

# The Postmetaphysical Future of Christianity

ANTONI TORZEWSKI

(University of Szczecin)

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**Abstract:** With regard to the “return of religion” in philosophy – as proclaimed by many contemporary philosophers – in this paper I reflect on the future of religion, especially Christianity (and specifically Catholicism), referring to Gianni Vattimo’s philosophy of religion and postmetaphysical concept of religion in general. After briefly discussing the main tenets of this account of religion, I consider multiple issues and problems connected to it, particularly: the status of religious practice and the Church, as well as the question of love which is central to the postmetaphysical account of religion. Other problems that I also tackle are: the motivations for the development of postmetaphysical religion concepts, their locality, their target group, and their status. In spite of many issues related to the postmetaphysical account of religion, I try to show that it can be considered the right direction for philosophy of religion, given its ethical awareness, its attempt to get away from violence and metaphysics, as well as its effort to adopt some of the most important contemporary philosophy’s findings into religion.

**Keywords:** postmetaphysical philosophy, philosophy of religion, contemporary philosophy, Vattimo, love, violence.

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century religion started to return as a meaningful topic of philosophical reflection after many years of exile and being attacked

and disavowed by different thinkers, such as the masters of suspicion – as Ricoeur called Freud, Marks, and Nietzsche – as well as the (neo)positivists and – earlier – Enlightenment’s rationalism<sup>1</sup>. In the face of the changes in philosophy brought by new approaches (which could generally be described as an answer to the crisis of metaphysics<sup>2</sup>) – mostly phenomenology, hermeneutics, pragmatism, and postmodernism – religion is no longer seen as something to be left aside, as a myth which should be demythologized<sup>3</sup>. That is why many philosophers, such as Caputo, or – my main focus point – Vattimo, proclaim the “return of religion”<sup>4</sup>. If one states that religion truly reappeared in philosophy outside of its purely critical account, one has to ask: what is this returning religion? Is it scholastic Christianity? A vague religious experience theory? Mysterious mysticism? Zim-zum Judaism? Is the return of religion a return to what was before, or is there something new? In short – what is the future of religion in philosophy, given its return? Let me add that, while asking about the future, I do not mean any prophecy or forecast, but what I have in mind is the direction in which the reflection on religion should be developed in the light of the changes in contemporary philosophy.

In this text I would like to reflect on the mentioned future of religion, especially Christianity (and specifically – Catholicism), referring to Vattimo’s philosophy of religion. Despite the fact that I claim this future is a postmetaphysical one and it is the right direction, I do not want to focus on justifying this thesis, but rather to consider the multiple issues and problems connected with the postmetaphysical understanding of religion, both when it comes to its internal presuppositions, as well as – on a kind of meta-level – this project as a whole. What interests me are the following questions: why develop postmetaphysical religion; who needs it; what is its status; what would be the practical changes in religion, according to it; what are its main and implicit presuppositions; and what are its shortcomings. The structure of this text is the following: first I will briefly present the main tenets of the postmetaphysical account of religion in the light of Gianni Vattimo’s concept; then I am going to reflect on the shortcomings of this understanding of religion in the internal and external perspective; finally, I will formulate conclusions.

### *1. Postmetaphysical religion*

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<sup>1</sup> See Torzewski 2020a.

<sup>2</sup> See Vattimo 1998: 84.

<sup>3</sup> It is also related to the contemporary appreciation of myth not as something to be rejected, but as an only form of narrative we have – see Vattimo 2002: 20; Marquard 1989: 89.

<sup>4</sup> See Caputo 2001: 91; Vattimo 1998: 79. This thesis is not related to the sociological aspect of religion, meaning it is not a claim that in today’s society, religiosity is increasing, or that the process of secularisation (understood as dissolution of institutional religion) has ended and now it is reversed. The return of religion should be understood in purely philosophical terms – as a return of religion as a subject of a full-fledged philosophical reflection.

Gianni Vattimo is among the most important contemporary philosophers who developed the postmetaphysical approach to religion. Let me outline the main tenets of his view of religion (reduced to Christianity) very briefly. In general, this project of religion can be described with the notion of weakness – central to Vattimo’s whole philosophy (called *pensiero debole*)<sup>5</sup> – which relates to at least three fields: God, religion, and belief.

The Italian thinker, being strongly attached to the legacy of Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Gadamer<sup>6</sup>, tries to consider God outside of their given metaphysical understanding, which is expressed primarily in the image of God as a supreme, omnipotent being, creator of everything, a fair and fearful judge who knows everything – even our most hidden, unconscious thoughts, needs, and drives – and will punish or reward us on the account of our deeds<sup>7</sup>. Such understanding of God should be overcome – claims Vattimo – for numerous reasons. Firstly, it is no longer valid, given the Holocaust and the amount of suffering brought by wars<sup>8</sup>. Secondly, it favours the metaphysical account of religion, which should be abandoned, given the violence connected to it<sup>9</sup>. Thirdly, it is untenable in the light of a large part of contemporary philosophy – mainly hermeneutics and postmodernism<sup>10</sup>. Lastly, this image of God does not express the main message of Jesus and the Christian religion appropriately, which for Vattimo is love (in the sense of charity)<sup>11</sup>. That is why we need to revisit our understanding of God in terms of weakening.

The Italian thinker points at two “moments” which support the weak image of God. The first one is *kenosis*<sup>12</sup>, the incarnation, self-limitation of God who resigns from his metaphysical status of supreme being and brings themselves closer to humans through becoming human themselves in the

<sup>5</sup> See Vattimo, Rovatti 2012.

<sup>6</sup> See Vattimo, Paterlini 2009.

<sup>7</sup> See Vattimo 1999: 89-90. Such account of the metaphysical image of God is also present in Caputo, Sloterdijk, or Ricoeur – see Caputo 2006: 32; Sloterdijk 2009: 84; Ricoeur 1974: 447.

<sup>8</sup> See Robbins 2007: 12-13.

<sup>9</sup> See Vattimo 2002: 115.

<sup>10</sup> See Vattimo 2005: 47.

<sup>11</sup> See Vattimo 2005: 51. Of course, love does not have to be identified with charity, *caritas*, but for the sake of the argument I am developing here, let me proceed with this simplified notion of love. This is also based on the fact that on the grounds of Vattimo’s philosophy, which is my main point of reference in this paper, love is in most cases understood as charity. It is visible not only in the Italian thinker’s texts themselves, but also in the scholarship on his thought e.g. Depoortere 2009: 879; Harris 2014: 55; Zathureczky 2008: 227.

