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## **The initiatory function of religion and its verification in affective cognition of God**

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**Abstract.** The purpose of this paper is to draw attention to the initiatory (mystagogic) function of religion, which is associated with its essential spiritual (salvific) function. The text comprises three parts. The first one addresses the problems concerning the very definition of the phenomenon of religion, the attempts to formulate its definitions, either substantive (reflecting the essence of religion) or functional (emphasizing the functions of religion), and the issue of their empirical verification. In the second part, the various functions of religion are outlined in light of the distinction between essential and auxiliary functions (specifically and non-specifically religious). One of these is the initiatory (mystagogic) function, the verification of which takes place in the affective cognition of God. The third part characterizes the affective cognition of God, which originates in the affective states and leads to a deeper knowledge of the Absolute.

**Keywords:** religion, essence, functions, initiation, affective cognition

### **Introduction**

Religion is not only an important element of culture but also an essential component in the existence of many people, shaping social and personal life as a result. Having originated in some kind of natural or historical revela-

tion, it has numerous crucial functions, both strictly spiritual and manifesting in other domains as well.

The purpose of the following deliberations is to draw attention to the sometimes forgotten initiatory function of religion, which stems from its essential spiritual function (part 2). The initiatory function is sometimes equated with, and sometimes separated from, the mystagogic one. It seems that both functions are combined, because the main task of religion is not only to introduce into spiritual life, but also to deepen it. Initiation and mystagogy could be seen as two stages of a single process. It is worth noting that the following analyses are mainly philosophical in nature. Therefore, subject of our interest will not be the particular stages and specific techniques of initiation and mystagogy on which researchers in ethnology and religious studies focus, but only their constitutive features common to the various religions. The background to the subsequent analyses will be the articulation of the problems associated with the very definition of religion, which can be captured in the form of a substantive or functional definition. The former highlights the essence of religion, while the latter prioritizes its functions. The issue of empirical verification of both types of definition is worth emphasising in this context (part 1). These include the initiatory element this paper explores. A particular way of verifying the initiatory function of religion is the affective cognition of God, having its origin in the experience of the affective states of man and leading to a deeper knowledge of God. This type of cognition will also be further characterised in its nature (part 3). It is worth emphasising that by God in this case is meant the personal God of theistic religions. The analyses carried out in this paper are therefore structured in three main parts, and their point of reference will be selected publications mainly in philosophy, but also in sociology, religious studies and theology concerning the problem of our interest.

## **The problem of definition of religion**

The fundamental problem that every researcher of religion has to confront is formulating a definition of religion that would be satisfactory to all, thus helping one to establish a distinction between non-religious and religious phenomena as well as identify the latter.

In this regard, one cites several critical factors which prove a hindrance to an exhaustive and universally valid definition of religion. The first of these is the multiplicity of the historical religions, which differ in their understanding of the object and activity. It is noted that the religious object remains cognitively

inaccessible, as it is never attainable directly. The nature of religious experience is another factor, since although it may have external forms of expression, it takes place primarily in the interior of the person, thus being unique and unrepeatable. It also emphasises the conjunction of religion and various areas of life, resulting in a multifaceted phenomenon. Moreover, the phenomenon of religion may be studied from different standpoints using various theoretical assumptions and methodologies, as the multiplicity of religious sciences demonstrates (Kałuża, 2017, p. 48), with a range of empirical religious studies, philosophy of religion and theology of religion.

In view of the above difficulties, attention is often drawn to the socio-cultural determinants which affect the definition of religion. Thus, one emphasizes the influence of Christianity in this respect (Sroczyńska, 2018, p. 170), yet the definition of religion can also involve a legal-administrative undertone, which is typical of Roman culture and unknown in other cultures (Bronk, 2009, pp. 111–116). The understanding of religion, conditioned by the Christian religion and Roman culture, is dominant especially in the Western European cultural circle and shapes the approach to it. We thus have an ethnocentric notion of religion that does not stand up to confrontation with the whole spectrum of phenomena of a spiritual nature. Researchers of religion are therefore compelled to reformulate its definitions.

