Day)*, 1961, No. 1.
- ¹⁸ See *Přehled vědecké a pedagogické práce kateder marxismu-leninismu (Review of Scientific and Teaching Work of Departments of Marxism-Leninism)*, 1963, No. 2.
- ¹⁹ On this see J. A. Kryvelev, *Sovremennoye bogosloviye i nauka*, Moscow, 1959.
- ²⁰ On this see D. M. Ugrinovich, *Ateisticheskoye vospitaniye i preodoleniye religioznoi psichologii, Voprosy filosofii*, 1961, 4; G. M. Gak, *Ucheniye ob obshchestvennom soznaniyi v svetlye teorii poznaniya*, Moscow, 1960, esp. p. 35–82.
- ²¹ Some questions are explained by Jiří Loukotka, *K otázce inspiračních zdrojů a obsahu tzv. náboženského umění (On the Question of the Sources of Inspiration and Content of So-Called Religious Art)*, *Shorník Janáčkovy akademie múzických umění*, IV, Brno, 1963, p. 43–67.
- ²² This branch as a separate scientific discipline is just being set up in this country.
- ²³ Some results so far of sociological research into religiosity in this country have been dealt with by Erika Kadlecová, *Sociologický výzkum religiozity (Sociological Research into Religiosity)*, *Nová mysl*, 1964, 10.
- ²⁴ Such ideas were undoubtedly called up above all by the consequences of the personality cult, as expressions of the alienation of man under socialism, caused by the grave distortions of Marxist theory and practice in the period of the personality cult.
- ²⁵ Published by the Czechoslovak Society for the Propagation of Political and Scientific Knowledge, Prague, 1961. See also Milan Machovec, *O metodách ateistické výchovy (On Methods of Atheist Education)*, *Filosofický časopis*, 1959, 5.
- ²⁶ *Filosofický časopis*, 1964, 3.
- ²⁷ This problem is also partly dealt with by Jindřich Filípec in his work *Člověk v křivém zrcadle (Man in the Distorting Mirror)*, Prague, 1963, in which he presents a criticism of some bourgeois sociological theories about the position of man in the so-called industrial society.
- ²⁸ See Machovec, *op. cit.*, p. 109.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*
- ³⁰ This of course does not intend to say that believers are some kind of socio-pathological cases.
- ³¹ Milan Machovec, *O tak zvané „dialektické“ teologii současného protestantismu*, Prague, 1962, p. 98.
- ³² *Ibid.*, p. 109.
- ³³ See Jiří Loukotka, *Príspevek k otázce církevně náboženských a socialistických společenských tradic*, *Filosofický časopis*, 1962, 6.
- ³⁴ It does not mean, then, that for example no scientific atheist lectures whatever should be given, etc. It is merely a question of ensuring that their *themes, purpose and style* should for the most part be different to what they have hitherto been, in order to be adequate for the given situation as well as for the various characteristics of those groups of listeners for whom they are intended.

O SMĚRECH DALŠÍHO ROZVOJE TEORIE VĚDECKÉHO ATEISMU A PROHLUBOVÁNÍ VĚDECKOATEISTICKÉ VÝCHOVY PRACUJÍCÍCH

Vědeckoateistická výchova pracujících jako důležitá součást jejich komunistické výchovy zaznamenává u nás v poslední době určitou stagnaci. Její kořeny je nutno hledat především v zaostávání teorie vědeckého ateismu za současnými potřebami ideologického boje a v zaostávání metod vědeckoateistické propagandy a výchovy. Zatímco náboženská propaganda namnoze velmi vynalézavě přizpůsobuje své argumenty změněným podmínkám, v kterých se šíření náboženství v současné společnosti podstatně ztížilo, teologové ne bez úspěchu zkoušejí nové ideologické zbraně v podobě zmodernizovaných výkladů fideismu a církve zintenzivňují svou pastorační činnost, přešlapuje se v teorii vědeckého ateismu na místě a také metody vědeckoateistické výchovy neodrážejí závažné ekonomické, sociální, politické i kulturní změny, k nimž u nás došlo od počátku padesátých let.

Teorii vědeckého ateismu charakterizují v posledních letech dost výrazně tři negativní tendence: příliš historizující zaměření, které staví do popředí výklad starých, často se již vůbec nevyskytujících forem religiozity; zjednodušující a zplošťující sociologizující pohled na náboženskou problematiku, který implikuje nesprávné představy, že překonání náboženství a náboženských přžitků ve vědomí lidí se dostavuje automaticky s odstraněním sociálních kořenů náboženství; redukce vědeckého ateismu v teorii i praxi pouze na racionální kritiku víry a opomíjení bohaté členitého světa náboženské psychologie, čímž se podstatně zužuje i výběr metod působení na dosud věřící občany a často deformuje sám přístup k nim.

Další rozvinutí teorie vědeckého ateismu předpokládá kromě rozpracování nejnovějších dějin hlavních náboženských proudů (směrů) a nejdůležitějších náboženských organizací (církví) zaměřit se na rozpracování zejména těchto problémů: a) otázky spojené se specifícností jednotlivých náboženských směrů, církví, event. sekt; b) otázky související se vzájemnými vztahy náboženských směrů a církví, a to zejména v podmínkách všeobecného poklesu a ústupu religiozity ve světovém měřítku a v podmínkách socialistických zemí; c) problémy vztahující se k přeměnám tradičních náboženských struktur, církví, jejich metod a praktik, tradičních forem náboženského života a forem šíření náboženské ideologie v podmínkách vyspělé moderní technické společnosti; d) otázky spojené s formami parazitování náboženství a možnostmi tohoto parazitování na nenáboženské činnosti lidí a na nenáboženských produktech této činnosti.

Při výběru a přehodnocování metod vědeckoateistické výchovy je nutno v současné době — zejména v našich podmínkách — vycházet z toho, že problém rozchodu s náboženstvím vystupuje dnes většinou u lidí z nejrůznějších vrstev jako problém vnitřního přerodu, narážejícího na různé subjektivní překážky, citové zábrany a konflikty, nálady živěné pocíty osamocnosti, životní prázdnoty atp., a že tudíž zásadní obrat od náboženství k ateistickému přesvědčení nelze uskutečnit pouze vnějšími prostředky. Od prosté propagandy vědeckého světového názoru je žádoucí přecházet k dialogu s věřícími, který navodí vnitřní potřebu věřícího člověka ztotožnit se i světonázorově s marxismem, jehož praktické společenské cíle namnoze upřímně schvaluje. Vysoká teoretická i morální, lidská úroveň tohoto dialogu je v současnosti nejdůležitější postulát vědeckoateistické výchovy.