<sup>12</sup> This Pauline notion is central to Vattimo’s philosophy of religion. Self-weakening of God inscribes itself very well within the whole weak thought up to the point that Bubbio claims that with its introduction, one can mark a *Kehre*, a turn, in Vattimo’s intellectual journey. The notion of *kenosis* is explored further by Bubbio, who takes it far beyond Vattimo’s thought and presents it as a hermeneutical key to interpret contemporary philosophy as such – see Bubbio 2024a: 2; 2024b; 2015.

person of Jesus<sup>13</sup>. The second “moment” is the death of God<sup>14</sup>, the death of Jesus on the cross<sup>15</sup>, when God weakens themselves even more, giving up their life for the love for human beings, at the same time setting a moral archetype of love. The call of Jesus “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”<sup>16</sup> signifies the absence of a metaphysical God, directing us to the weak God who dies on the cross<sup>17</sup>. For Vattimo, this weakness expresses the “essence” of Christianity, which – again – is love.

Weakness advocated by the Italian thinker relates to religion as well. The process of weakening religion, known as secularisation, is understood as a positive change from the religious perspective, because it deprives religion of its violent potential<sup>18</sup>. Secularisation is not meant to annihilate religion in favour of the secular, but it is about the extraction of the Christian message of love<sup>19</sup>. The process of secularisation is therefore aimed at the metaphysical interpretation of religion in order to bring the postmetaphysical one out into the open. Vattimo strongly refers to the Girardian theory of the violent sacred<sup>20</sup> claiming that secularisation thought in terms of drifting away from the strong notion of *sacrum* – which, as Girard showed, is closely related to violence and sacrificial scheme – enables religion to escape its bloody origin<sup>21</sup>. Jesus, from this perspective, is the one who starts the process of secularisation by being the

<sup>13</sup> See Vattimo 1999: 55.

<sup>14</sup> For different ways of understanding this notion in the light of Vattimo’s philosophy – see Torzewski 2020b). Death of God in Vattimo’s thought is also broadly discussed (and compared to other accounts of this event, especially the one by Thomas Altizer) by e.g.: Bubbio 2024b); Harris 2011; 2019.

<sup>15</sup> See Vattimo 2009: 58.

<sup>16</sup> Mk 15:34 (all the Bible quotations come from the online BibleGateway website).

<sup>17</sup> See Vattimo 2002: 109. Many scholars take the beforementioned words of Jesus as signifying precisely the absence of God. This is understandable while interpreting these words out of context of Psalm 22, which these words come from. This psalm, however, expresses a praise for God, a strong faith in his help in a situation when almost all hope is lost. It is not a cry of the abandoned, or a sign of solitude and despair – as it is generally interpreted; in a way, also by Vattimo.

<sup>18</sup> See Vattimo 2002 : 119; Guarino 2011: 26; Torzewski 2020c).

<sup>19</sup> See Zathureczky 2008: 229.

<sup>20</sup> See Vattimo 1999: 41.

<sup>21</sup> See Girard 1986; 2005. For Girard, the sacred is intrinsically related to violence, among others through the scapegoat mechanism, which accompanies every crisis that happens in every culture (that is why Girard claims that violence is the power from which culture originates). In the history of mankind, only one event escapes the logic of the scapegoat mechanism, or even destroys it by demythologizing it. This event is Jesus’ life and death described in the Gospels, which constitute a text on an innocent victim. That is why, for Girard, Christianity is unique – it is the only religion which escapes violence. Vattimo heavily draws from his theory and broadens it by identifying the violent natural sacred with God of the metaphysical tradition. Demythologization of the violent mechanism in Girard becomes secularisation of metaphysical religion (supported also by the event of *kenosis*) in Vattimo. In spite of the significance of Girard’s influence on Vattimo, this topic will not be developed further in this text. It is broadly discussed by many other scholars – see e.g.: Arrigo 2017; Biris 2012; Bubbio 2024a); Depoortere 2009; Dickinson 2021; Meganck 2015.

weak, postmetaphysical God<sup>22</sup>. In other words, secularisation is a deeply Christian process of going away from metaphysics<sup>23</sup>.

Weakening, lastly, is also connected with religious (but not only religious) beliefs. The title of one of Vattimo's books *Credere di credere* (believing in faith or believing that one believes)<sup>24</sup> expresses exactly the weak character of the Christian faith. The believer from this perspective should not be certain about their faith, but should remain sceptical, or at least resign from the strong notion of religious truth<sup>25</sup>. It is motivated not only by the (postulated) weak character of Christianity, not only by consequently following the secularisation process, but also by the observation that strongly and metaphysically understood truth is connected to violence<sup>26</sup>. This is a well-known thread – in the Enlightenment, at the time of a very important and influential debate on religious tolerance, most of the authors advocating for tolerance claimed that religiously motivated violence is possible because of the certainty with which religious truth is professed<sup>27</sup>. Locke e.g., was an advocate of moderate scepticism on the grounds of religion, saying that we cannot be sure which of the ways leads to salvation, and therefore we cannot justify violence towards the heretics with our knowledge about the true faith<sup>28</sup>. That is why Vattimo also thinks from the perspective of scepticism – he proposes to use the notion of interpretation instead of truth, because interpretation is essentially weak and truth – strong<sup>29</sup>. If one wants to get rid of the possibility of religiously justified violence, one has to abandon the classical, metaphysical concept of truth.

Weakness in relation to God, religion, and beliefs points at a more general notion of pluralism, which is in the “centre” of this peripheral concept. “Number one is a mother of intolerance”<sup>30</sup> writes Sloterdijk and this statement precisely describes the philosophical attitude of Vattimo. For the process of weakening's outcome is the dissolvment of the metaphysical One and opening pluralism, which gives hope for nonviolence. Thinking in terms of the One – as the one God, one religion, one truth – has had terrible consequences which are clearly visible in history<sup>31</sup>. It is therefore sceptical pluralism that can become the reservoir of peace<sup>32</sup>.

Vattimo's view of Christianity, which is briefly outlined above, inscribes itself in a more general phenomenon of postmetaphysical religion concepts which are formulated by numerous contemporary philosophers, such as

<sup>22</sup> See Vattimo 2002: 67.

<sup>23</sup> See Vattimo 1999: 47; Vattimo 2003: 35.

<sup>24</sup> See Vattimo 1999; Vattimo 2002: 1.

<sup>25</sup> See Vattimo 2007: 37.

<sup>26</sup> See Vattimo 1997: 30; Jonkers 2000: 382.

<sup>27</sup> See Locke 1796: 23.

<sup>28</sup> See Locke 1796: 29.

<sup>29</sup> See Vattimo 1997: 14.

<sup>30</sup> Sloterdijk 2009: 96.