Polish sociologist Janusz Mariański noted that, notwithstanding, one cannot confine oneself to a definition of religion based on a single religious tradition, as this would lead to a narrow and juridical understanding of religion. Furthermore, such a definition would fail to account for the entire reality of religious and cultural phenomena (Mariański, 2021, pp. 17–18).

Hence, the American philosopher John E. Smith stresses that a description of religion must allow for the many distinct religious communities in the world, given that a narrow cultural and intellectual perspective is in no way warranted because the time has come for a confrontation between different traditions in order to define the nature of religion (Smith, 1971, pp. 172–173). Smith's opinion must be acknowledged, because contemporary reality is characterized by cultural and worldview pluralism. Consequently, an attitude of openness and dialogue is required for a better understanding of important social phenomena to which religion undoubtedly belongs.

One should therefore concur with Andrzej Bronk, a methodologist from Lublin, that no definition of religion is general enough to encompass all phenomena regarded as religious. Moreover, there are no objective criteria enabling one to qualify a religion as such. Therefore, a partial definition must suffice to regulate conventional use of the word "religion" relative to culture, scholarly tradition and specific theoretical premises (Bronk, 2009, pp. 109–114).

It is worth noting, however, that we have to do with the proposals of radical solutions. Canadian religious scholar Wilfred C. Smith, for example, proposes that the term “religion” be abandoned altogether because it is confusing, unnecessary and distorting (Smith, 1964, p. 50).

However, the majority of religious scholars, including philosophers, sociologists, psychologists, religious scholars and theologians, have chosen not to adopt radical positions, are not discouraged by obstacles and have tried to put forward new definitions of religion. They distinguish two main types of definitions: substantive and functional. Some also highlight the issue of empirical verification of both types of definition of religion.

The substantive approach defines religion from the standpoint of its constituent elements, whereas the functions of religion are the focus of the other viewpoint (Bronk, 2009, p. 124). To philosopher of religion Ireneusz Ziemiński, a substantive definition of religion should span all phenomena which constitute the essence of religion. It should be essential, i.e. contain a set of constitutive properties and criterial, that is, unequivocally distinguish religion from what it is not. According to Ziemiński, the conviction that the essence of religion does exist is therefore tacitly taken for granted, as it were, which is why one can distinguish religion from other types of phenomena (Ziemiński, 2013, pp. 266–268).

However, the prevalent opinion among most philosophers and theologians of religion is apparently that an essential definition of religion is needed for three main reasons. First, without it, religious studies will not be able to accurately distinguish the object of enquiry. Second, it would be impossible to compare religions with one another. Third, a critical evaluation of religious phenomena will not be feasible (Kałuża, 2017, p. 49).

Still, Bronk argues that the search for an essential definition of religion, typical of the Western European mentality, does not make sense since an essence shared by all religious phenomena remains elusive. Instead, one must confine oneself to highlighting the elements that religions do have in common. These include a belief in supernatural beings, the division into sacred and secular spheres, ritual, moral code, religious sentiments, prayer, worldview, structures of personal and social life (Bronk, 2009, pp. 124–127). Some focus on comprehending religion solely as a system of beliefs. In such case, its important components would comprise the beliefs about the nature of transcendence, the origin and nature of the world and the human, soteriology and eschatology, religious ethics and solving existential problems, the divine origin of the scriptures and the mission of the founders (Kondrat, 2002, pp. 38–39).

At this point, it may be worthwhile to recall the figure of the German religious scholar Perry Schmidt-Leukel, who underlined that although there

is no essence common to all historical religions, one common feature of religious phenomena can be stated: holding certain convictions. In the plethora of religious convictions, one basic belief renders special - it posits a certain supreme Reality as the object of religious reference. In its characterization, Schmidt-Leukel displays a few formal remarks. It is transcendent, infinite and boundless. The paucity of such a characterization is not without its advantages. First, it tallies with the normative concept of religion as used in philosophy and theology. Second, the concept of a transcendent Reality can be reconciled both with the personal God of theistic religions and with the impersonal Absolute of non-theistic ones (Schmidt-Leukel, 2005, pp. 196–199). The essence of religion would therefore be formal rather than material, lacking qualitative endowment and the possibility for man to experience the Absolute. Thus it would not meet the criterion of empirical verification.

Meanwhile, the criterion of empirical verification is often invoked in the context of religion and its substantive definitions. The sacred cannot be subject to scientific analysis because of its empirical unverifiability. Consequently, such definitions are cognitively meaningless due to the error of *ignotum per ignotum*. As a result, the existence of a nucleus of religion is occasionally questioned, whilst acknowledging merely a set of phenomena that bear a number of external similarities and are referred to as religion because of those similarities. It is also stressed that substantive definitions do not communicate any content and serve solely to convey words and behaviours (Remisiewicz, 2011, pp. 115–119).

John Hick, an analytical philosopher of religion, thus proposes a notion of religion elaborated in the light of Wittgenstein's conception of family resemblance. Religions would have no essence, but only a set of similarities, like family (Hick, 1989, pp. 5, 36). Another analytical philosopher Philip L. Quinn sees the issue in the same way (Quinn, 2019, p. 325).

The absence of an essence of religion which would see its reification in all specific historical religions is also noted by the representatives of religious studies, the empirical science of religion. In their opinion, a religious researcher should not devote attention to religion in general, but investigate particular forms of historical religions (Kałuża, 2017, p. 49). Thus, the attempt to create a substantive definition of religion would be doomed to failure in empirical sciences, within the framework of philosophy, perhaps even in theology as well.

In these circumstances, attempts are made to coin a functional definition of religion, which expounds on how religion works and what functions it performs in personal and social life. If one adopts a functional perspective on religion, then the spectrum of possibilities expands, causing religious system

with no direct reference to the sacred. Within the paradigm of functional definitions, whatever people consider to be a religion may be pronounced as one (Mariański, 2009a, pp. 192–194, 207; 2009b, p. 34). Hence, a functional understanding of religion prevents an efficacious distinction between religious and non-religious phenomena because, in a sense, anything can become a religion (Bronk, 2009, pp. 127–129).

Functional definitions of religion, however, are under no threat from the aforementioned criterion of empirical verification. As the name suggests, these definitions focus on the functions performed by religion in a society. In order to describe and characterize a particular function, it must be shown on the available empirical material (Remisiewicz, 2011, p. 114). It is thus evident that both the function itself and the definition of religion are grounded on the experience which constitutes their specific existence foundation and means of verification.

It should be noted, however, that functional definitions of religion are often purely naturalistic, since they disregard the transcendent dimension (Woleński, 2002, p. 22). As a rule, they are formulated within the humanities and social sciences, which examine the functionality and actual impact of religion on life while completely ignoring its metaphysical premises. Admittedly, due to the adopted methodology, the sciences in question do not dispose of any applicable tools to do so. However, their representatives should be open and willing to allow for other research perspectives in order to avoid the threat of the reductionist approach.

## **The functions of religion**

As previously noted, the popularity of functional definitions of religion in certain scholarly milieus and their dominance in the humanities and social sciences prompts one to examine the functions performed by religion in different societies.

Treating religion as one of the subsystems of society, German sociologist Niklas Luhmann mentions its essential spiritual function and various ancillary roles. The spiritual function consists of interpreting and lending meaning to various situations through reference to their sacred, as well as in providing certain salvific goods. The auxiliary applications include economic, educational and political functions (Luhmann, 1998, pp. 22–40, 219–233, 252–261).

Furthermore, Marek Pepliński, a Polish philosopher of religion, draws a distinction between specific or non-specific functions of religion, and recognizes the salvific function as an instance of the former. Showing the meaning of life,

providing the principles of morality, satisfying human needs and organizing human existence belong to the latter one. Pepliński adds that these functions are understood differently in religions, depending on their spiritual traditions and their notional schemata (Pepliński, 2019, pp. 68–70). It would appear that the salvific function is the most crucial in a religion because humans strive to attain the fullness of life, which the religious language calls salvation. Still, this is not within their own capacity but rather depends on the relationship with God that the religion facilitates. Religion is the experience of the individual salvific reference to God, and its salvific function is essential.

Some argue that the primary function of religion is the exercise of worship (Kaczmarek, 2013, p. 143). This position is shared even by intellectuals of agnostic or atheistic provenance.