<sup>31</sup> See e.g. Armstrong 2000.

<sup>32</sup> See Marquard 1989: 93.

Caputo<sup>33</sup> or Kearney<sup>34</sup>. Even not strictly religious thinkers, e.g. Rorty, Welsch, Marquard or Sloterdijk (to name just a few), are implicitly in favour of such account of religion and their reflections can easily be applied to it. If I were to make an attempt of defining postmetaphysical religion, I would say that it is a kind of concept which is oriented on pluralism and nonviolence. Religion in such view is recognized as a weak bearer of love (hospitality, gift, charity)<sup>35</sup>. It is sceptical both towards religious truth, and towards itself<sup>36</sup>. However, its justification is not epistemic but ethical – it presents itself as the least violent way of interpreting religion and at the same time the most tolerant and pluralistic, meaning it is inclusive when it comes to particular religions and denominations<sup>37</sup>. It does not impose any strong view and lets the believer believe what they choose, with one exception. The limit of interpretation is love<sup>38</sup> – as Vattimo claims, or – evoking St. Augustin – “love and do what you will”<sup>39</sup>. What is important from the postmetaphysical perspective is not the truth – which religion (if any) or which God (if any) is true – but ethics, so how to get away from violence<sup>40</sup>.

## 2. Postmetaphysical Christianity – issues

As I said at the beginning, the postmetaphysical view of religion (especially Christianity), despite its being very compelling, given the postulated nonviolence, is not deprived of issues. I would like to briefly tackle some of them.

First, let me ask about the status of religious practice. If postmetaphysical Christianity underlines love so much, the simplest conclusion would be that religious practice is a moral practice (just like in Kant and other

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<sup>33</sup> Just as Vattimo’s reflections are mostly about religion, Caputo focuses on God more – that is why one can speak of postmetaphysical religion and postmetaphysical theology. In my view, Caputo’s theory of God is a great supplement to Vattimo’s view of religion and the other way around. See e.g.: Caputo 2001; 2006.

<sup>34</sup> On the margin I should add that as Vattimo speaks about postmetaphysical Christianity, other mentioned philosophers – especially Kearney – try to broaden the postmetaphysical interpretation of religion so that it also includes at least the other two Abrahamic religions – Judaism and Islam. In such view Vattimo seems to recognize some kind of uniqueness in Christianity in its message of love, and Kearney sees this message also in other religions, so the concept of the latter seems less christianocentric and more about religion as such. See Kearney 2011. However, only in Christianity there is an event of One God’s incarnation and *kenosis*, which for Vattimo constitutes the base for recognizing this religion’s uniqueness. On the other hand, there is also the singular event of the death of Jesus, which Girard points at in order to argue for the uniqueness of Christianity – see Depoortere 2009.

<sup>35</sup> See Vattimo 2007: 45.

<sup>36</sup> See Caputo 2001: 114.

<sup>37</sup> See Kearney 2011: 149.

<sup>38</sup> See Vattimo 2002: 51; Depoortere 2009: 879; Harris 2014: 54.

<sup>39</sup> Augustine 1885: 862.

<sup>40</sup> See Vattimo 2007: 42. Among others, also Bubbio pays attention to the primacy of ethics over epistemology in Vattimo’s thought – see Bubbio 2024a: 8.

Enlightenment philosophers' projects), and such practices which do not constitute a moral act are redundant from the religious perspective. As it is precisely the case for Kant, who calls prayer or participating in mass a pseudo-service to God<sup>41</sup>, it is not so simple on the grounds of postmetaphysical religion which is aware of the importance of both religious practice, and the aspects of religion other than the moral ones. I distinguish five dimensions of religious practice on the grounds of postmetaphysical religion.

The first one is aesthetical. Religious cult can be viewed in aesthetical terms as e.g. an experience of beauty, or the sublime. The aesthetical aspect of religious cult can be seen not only in e.g. religious music, but also in the specific religious discourse in which the prayers and other religious texts are written, or in the whole spectacle of movements, lights, scents, costumes, and scenography, which constitute e.g. the holy mass. Vattimo on numerous occasions compared churches to museums and paid a lot of attention to the aesthetic dimension of religious cult, especially of the Latin holy mass<sup>42</sup>.

The second aspect of religious practice I call mnemonic. Participating in or performing religious rituals, such as prayer, as well as reading the Bible, attending the holy mass, etc., makes the believer remember – remember the content of their faith, the message of love inscribed in Christianity, the importance of religion and the reflection upon its meaning, finally – remember the weak God who sets an example for the believers. Remembering enables the believer to shape their religious attitude of openness, hospitality and tolerance. Moreover, remembering is constantly revisiting the contents of religion, which preserves the sense of scepticism in the believer and prevents them from falling into the abyss of certainty, which – as I have mentioned multiple times – usually ends with violence.

The third dimension of religious practice is anthropotechnical – in Sloterdijk's terms<sup>43</sup>. Many forms of ritual activity, such as chanting or reciting litanies, rosary prayer, singing psalms, performing recurrent religiously motivated movements, fasting, are but a meditative form of self-practice. This "technique of the self" makes the believer more focused, more patient, more calm, more self-reflective, etc., which in the end increases their capacity of exercising the religious message of love. The constant practice of the self keeps the believer "in shape", enables them to progress towards developing a religious attitude of openness, which is not an easy one – as Kearney highlights – because welcoming the stranger is always a risk, a wager<sup>44</sup>. Being a real host demands practice, which religion provides.

The fourth aspect of religious practice is connected to broadly conceived religious experience understood as the contact with "something more", "something otherworldly". Through participating in the holy time of religious

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<sup>41</sup> See Kant 1998a: 142.

<sup>42</sup> See Vattimo 1999: 69; Vattimo 1997: 75.

<sup>43</sup> See Sloterdijk 2013.

<sup>44</sup> See Kearney 2011: 19.

festivals, a certain attitude is produced in the believer, namely a sceptical one. Because of experiencing “something more”, something that in different ways transcends them, the believer becomes aware of their finitude and thus they also become sceptical – they are thrown off balance from their everyday life, which makes them reflect on their cognitive capacity. The result of this reflection – scepticism – is a way of nonviolence – as I mentioned earlier. That is why religious experience leads to the abandonment of violence.

The fifth and last dimension of religious practice is the communal one. Ritual and cult activities are often performed in a group of people who profess similar values, who have similar aims. That is why the believer can benefit a lot from participating in religious practices. They not only gain a sense of community, but also have the occasion to confront their beliefs with others who may think differently on many topics, and learn from their experience of religion, as well as from their practice of love.