For instance, Polish philosopher Leszek Kołakowski stresses that worship is essential to every religion and indelible from it (Kołakowski, 1987, p. 9). Polish logician Bogusław Wolniewicz adds that worship influences people to a much greater degree than dogmas (Wolniewicz, 2003, pp. 169–170). Worship is, therefore, a constitutive element of religion and, as such, it claims priority over dogmas as the means to lend meaning to human life.

Worship is important in religion, being one of its principal components, along with the doctrine, morality, and the institutions. It seems, however, that worship is closely linked to the aforementioned salvific function. Thanks to particular rites which enable the believers to establish a relationship with the Absolute, the individual experiences the fulfilment of life and actualizes their potentialities.

One can thus say that religion has a transformative function. It is referred to by, e.g. Hick, for whom it was a skilful device or an effective means to achieve the goal of leading the individual to a transformation of their existence, from one focused on himself to an existence towards the ultimate reality. Religion, with its thought patterns and theories, is an instrument of that transformation (Hick, 1993, pp. 119–120, 129–135). Thus, to a degree, it involves a pragmatic and instrumental dimension.

In this context, the position of the Polish philosopher Marek Szulakiewicz is worth quoting here. He believes that religion fulfils an important opening function, enabling protection against materialization of the world and degradation of humanity. However, that religious opening should be understood twofold, according to Szulakiewicz. On the one hand, it directs one towards a transcendent and spiritual reality, and, on the other, the individual is encouraged to embrace the profundity of their own being. The aim of this opening-up is to shape the human being and the world anew (Szulakiewicz, 2021, pp. 170–175).

As we can see, the above philosophers focus on the essential (specific) functions of religion, whereas representatives of the social sciences emphasize its auxiliary (non-specific) functions.

Discussing the functions of religion from the psychological perspective, Marcin Wnuk and Jerzy T. Marcinkowski underline that they can be both negative (an outlet for mental disorders, a buffer factor against disorders) and positive (discovery of the meaning of life, development of a system of values, assistance in self-identification and identification with a group, therapy and re-socialization, incentives fostering transcendence and human actualization, nurturing hope and a method of coping with life problems) (Wnuk, Marcinkowski, 2012, pp. 239–243).

German sociologist Franz X. Kaufmann speaks of five functions of religion in a contemporary society: psychological (satisfaction of emotional and developmental needs of the individual), interpretive (giving meaning to events), predestination (solving moral problems and lending meaning to life), cosmization of the world (satisfaction of the need for a sense of order) and communal (integration with the community) (Kaufmann, 1998, pp. 361–382). The latter function is also recognised by the Czech sociologist and philosopher Tomáš Halík, who holds that religion integrates a community. He employs the Latin word *religio*, according to its original meaning, denote precisely a certain force integrating a society (Halík, 2006, p. 27).

Polish sociologist of religion Maria Sroczyńska speaks of yet another function, namely providing a non-empirical system of reference as well as supporting one when they face the uncertainty of fate and undertake prophetic-critical activity (Sroczyńska, 2018, pp. 167–168). The two latter functions of religion are crucial in the context of social life. After all, no programmes or strategies of socio-political life are formulated on the grounds of religion, which only makes a critical evaluation of the existing political order with respect to human well-being.

One should not fail to mention yet another function of religion: the initiatory function, also known as the mystagogic function. Sometimes these two functions are identified with each other. However, there seems to be a difference between them, as initiation would consist in commencing an action or introducing the individual into a particular form of life (e.g. a religious one). On the other hand, mystagogy would imply participating in sacred reality, gaining arcane knowledge or entry into strictly limited group of people. Thus, its elitist aspect would be highlighted. Initiation, then, would be the undertaking and beginning of an action, and mystagogy – its intensification and deepening. However, it seems to be a feedback loop between them. Initiatory and mystagogic function are therefore linked to each other, and

are also connected with the essential spiritual (salvific) function of every religion.

The word 'initiation' means a passage into another life, an entrance into the interior, an admission into the life of a particular religious group (Bagrowicz, 2002, p. 87). In the opinion of the Polish religious scholar Andrzej Wierciński, initiation lies at the core of every form of religion (Wierciński, 2004, p. 233). At the same time, it should be noted that initiation has many different form of expression. First, it expresses in striving for the fullness of personality. Second, it consists in admitting a new member into an association. Third, it brings a change in the ontic and moral life of a person. Fourth, it introduces to a sacred reality, from which human being obtains new knowledge. Fifth, it consists of the experience of partaking in the structures of a world permeated by the sacred. Sixth, it leads to the divinization of nature. Seventh, one is introduced into a new religious function and position. Eighth, it enables participation in worship (Broniek, 2019, pp. 113–126, 146, 167–176). It seems that all above forms of initiation can be applied to any religion.

In the opinion of the Polish religious scholar Tadeusz Dajczer, with which we should agree, the religious nature of initiation is revealed especially in the situation of one's reference to the sacred, where the aim is to sanctify this existence through a certain numinous archetypal model. Initiation is associated with certain rituals which engender a certain ontic transformation and cause a new modality of existence. The transformation occurs under the influence of supernatural beings, symbolized by the ritual. Dajczer emphasizes additionally that even after the transformation, we have to do with an actual difference between the nature of the participant and the nature of the sacred (Dajczer, 1979, p. 162).

Historian and philosopher of religion Mircea Eliade also draws attention to the question of ontic transformation. In his opinion, initiation comprises a set of rites and oral instructions aimed at a radical modification of the religious and social status of the subject. Therefore, it entails ontic transformation of the existential order (Eliade, 1997, p. 8).

Given the above, several elements can be distinguished in initiation. First, a specific rite is involved, because initiation is accompanied by an appropriate ceremony or liturgical act. Second, knowledge is passed on, because a person gains a better understanding of reality and morality. Third, a transformation of being and existence is effected, because the initiate embarks on a spiritual path of existence and embraces spiritual values (Broniek, 2019, pp. 148–154, 160).

It should be underlined that religious initiation does not begin with theoretical instruction but with an introduction into religious practice with appropriate explanations. It usually takes place in the family, where trust in

the authority and integrity of its members are important elements (Moskal, 2008, pp. 191–192). Initiation takes place in this case, and this is its essential element, through direct contact with concrete person who can accompany, support the development and lead to a spiritual experience (Bagrowicz, 2002, p. 98, 102–103). However, it is important to note at this point a certain danger associated with this contact and the trust placed in the person accompanying the initiation. It involves a possible manipulation, the consequence of which may be the enslavement of a man or his exploitation in various ways. However, we would then be dealing with a form of initiation pathology.

In initiation, therefore, an important role is played by specific rituals and related practices that aim to transform human life. Nevertheless, it is not without a cognitive element either, since it is linked to the explanation of rites and the acquisition of new knowledge of divine-human reality.

Today, initiation is seen to decline and fade. It used to exist in traditional societies, where it was mainly associated with the so-called rites of passage, marking the transition from childhood into adulthood. An individual was once supported by the family and relatives, but this arrangement has atrophied nowadays, and the person is left alone and stranded (Broniek, 2020, pp. 262–263). However, initiation is especially important in the context of the contemporary pluralistic and secularized society, in which the significance of religion in people's lives wanes or becomes a matter of choice, adherence based on religious initiation, conversion and personal commitment (Piwowarski, 1996, pp. 14–15). Movements, communities and small religious groups can play an important role in this regard (Bagrowicz, 2002, pp. 100–101).

Consequently, more attention should be paid to the question of initiation not only in the successive stages of man's natural existence, but also in his religious life. All the more so since initiation is linked to the essential function of religion, namely spiritual and salvific. It thus becomes crucial in man's religious life.

Initiation, in spite of the differences mentioned above, has a connection with mystagogy (Broniek, 2020, pp. 262–263), understood as the deeper experience of Divine mysteries as it is required by religious development. The deepening of spiritual life through participation in sacred reality and the acquisition of more thorough understanding is very important in this case.

Mystagogy has, according to the German theologian Stefan Knoblauch, three fundamental dimensions. First, it is the human experience of the mystery of the world in order to feel unity with it. Secondly, it consists in a living and conscious participation of believer in the liturgy as a way of experiencing the salvific mystery. Thirdly, it means introducing man into the mystery of his being as a way into the mystery of God (Knoblauch, 1996, p. 188).