It is visible that on the grounds of postmetaphysical Christianity, religious practices have many more aspects than just the moral one and that is why it remains a religion and is not a Kant-like reduction of religion to its single dimension, such as morality (despite that morality is presented as central for postmetaphysical religion)<sup>45</sup>. Religious practice is not only moral practice, and the religious community or institutionalized religion – the Church – still remains important. Vattimo clearly answers the question: “Can we have a private religion without church?” by saying: “I don’t think so”<sup>46</sup>. Postmetaphysical religion is not a private one, but an individualized one, meaning that religious beliefs can be interpreted individually by every believer, but it does not mean that any form of public religion (churches, religious societies, missions, etc.) should be abandoned and that the pluralism of beliefs demands it<sup>47</sup>. On the contrary, an officially sanctioned religious community is very important for the reasons I provided above. However, one may ask, if every believer has their own set of beliefs, how could this church exist and bring all these different people together? The sole recognition of love as the main value is too general to be the only integrating factor. To be able to exist, this postmetaphysical Christian church would also demand recognizing the Christian tradition and the Bible as important, as well as sharing the postmetaphysical, sceptical attitude by its members. However, why should one assume that along with the postmetaphysical understanding of religion, a new church must be formed – it may also be that an existing church, say the catholic one, would slowly transform and incorporate postmetaphysical thinking. I believe the latter would be the case, given the nonrevolutionary (but

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<sup>45</sup> I leave aside the thesis of certain thinkers, such as Palmquist, that in Kant’s case it is not about the reduction of religion to morality, but about making morality religion – see Palmquist 1992.

<sup>46</sup> Vattimo 2005: 70.

<sup>47</sup> The problem of the political status of religion as private is reflected upon by Taylor and Maclure – see Taylor, Maclure 2011.



evolutionary)<sup>48</sup> character of postmetaphysics (related to the fact of human finitude)<sup>49</sup>. The Church would eventually become a weak community of believers who profess their own idiosyncratic interpretation of the Christian heritage<sup>50</sup>.

That brings me to the problem of religious doctrine which, as such, is a truly metaphysical aspect of religion, if it is understood as a system of coherent (or at least claiming to be) beliefs, based on the revelation, and related to the sphere of the sacred, which every believer should profess and consider absolutely and undoubtedly true. In this sense the presence of doctrine is not possible on the grounds of postmetaphysical Christianity, especially given what has been said about the individualization of religious beliefs and scepticism. The doctrine is one of the most important aspects of religion which have no future in postmetaphysical perspective. Only a kind of weak set of interpretations could be present in it, but essentially it is about an individual interpretation guided by love, so in a sense, it is more demanding.

This last notion – love – is key to understanding the postmetaphysical and nonviolent approach to religion. Vattimo uses love both as a central ethical tenet and as a limit of various processes of weakening religion. He often evokes Augustin's words "love and do what you will"<sup>51</sup>, highlighting that "love is all you need" (as the Beatles sang) when it comes to religion. These sentences can be applied to two important grounds, namely to the grounds of the process of secularisation, and of the interpretation of the Bible (and more generally – the Christian tradition). In short: one can interpret Christianity in all different ways, but the one thing they cannot change, resign from, or alter, is love<sup>52</sup>. The same applies to secularisation – religion can and should be secularized, which means it should drift away from its metaphysical character, up to the point where love appears, because it constitutes the limit of secularisation<sup>53</sup>. Seemingly, love is free from any problems and self-explanatory. Love is good – we all know that; what could be wrong in being guided by it in our actions and in our intellectual endeavours? Well, unfortunately it is not so simple. Love in postmetaphysical religion seems to be treated quite naively, as a basic axiom, accepted without justification, and not questioned at all. As for the validation of love – it seems that postmetaphysical philosophers base love on a kind of

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<sup>48</sup> The question about the evolutionary vs revolutionary character of the postmetaphysical thought can be broadly explored, however, it is beyond the scope of this paper. I believe that it is evolutionary, and that Odo Marquard expressed it most precisely. Vattimo, on the other hand, on numerous occasions spoke about revolution, criticizing it for its metaphysical character. Revolution on the grounds of postmetaphysical philosophy should only be conceived as an inner change, which – as the Italian thinker says – has no radical character but is rather understood as a process of creative overcoming of the given way of thinking – see Marquard 1989, Vattimo 2009: 126; 2021: 17.

<sup>49</sup> See Marquard 1989: 73.

<sup>50</sup> See Vattimo 1999: 66.

<sup>51</sup> See Vattimo 1999, p 64.

<sup>52</sup> See Vattimo 2002: 67.

<sup>53</sup> See Vattimo 2002: 51

elementary moral intuition available for all and they do not try to justify it further and more fundamentally<sup>54</sup>, which remains in accordance with the antifoundationalist scope of postmetaphysics<sup>55</sup>. The potential objection, according to which this justification is philosophically very weak, should be dismissed because essentially all basic presuppositions of philosophical theories are accepted precisely as suppositions, and not as undoubted truths, even if that is what they claim to be. E.g., postulates of both the theoretical and the practical reason in Kant's conception<sup>56</sup> are accepted as factors which make our intellectual endeavours meaningful, but they are just postulates, they cannot be proved. In other words, love in postmetaphysical philosophy plays a role of such basic presupposition<sup>57</sup>, and its justification is mainly negative, meaning – because other presuppositions have not resolved the problem of violence, let us now adopt love as an axiom and maybe on its grounds violence can be dealt with. Love from this perspective is yet another elementary notion on which one can develop a philosophy – it is not justified better or worse than other such basic presuppositions.

But the other problem remains, meaning the problematization of love, especially on the grounds of religion. Love in the postmetaphysical account of religion is understood classically as an attitude towards the neighbour's (or even the enemy's) good. If I am guided by love, I want what is best for the Other. Is this enough to dismiss all violence? Not at all. The history of Christianity shows again and again that love can have its dark side, which is often missed<sup>58</sup>. Let me provide some short examples starting with the political right-wing parties (not even those far-right, but the "good old" conservatives). Notice that in many countries conservative parties mention Christianity and its main tenets such as love, and at the same time propose a policy that seems contrary to it, e.g. regarding social benefits or migrations. American republicans, who have highlighted their attachment to the Christian heritage on numerous occasions,

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<sup>54</sup> Different scholars point at the lack of foundation for love, but by demanding a foundation they do not seem to recognize the specificity of the postmetaphysical approach, which is intrinsically antifoundational. E.g. Harris writes: "with no neutral point from which to adjudicate interpretations, even *caritas* needs to be grounded on something else, something which is lacking. Vattimo's postmodern Categorical Imperative, therefore, lacks both a foundation that does not beg the question or consistency with his intention to weaken metaphysics" 2014: 63. Also Jonkers points at the arbitrariness of choosing love as central tenet in Vattimo's philosophy – see Jonkers 2000: 386.