On the other hand, according to Polish theologian Ryszard Hajduk, we have two basic types of mystagogy: liturgical and existential. Liturgical mystagogy serves to introduce people to sacramental life, to read the mysteries of faith in the rites, to contemplate supernatural reality and to understand the experiences connected with it. The aim of existential mystagogy, which has its origins in the thought of Karl Rahner, is to introduce man into the mystery of his being as a form of participation in Transcendent and thus to reveal the Mystery called God in his everyday life in an indirect, inexpressive and non-thematic way (Hajduk, 2019, pp. 39–41). In another place Hajduk points out that liturgical mystagogy is about explaining and showing the meaning of the initiation rite. It emphasizes not so much knowledge as the personal relationship with God. Its aim is the inner transformation of man and a new way of life. Existential mystagogy, on the other hand, emphasizes the role of personal experience in which one perceives God's action in all things as the Mystery, which is the foundation of all being (Hajduk, 2017, pp. 126–133). Opportunities for the experience of supernatural being are situations, events, and the most inner human longings for the fullness of life, happiness, peace, and security. By discovering the presence of the Absolute, it is possible to find their best explanation and to give them meaning (Hajduk, 2011, pp. 113–115).

Mystagogy, in fact, is a way of human formation which does not consist in teaching a doctrine, but relates to the whole of human life and its development. Participation in the mystery should become a source of inner transformation and newness of life. It is achieved by interpreting personal experience in the perspective of the mystery. Mistagog uses a method that is reminiscent of the Socratic *majeutics* of accompanying man in his search. It is the art of giving birth to truth by means of skilfully posed questions and reflection on one's experience. As a result, there is a transition from concrete experience to expressing the depth of one's own experiences (Hajduk, 2011, pp. 108–111, 114–116).

It can be seen, therefore, that both the profound celebration of the rites and the experience of the world can be opportunities for the deeper participation of man in the sacred. What is needed, then, is an introduction into a certain type of experience through which man can open himself up to a relationship with the mystery and participate in it. It would be about revealing the deeper meaning of existence and of the various aspects of life, and thus finding signs of God's presence in liturgical signs, historical events and human desires. Man can experience transcendence in them, although this does not happen in a direct way. Transcendence comes in the form of the liturgical and existential mystery, thanks to which the religious dimension of the reality is revealed. Mystagogy would consist in introducing man to a deeper understanding and

participation in the Divine Mystery. Especially the question of man's participation in the sacred reality is relevant here that could enliven his whole life.

The result not only of religious initiation but above all of mystagogy is participation in sacred reality by establishing some kind of relationship with the God. Its verification is not only the experience of a successful religious life (e.g. inner freedom, harmony, a profound approach to various matters), but also the affective knowledge of God (Moskal, 2008, p. 194).

It is evident, therefore, that the initiatory and mystagogic function of religion must find its fulfilment in participation in the sphere of the sacred and in the ontic transformation. What is needed, therefore, is its empirical verification, manifesting not only in a new lifestyle, but also in a new type of knowledge, whose nature is affective. It would thus be worthwhile to examine the peculiar traits of such cognition.

## **The affective cognition of God**

A number of philosophers emphasize the role of affective cognition in faith quite strongly, which is why the nature of such cognition deserves some attention, all the more so because some currents in philosophy (e.g. Thomism) do not attribute cognitive functions to feelings.

Antoni B. Stępień, a Polish epistemologist, notes that in the classical tradition, emotions were classified as desiderative-sensory actions. Therefore, emotional experience could not serve a cognitive function. It was only the Brentanoists, phenomenologists and dialogists who argued that they have a cognitive role, particularly with respect to values and the making of a worldview (Stępień, 2006, pp. 9–10, 14–16). According to the neo-Thomist Piotr Moskal, cognition is an activity of the intellect, as it aims at obtaining information. The purpose of such activity is to arrive at the truth expressed in a beliefs. If a subject accepts a statement as true because he perceives its truth, then knowledge is involved. If, on the other hand, the subject accepts a statement as true even though he does not perceive it to be true, it is faith. According to Moskal, in theoretical cognition, the intellect follows the cognitive sphere of the subject. Conversely, in affective cognition, the intellect aligns itself to the affective one (Moskal, 2008, pp. 130–131; 2017, p. 157). Still, cognition is the work of the intellect in either case.