<sup>55</sup> See Rorty 1989: 74.

<sup>56</sup> See Kant 1996, 2002.

<sup>57</sup> That is why accusing postmetaphysical philosophers (who choose love as the base of their conceptions) of inconsistency should be dismissed. Love has no absolute or transcendental character, it is simply adopted as a basic presupposition (a base of interpretation) with no strong ontological claim on its side. So, when Vattimo speaks of love in the context of Kant's categorical imperative, it ought to be understood rather as a metaphor and not a strong claim of a universal and absolute moral tenet – see Jonkers 2000: 385; Harris 2014; Depoortere 2009: 888.

<sup>58</sup> E.g. Biris does not seem to see the problem of the relation between love and violence, when he writes: "For what violence can exist in love? Only the violence which is supposed by self-defence, because the love of our neighbour should not be cancel the love of one's self" 2012: 181

propose an anti-immigrant policy which is materialized in the wall on the US-Mexico border<sup>59</sup>. The same goes for the Law and Justice (PiS) government of Poland in the context of its policy regarding the Poland-Belarus border and migrants from the Middle East, who have been stuck in the woods between the two countries<sup>60</sup>. Where is love in this approach? Where is the Christian hospitality and openness for the neighbour (and enemy) in it? Setting the problematic political context aside, let me turn to religion itself.

If love is understood as the attitude towards the Other's own good, and – on religious grounds – Other's own good equals their salvation, their eternal good, this can make the exercise of love very problematic when applied to the worldly sphere. In contact with people who do not share the Christian (or even narrower – catholic, protestant or orthodox, etc.) belief, love makes the believer convert the Other not only by using words and persuasion, but also – in more extreme cases – by using violence. After all, it is better for the Other to suffer in this world, where their suffering is finite, than to let them suffer the eternal damnation if not converted. This kind of logic was (and still is, to some extent) strongly present in the Christian mentality. It is expressed e.g. in involuntary baptism, forcing people to join the Christian community or baptizing them without their consent and awareness<sup>61</sup>. It is also visible in the attitude towards LGBTQ+ persons, namely e.g. the "treatment" of homosexuality (the violent conversion to the "right path" of sexual health, resigning from sin, which is one of the conditions of salvation)<sup>62</sup>. In the most extreme cases, love understood as care for salvation<sup>63</sup> was also the factor which guided the actions of inquisitors and their practicing torture. The belief hidden behind it was that worldly suffering can redeem the sinner; fire purifies the witch. So, witch-hunts and other persecutions, including torture, could have been performed with love in mind – however unbelievable it sounds.

The appreciation of worldly suffering directed at salvation is clearly visible in Christian history, not only in the examples I mentioned earlier, but also in the practice of self-inflicted pain (e.g. the infamous flagellants, fasting, self-mutilations, as well as other numerous and elaborate practices)<sup>64</sup>, which is all included in the metaphor of the cross every one of us has to carry through

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<sup>59</sup> See e.g.: [www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2023/10/24/trump-religion-immigration/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2023/10/24/trump-religion-immigration/).

<sup>60</sup> See e.g.: [www.polskieradio.pl/395/7989/artykul/2828548,we-will-defend-polish-border-conservative-leader-says-amid-migrant-crisis](https://www.polskieradio.pl/395/7989/artykul/2828548,we-will-defend-polish-border-conservative-leader-says-amid-migrant-crisis).

<sup>61</sup> See Hitchens 1995: 48.

<sup>62</sup> See Haldeman 2022.

<sup>63</sup> It is clear that the idea of salvation can be very dangerous. That is why adopting it as a main safeguard of violence, as Jonkers does, can be even more problematic than referring to love in this capacity – see Jonkers 2000: 388.

<sup>64</sup> One of the examples of people who practiced self-mortification in modern times is pope John Paul II, who whipped himself regularly and also practiced other different kinds of penance – see Oder, Saverio 2010.

our lives like Jesus<sup>65</sup>. This cross, the suffering will eventually become what enables our salvation. Pain is also appreciated as a means for worldly goals, and has a “pedagogic” role. It does not necessarily have to be about enabling salvation, but also about becoming a “better” human being. On such grounds e.g. beating the children is justified – the parent does not want to inflict pain on their child, but they believe that it will have benefits in the future. The same, in a sense, goes for medicine – inflicting pain now (e.g. during a medical procedure) is aimed at preventing more suffering in the future. The only difference between this and witch-hunts is understanding the future pain – in the cases of medical treatment and child abuse it is understood in a worldly manner, and in witch-hunts it becomes eternal, so the stakes are infinitely higher in the latter case. From this perspective it is clear that love does not guarantee nonviolence and lack of suffering, and sometimes even supports it.

Let us not forget that in Christianity, the commandment of love for the neighbour and the enemy is subordinate to the most profound commandment of love for God<sup>66</sup>. The most popular interpretation is that the believer should see God in all people, according to the words of Jesus: “whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me”<sup>67</sup>. That is why the two commandments of love are really one – the love for neighbour and enemy is a reflection of the love for God. However, such an understanding can be interpreted as utterly diminishing any meaning of the human life and morality in favour of piety. If the believer should do good only because God is present in other people, they would act for God and not for other people, and the sole value of people as people would be of no importance, they are only important as a means and not as aims – to use Kant’s perspective of categorical imperative<sup>68</sup>. Christianity from this perspective is amoral, because there is no relation between humans in it, but only a relation between the believer and God (whom the believer should see in everything and everyone)<sup>69</sup>. Love in such case is reserved only for God and can also lead to violence in cases such as blasphemy, or heresy, as well as it can cause moral apathy given that moral action is not the only kind of action that can express piety.

Love is therefore not deprived of important issues and in its general understanding, it does not seem an appropriate means to end violence. It requires a certain, strongly philosophically entangled interpretation to become such factor. Love, as I have mentioned, is about the good of the Other, and now

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<sup>65</sup> This way of the cross of course began already with Jesus’ words: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Mt 16:24. Later, the metaphor of a Christian’s life as a way of the cross was also popularized by Thomas a Kempis’ famous book *Imitation of Christ*, especially in the part where he writes about the “Royal Road of the Holy Cross” – see Thomas a Kempis 2004: 40.

<sup>66</sup> Mt 22:36-37.

<sup>67</sup> Mt 25:40.

<sup>68</sup> See Kant 1998b): 41.

<sup>69</sup> See Ziemiński, Nowak 2023.

everything depends on the understanding of the good. It should not be identified with salvation, nor with piety. So, what is good on the grounds of postmetaphysical religion? It seems that good is nonviolence<sup>70</sup>. That, however, does not mean anything specific yet. Putting the many problems connected with the understanding of violence (such as the relation between violence and suffering, violence and evil, or violence and power) aside, I am in favour of describing violence as forcing one's will upon the other. Violence is a violation of freedom. That is why the good in the postmetaphysical scope becomes individual freedom. Making it the main value, postmetaphysical religion is safeguarded from the distortions I highlighted above. The believer cannot impose their own view of salvation or piety onto the Other and use love as an excuse for or justification of violence, because violence is the opposite of love in the postmetaphysical perspective<sup>71</sup>. Even though the postmetaphysical religion becomes coherent through the introduction of freedom, it has to be said that this religion contains a very strong philosophical presupposition. For it is not obvious that freedom is the main value; there are many others, such as: morally good life, developing one's personality, intellectual growth, piety, etc.<sup>72</sup>, which are adopted as central for many people. Choosing freedom seems arbitrary. Similarly, the proclamation of violence as the worst out there can be debatable. For there are also other factors which can be regarded as the worst: suffering, sin, stupidity, and so forth<sup>73</sup>. Postmetaphysical religion's focus on freedom and violence (and postmetaphysical thought in general) has many philosophical consequences, e.g. despite its being a religious project, it means the adaptation of an essentially secular point of view – the ultimate values are realizable in this life and through worldly means.

### 3. Postmetaphysical religion – issues (external)

It is visible that there are many issues connected with postmetaphysical religion which are not tackled too often, but they significantly influence the reception of this project. Referring to love and freedom is not “innocent”, even though it seems deprived of controversies. The beforementioned issues – not only those

<sup>70</sup> Also Harris and Jonkers point out that at the base of Vattimo's theory, there is a claim that violence is wrong (and nonviolence good). What is significant – this belief is arbitrarily treated as a moral absolute, according to Harris and Jonkers. It is a serious problem, which I also take into account – see Harris 2014: 62; Jonkers 2000: 384.

<sup>71</sup> Though some scholars would rather say that the opposite of love is hatred in Vattimo's thought – see Biris 2012, p.183

<sup>72</sup> It is clearly visible e.g. in different declarations of human rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights present freedom and developing one's personality as the main values, but e.g. The Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam or the Orthodox Declaration of Human Rights adopt different values, such as: developing the religious (or national) community, developing one's faith, or living a morally good life. See <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights> and [https://www.pravoslavieto.com/docs/human\\_rights/declaration\\_ru\\_en.htm](https://www.pravoslavieto.com/docs/human_rights/declaration_ru_en.htm); <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/institute/cairodeclaration.html>

<sup>73</sup> Those other factors are also mentioned e.g. in different Human Rights Declarations.

related to love, but also to the status of religious practice and community – were discussed from an internal perspective, meaning that they are specific problems within the postmetaphysical project of religion. However, one can also bring about a more general, external perspective, and ask about postmetaphysical religion as a whole. This reveals a new set of problems which have to be dealt with in order to properly justify the mentioned project. The first one I would like to consider is: what are the motivations or the possible reasons for developing the postmetaphysical Christianity theories? In other words: why talk about them in the first place?

On a strictly intellectual level, I have already said in the beginning that after a long period of critique of religion, the philosophical thought shifted towards other currents, which opened the possibility to seriously discuss religion again. I would say that in general, it has to do with a “crisis” of metaphysics and rationality (specifically the science-oriented rationality and instrumental reason)<sup>74</sup>, or – not to use such strong notions – with questioning the hegemony of the latter (which comes along with the crisis of modernity)<sup>75</sup>. Religion in the light of science and reason appeared as an old system of naïve beliefs which do not accurately explain the world and our place in it<sup>76</sup>. That is why one can see different philosophical efforts aiming at pushing religion to the private sphere or even questioning its further existence as meaningful<sup>77</sup>. In contemporary philosophy one can notice a strong doubt in the power of reason both as a means of developing knowledge, and contributing to the progress of morality; so, doubt in the Enlightenment project and in the reason-oriented metaphysics<sup>78</sup>. Of course, it does not mean that reason is no longer important or that one should abandon it altogether, appreciating only irrational spheres of live and irrational interpretations of the world. It only means that reason is not the one and only thing which should dominate every field of our lives or that reason (or better – rationality) has different forms – many of which should be heard, and not only a single one absolutized<sup>79</sup>. So, it is a shift from

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<sup>74</sup> See Vattimo 1999: 28.

<sup>75</sup> See Jonkers 2000: 376.

<sup>76</sup> As Rorty says – when science is made the main paradigm of rationality and truth, “then religion will have to be thought of either as an unsuccessful competitor with empirical inquiry or as ‘merely’ a vehicle of emotional satisfaction” – Rorty 2005: 37.

<sup>77</sup> See e.g.: Dawkins 2006; Carnap 1959.

<sup>78</sup> See Rorty 1989: 52. Also, Vattimo’s *End of Modernity* is written as a critique of the Enlightenment (modern) project and at the same time as a proposition of hermeneutical, postmodern concept of truth understood outside of the narrow understanding of modern reason – see Vattimo 1991.

<sup>79</sup> This is related to the problem of incommensurability of discourses, which is approached by many contemporary thinkers, such as Lyotard and Welsch. The latter shows that all discourses are not equal, there are in fact better and worse ones, but the criterion of evaluation is not absolute and ethical, not epistemological, which means a discourse is “better” when it is less violent. Vattimo seems to take a similar stance – see Welsch 2008; Vattimo 2002: 67.

unification towards pluralism<sup>80</sup>. It is also visible in relation to metaphysics, namely it is not rejected as a mistake, it is just exhausted – in the light of that a shift towards postmetaphysics (but not antimetaphysics) is needed<sup>81</sup>. In such atmosphere the reflection on religion returns, yet given the appreciation of moderate scepticism, as well as pluralism, it cannot be thought of as it was before. In other words: today's philosophy needs today's religion<sup>82</sup>. That is one reason why a postmetaphysical religion is being developed.