A different position is adopted by the historian of philosophy Piotr Gutowski, in whose opinion emotions can have a cognitive function; however, should this be the case, a broad concept of experience as a form of direct cognition must be presumed. Experiencing certain phenomena (e.g. atmosphere, mood or love), a person can attain certain knowledge through or thanks to the

associated experience and express it via beliefs (Gutowski, 2019, pp. 138–139). Feelings would thus involve a cognitive element or extend the scope of our cognition. Nonetheless, in the case of affective cognition, the intellect is the faculty through which a person acquires new knowledge. The experience of certain emotional states is only the starting point of the cognitive process. This position is not alien to some representatives of neo-Thomism.

Moskal underlines that affective cognition of God has been known for a long time, having been referred to as cognition by connaturality, knowledge by inclination, love, union, knowledge through experiencing things of God, and experimental cognition (Moskal, 2006, p. 39). Thus, affective cognition has its source in experience, and its results cannot be adequately expressed in words. Moskal argues that the first to be experienced are certain states, e.g. the goodness of God, the taste of gentleness or the liking of God's will. Thus, experimental cognition takes place through co-perception, because the individual partakes in a supernatural reality and experiences positive affective states. He feels first and then he comes to know. One of the modes of experiencing is contemplation which, albeit an activity of the intellect, has its source in the affective order. According to Moskal, love of God is the background underlying contemplation, prompting the desire to see Him. The contemplation culminates in joy and happiness, which lead to increased love towards God. Through love, the individual is volitionally united with God and directed towards Him. It is also through love that they achieve a kinship with God and an empathic alliance with Him. Obtaining the gift of wisdom is also contingent on love, owing to which the human obtains new knowledge of the things of God. Wisdom thus stems from love, enabling the individual to experience certain subjective states, as well as share in a deeper knowledge of transcendent reality (Moskal, 2008, pp. 183–190).

Moskal consistently emphasizes the cognitive role of the intellect and distinguishes two forms of affective cognition, defined as inclination and participation. First, thanks to love, the individual is guided towards the Absolute. Having been thus oriented, they recognize the inadequacy of finite entities in relation to the deepest desires, which only God can satisfy. Second, affective cognition arises from participation in a sacred reality. One of the methods is contemplation which, though mediated by the intellect, begins and ends in the affective order, i.e. in love for God. Moskal maintains that as a result of being united in love, the individual gains a certain kinship with God, a gift of wisdom evinced as better knowledge of the divine and human affairs, as well as an experience of certain subjective states (e.g. joy, happiness, security) (Moskal, 2006, pp. 42–50; 2008, pp. 183–190; 2012, pp. 120–123; 2017, pp. 160–167). Affective cognition is thus the work of the intellect, which, in

turn, is motivated by the love of God. Although love itself consists primarily in the volitional union between the human and God, the human being also participates in a sacred reality, experiences specific emotional states and attains better knowledge of the Divine Being.

In this context, two important issues are highlighted by American philosopher Daniel Garber. First, analysing Pascal's suggestion recommending living in the manner of a believer in order for faith and rational religious beliefs to emerge, he points out that the desire to be a believer can so blind a man and eclipse his mind that he will deceive himself. Secondly, the emergence of faith and religious belief is non-cognitive and casual. It is therefore not the result of a process of education, but of the repetition of certain practices. Moreover, their emergence could occur through the application of another method (Garber, 2019, pp. 746, 751, 754–756, 758–760). With regard to the question of affective cognition of God, it should be noted that love, reduced especially to the realm of feeling, can indeed cloud the human mind and lead to some form of self-deception of man regarding faith and the acquisition of religious beliefs. However, it must not be forgotten that in initiation itself, as well as in affective cognition, the intellect plays an important role. They are therefore cognitive in nature, making it possible to criticise and correct acquired beliefs. We do not have to reject them, but merely correct them.