Let me notice, however, that in practice and in numerous cases of particular believers, rationality has little to do with religion – “[...] the obstacles to belief are primarily moral and spiritual, rather than epistemic” – says Taylor<sup>83</sup>. What seems more important is different experiences connected with religion, and its being practically meaningful. With regard to it, the experience of constant and enormous violence closely related to religion constitute a factor which makes the given reflection on religion invalid. In the past, religious violence was thinkable and appeared justified, now – not necessarily. The belief that God wants me to kill someone or force them to change their beliefs is getting harder and harder to accept<sup>84</sup>. Violence connected to religion has two important dimensions which I would like to point at. Firstly, it is violence inflicted by the believers on the religious grounds (so, e.g. killing the heretics) – there is no need to name the many examples of such actions. Secondly, however, there is also violence not directly related to religion, but indirectly as in the experience of the Holocaust. The classical theodicy model, rationalizing the suffering of the millions who died in concentration camps, and maintaining the paradigm of God as good and omnipotent, are not tenable<sup>85</sup>. Postmetaphysical religion is formulated as an answer to this situation, because

<sup>80</sup> It is visible e.g. when Vattimo says: “[...] until now philosophers have seen fit to describe the world, now the moment has arrived to interpret it” (it is of course a paraphrase of Marx's statement) – Vattimo 1997: 14.

<sup>81</sup> See Heidegger 1977; Vattimo 2009, p.126; Harris 2014: 52. The difference between anti- and post-metaphysics is very significant and relates to the Heideggerian notion of *Verwindung* which is used instead of *Überwindung*. The latter means overcoming; in this context – overcoming of metaphysics. The approach guided by *Überwindung* is anti-metaphysical, for it rejects metaphysics and treats it as a mistake of the past. Therefore, paradoxically, the anti-metaphysical approach (such as e.g. positivist movement) is still metaphysical, because it recognizes a new objective truth. What Heidegger and the whole postmetaphysical thought propose is the way of *Verwindung*, which means a creative exceeding of the given metaphysical tradition. It does not reject it as false, it just recognizes its shortcomings (especially its connection to violence) and wants to develop a new way of thinking while having the past philosophical tradition in mind.

<sup>82</sup> That is why Vattimo connects hermeneutics (as today's philosophy, today's *koine*) with Christianity (in its today's interpretation in the spirit of love) – see Vattimo 1997: 42-44.

<sup>83</sup> Taylor 1999: 25.

<sup>84</sup> Of course, I am referring mostly to intellectualists because the sole relation between religion and violence is still strongly present, especially in the rhetorical aspect, when God or religion are used to justify violence e.g. in the case of Russia's invasion on Ukraine – see e.g.: <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/russian-orthodox-church-declares-holy-war-against-ukraine-and-west/>.

<sup>85</sup> See Rubenstein 1992.

it is a project aimed at preventing any (religiously or secularly motivated or justified) violence, as well as it takes into account the need for a different understanding of God and evil. Moreover, postmetaphysical perspective shifts the focal point of reflection (including religious reflection) from truth to ethics<sup>86</sup>, to love above all else, which also signifies the importance of the question of violence and its possible justifications.

Today's talk of postmetaphysical religion is also caused by the need to adapt religion to contemporary European, liberal mentality and sensitivity. From this point of view, the given understanding of religion does not fulfil the moral (and intellectual) expectations and that is why a new interpretation of religion is needed; such an interpretation that takes into account e.g. the attachment to individual freedom, to equality, to openness and hospitality, to a non-economic understanding of moral action, as well as e.g. today's stance on bioethical issues, and on sexual ethics. Postmetaphysical religion seems like an appropriate way to accommodate that by weakening the strong claims of religion and allowing more freedom and independence for the believers. It also paves the way for religion to become more liberal – e.g. to allow for women priesthood, for homosexual marriages, etc. The fact that religion is still preserving such conservative *status quo* as not letting women have the same rights in the church community as men is incomprehensible from today's perspective and that is what makes postmetaphysical interpretation needed.

To some extent, also the crisis of the institutional religion, which is visible in certain areas of the world, such as Europe, can be thought of as the cause of development of postmetaphysical religion, whose attachment to the Church is much weaker than that of the metaphysical one. Paedophile scandals, mistreatment of the mentally ill (treated as possessed by demons), and other problems pointing to the moral corruption of the Church have appeared one after the other in recent years<sup>87</sup>. Social trust for the Church diminishes, religious people often do not want to be associated with this institution, and some people are so morally disgusted by the actions of priests and nuns that they leave the Church as apostates. One of the meanings of the secularisation thesis is the dissolvment of institutional religion (clearly visible in the Christian Europe). In order for the Church to change, a new model of religious community is needed. That is when the postmetaphysical religion comes to mind. A more liberal, equal and communal image of the Church it presents seems to be more appropriate given the contemporary disappointment with the moral corruption of the Church. Postmetaphysical religion therefore can be seen as a chance for the church to reappear and to claim its calling as a godly community. But a community of who? Is this vision of religion universal, directed at all people, just as it seems to be the case with traditional way of interpreting Christianity?

<sup>86</sup> See Vattimo 2016: 111.

<sup>87</sup> See e.g.: famous series of Boston Globe articles - <https://www.pulitzer.org/winners/boston-globe-1>.



It could already be seen, although implicitly, that the postmetaphysical religion has its limitations when it comes to its scope – and that is the second issue I would like to tackle briefly. Well, despite the fact that at the first glance, postmetaphysical interpretation of religion may seem quite universal and its main assumptions understandable, there are in fact many factors which make it really local – in numerous dimensions. Firstly, it is ethnocentric, associated closely with the western, democratic, and liberal perspective, which is visible e.g. in the focus on values such as freedom, equality and morality<sup>88</sup> strongly highlighted in the west. Secondly, the locality is clear in the field of religion, because the discussion on religion is in fact a discussion on Christianity, which is adopted as the main role model of religion<sup>89</sup>; and often the reflections on postmetaphysical religion are identified with reflections on postmetaphysical Christianity. In some cases, such as Kearney's, postmetaphysical projects of religion also evoke two other Abrahamic religions, but they almost never refer to any polytheisms or non-theistic religions<sup>90</sup>. The message of love and the main tenets of postmetaphysical religion are derived from Christianity, and often there is a silent assumption present in it that this religion is in a way special and differs from other religions because of the figure of Jesus and his actions<sup>91</sup>. The locality of postmetaphysical religion is also visible in relation to philosophy, namely it is an intellectual project entangled in a complex web of texts and discussions on religion, philosophy, rationality, and morality. Postmetaphysical religion can facilitate an interesting perspective for highly educated people knowledgeable in humanities, but at the same time its meaning can be utterly incomprehensible for ordinary believers.

Of course, this locality of postmetaphysical religion does not necessarily have to be a problem. In fact, postmetaphysical thought in general is in favor of locality and appreciates the limited perspectives, at the same time not acknowledging any universal and total outlooks<sup>92</sup>. That is why it is no surprise that the project of religion developed on its grounds is local in many ways. The only problem is that this locality is often hidden, and the language used by the philosophers reflecting on religion in a postmetaphysical manner is seemingly universal – e.g., instead of using the more “local” term “Christianity”, they speak of “religion”, which is very misleading<sup>93</sup>. That is why one can state that the universality of postmetaphysical religion is at most a potential one (meaning it can – maybe – be applied to every religion), but for sure not a factual one. It

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<sup>88</sup> Of course, other areas of the world also value freedom and morality highly, but they are not necessarily as central to their identity as they are to the western one. In other civilizations and geographical fields such values as piety, lawfulness, obedience, motherland etc. play the main part as shown on the example of different Human Rights Declarations.

<sup>89</sup> It is visible in such authors as: Taylor (2002), Sloterdijk (2020), or Rorty (2011).

<sup>90</sup> See Kearney 2011.

<sup>91</sup> See e.g. Girard's praise of Jesus' death as the end of the scapegoat mechanism – see Girard 1986.

<sup>92</sup> See Rorty 1991: 203.

<sup>93</sup> See e.g. Vattimo 2005.

is essentially a local project limited to Christianity in the west, liberal, and democratic states, and to the philosophically knowledgeable intellectuals.

That brings us to the question: who is the “target group” (using marketing terms) of the postmetaphysical religion? In other words: who needs it? Is it really only the western intellectuals – as I have mentioned before – or is this group larger? It does not seem to be needed by many ordinary believers as they are in most cases satisfied with the given religion, with the metaphysical notion of reward and punishment, with the clear doctrine, with a meaning-giving function of religion. The clergy, too, is rather not meant to be the main target of postmetaphysical Christianity. Of course, one can see a group of more liberal priests, with pope Francis at the head<sup>94</sup>, but their attitude is still far from the assumptions of the postmetaphysical thought. So, maybe it is aimed at non-believers as an encouragement to adopt the Christian faith? This does not seem to be the case either, as the weak interpretation of religion requires recognition of the importance of the Christian heritage. I think that apart from the mentioned intellectuals, postmetaphysical Christianity can be viewed as targeted at ex-believers, or the believers outside of an institution; at those who feel failed by religion, who left the church motivated by its corruption, or at people who cannot agree with the strong and absolute claims of religion, but at the same time want to believe (*credere di credere*). But believe in what exactly? What is in fact the postmetaphysical religion, towards which those people should be directed? Is it a description, an interpretation, is it only an intellectual project, or practical as well; is this setting a course of thinking about Christianity; is this an attempt to save this religion in the contemporary world?

Well, it certainly is not a description of the factual state of affairs, especially when it comes to religious practice. However, if one were to focus on the presented interpretation of the meaning of Christianity, it could be regarded as a description – in the sense that the meaning of religion is in fact what postmetaphysics claims. Yet, the more appropriate name for it would be an interpretation; given its weak character it inscribes itself better in the main tenets of postmetaphysics. It is therefore an interpretation, a proposition how to understand Christianity in the nonviolent key of love. The project of postmetaphysical religion is not solely intellectual, though this component seems to be the most elaborate one. The practical dimension is also clearly visible, but on the one hand the particular postulates are not explicitly defined (in most cases), and on the other – implementing those postulates in everyday religious practice would be very difficult, especially given the current condition of the Church. We could experience a little foretaste of that when Jorge Bergoglio became pope Francis and introduced a slightly different than existing attitude and rhetoric into the Church, which was met with a strong opposition, particularly in the countries where conservatism is still a strong political option (such as Poland). That is why postmetaphysical Christianity should not be

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<sup>94</sup> See e.g. Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter, *Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship*.

treated as a proposition to be introduced to religious practice today, it should rather be treated as a guidebook for the future of religion and implemented slowly, without any revolutions along with the change which occurs in the believers themselves. In a way this is a project which aims at saving Christianity, but above all it is a human emancipatory endeavour whose goal is to broaden the scope of individual freedom.

#### *4. Conclusion*

Postmetaphysical Christianity expresses certain tendencies present among the western, liberal intellectuals who grew tired of the metaphysical understanding of Christianity and who are revoked by the violence connected to it, at the same time recognizing the value of the Christian heritage and wanting to preserve this religion. That is why they develop a project of postmetaphysical Christianity which is perceived as a religion for today (when it comes to “the elites”), or for the future (for a broader group of people). The future of Christianity is truly postmetaphysical – as the title of this text says – but given certain clauses. Firstly, it has to be understood in the context of a large part of contemporary philosophy. Secondly, it is valid only if violence is recognized as the worst thing that exists. Thirdly, it seems a good form of religion on the grounds of the contemporary pluralistic, liberal, and democratic societies. As I have mentioned, I think the direction set for religion by postmetaphysics is the right one (or maybe I should say the safest and the most freedom-securing), but on the other hand it is difficult to realize in practice, especially if one were to look at other religions which do not want to abandon their claim to absolute truth, and remain utterly metaphysical. Also, the issues discussed in the presented paper show that postmetaphysical religion itself is not free from controversies and has deeply rooted philosophical concepts at its base.

Now the task would be to further examine the postmetaphysical notion of freedom, which seems really crucial to the whole reasoning not only in regard to religion, but to the postmetaphysical thinking in general. It would also be interesting to check if there are philosophical approaches that could be called postmetaphysical and at the same time not freedom-oriented. That would provide ground for stating whether freedom is a necessary element of postmetaphysics. What is also important is to examine if the presented project of religion can be applied to religions other than Christianity. It is done partially by Richard Kearney, but requires further development e.g. in the context of polytheistic religions. Finally, let me say that in the postmetaphysical endeavour of searching for a category which would free philosophy and human beings from violence<sup>95</sup>, referring to love is not “all you need” (contrary to the

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<sup>95</sup> There is also a different perspective on this issue which highlights, that postmodern relativism (or quasi-relativism) and nihilism are exactly the factors potentially increasing violence, because “in a world saturated with never-true-never-false interpretations, violence becomes the sole means to assert the (always transient and precarious) dominance of one interpretation over another” – see Bubbio

Beatles' statement). This attempt to get rid of violence seems most important for postmetaphysical philosophers and that is why the category of love should be approached more critically in order to clarify it and then use as a safeguard against violence.

[antoni.torzewski@gmail.com](mailto:antoni.torzewski@gmail.com)

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2024b: 10. That is why, the means to decrease violence can be found only in strong philosophical notions and especially referring to transcendence – see Jonkers 2000: 388; Zathureczky 2008: 231.

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#### Biographical note

**Antoni Torzewski** is a researcher at the University of Szczecin. His work focuses on contemporary continental philosophy, especially Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Gianni Vattimo. He writes on postmetaphysics, nihilism, and the future of religion, and has published in several international philosophical journals.