Garber notes, moreover, elsewhere that a significant amount of our beliefs, including religious beliefs, are based on a strong feeling of being persuaded and are shaped by casual factors (e.g. place of birth, upbringing, education). The American philosopher therefore refers to an analysis of the history of the acquisition of certain rationales for our beliefs. Its consequence, however, need not be their rejection, but merely the adoption by human being of an attitude of cognitive modesty. It would allow him to have limited confidence in his beliefs and to be open to new empirical data or arguments that sometimes even challenge these beliefs. Garber therefore recommends caution and a readiness to revise beliefs (Garber, 2019, pp. 764–770). It seems that Garber's recommendation can also be applied to the affective cognition of God. It has its rationale in the love of God and the desire to behold Him. Human being is united with God in love and receives new cognition in the form of beliefs. Man should, however, be cautious and cognitively modest in this situation and be ready to search for new reasons and to revise his beliefs. He is not, however, obliged to reject them. The correction of beliefs is also made possible by the cognitive element present in initiation.

Philosopher of religion Sławomir Szczyrba approaches affective cognition somewhat differently, emphasising the role of commitment in the first place. It is a means of knowing what one dedicates their life to. Therefore, according

to Szczyrba, affective cognition is not so much about acquiring information, as it is about commitment (Szczyrba, 2006, pp. 20–21, 30–35). Elsewhere, the author stresses that in relation to a given being, an individual senses the effect of the Mystery. Opening up to it results in discovering the meaning of life and truth. Still, the attainment of truth is not purely theoretical but requires commitment and a transformation of life. Only secondarily can it be articulated linguistically (Szczyrba, 2008, pp. 351–356; 2016, pp. 23–26). Affective cognition would thus be a form of human involvement in the implement of the discovered meaning and the truth, all the more so since, in the first place, religious truth is not strictly theoretical but practical. It is a truth destined to be experienced.

Clearly, the fundamental forms of affective cognition are geared towards the God, participation in It and commitment to the pursuit of a certain lifestyle. In this situation, religious initiation and mystagogy would be a proper method to orient the individual towards God and to initiate their participation in a supernatural reality. Thanks to them, an individual would have the opportunity to experience the mystery of the world, to be exposed to various emotional states, as well as to understand reality better and to read its meaning, the implement of which would lead to the transformation of human existence and a new way of life.

## Conclusions

The purpose of the reflections above was to draw attention to the initiatory function of religion, and associated with it mistagogic one. They display a substantial link with its essential spiritual (salvific) function. The analysis was carried out against the backdrop of issues associated with the very definition of the phenomenon of religion, which may assume a substantive modality, with the essence of religion in the foreground, or adopt a functional approach, in which the functions of religion are emphasized. One of these is the eponymous initiatory effect, whose verification takes place by way of affective cognition of God. It should be stressed once again that cognition is an activity of the human intellect, but it may derive from one's experience of participation in the sacred, which entails various affective states. Not only do the latter contribute to the acquisition of better knowledge, but they also intensify human feelings, promoting the transformation of the individual and a new form of existence.

The affective knowledge of God is attainable by virtue of initiation, which is one of the essential tasks of every religion. It consists in introducing one into the life of faith by means of various rites and instructive guidance. Initiation

constitutes a certain strategy of religious action, which proceeds over time and follows a division into stages. The catechumenate of the early Christianity is the prime example - with a series of catecheses, a range of rituals and spiritual practices, it was intended to receiving the sacrament of baptism and, most of all, to the experience of a living relationship with God. The initiation was connected with mystagogy, because it not only introduces but also deepens the participation in Divine reality, understanding of the mysteries and the transformation of ontic and moral dimension of human existence (Bagrowicz, 2002, pp. 91–95).

It appears that the initiatory and mystagogic element has recently been virtually forgotten or disregarded in many religions. In consequence, the quality of religious and spiritual life of the believers has decreased. Therefore, its value should be recognised anew, while its paradigm should be adapted to the contemporary mindset and the demands of the present. It would then offer individuals the chance of being introduced into a deeper spiritual life and becoming actively involved in the functioning of a religious community. Importantly, it should extend over a period of time, feature a number of stages, be marked with rituals, and be enriched with competent instruction. One should also be inducted into appropriate practices, as well as expected to meet certain requirements whose fulfilment is duly reviewed. From the outset, it would be most advisable to provide adequate motivation to the initiates, since the aim is not to encumber them with excessive duties, but rather to usher them to a living experience of the Transcendence, a more profound inner life and an active presence in the religious community.

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