

RYSZARD MORDARSKI

PROBABILISTIC THEISM
AND THE TRADITIONAL DOCTRINE
OF *ACTUS PURUS*

Our thinking about God always takes place in the highest areas of metaphysics, where, in an attempt to somehow reach the inexpressible, we are constantly encountering paradox, inconsistency, and even contradiction. We refer to a reality that is not of this world; furthermore, in every possible sense it is “beyond” the world and regardless of the world. As Aquinas says: “God as an unknown is said to be the terminus of our knowledge in the following respect: that the mind is found to be most perfectly in possession of knowledge of God when it is recognized that His essence is above everything that the mind is capable of apprehending in this life ...” (*Expositio Super Librum Boethii De Trinitate*, q. 1, a. 2, ad. 1). The question arises whether human beings are able to succeed on the path of knowing God naturally. Can a purely philosophical undertaking, no matter how insightful and cautious, lead to reliable knowledge of at least some aspects of God’s nature? The skepticism that often results from these efforts triggers reflections that perhaps we are left only with a negative path, realised in the apophatic task of calculating what we do not and cannot know.

On the other hand, the challenge for the intellect to understand, at least to some extent, the nature of God and His relation to creatures seems so lofty and compelling that it is almost impossible not to consider these problems, though this consideration may take place in darkness. An invaluable guide in such inquiry is offered by analytic and inquisitive works like Dariusz Łukasiewicz’s book *Opatrzność Boża, wolność, przypadek. Studium z analitycznej filozofii religii* (*Providence, Freedom, Chance: A Study in the Analytic Philosophy of Religion*, Poznań: W drodze,

RYSZARD MORDARSKI, PhD, Hab., Associate Professor in the Institute of Philosophy, Kazimierz Wielki University; address for correspondence: ul. Ogińskiego 16, 85-092 Bydgoszcz, Poland; email: rysard.mordarski@gmail.com; <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2346-4572>.

2014). It is a deeply erudite book, engaging the reader on both theological and metaphysical levels, as well as scientific and existential ones. Written in beautiful prose, the book analyses a number of fundamental problems in a way that is not only insightful, but often thrilling. From all the problems discussed in the work, I have chosen two issues that seem most relevant to the proper presentation of the role of chance in the world in the context of God's providence: 1) the problem of God's simplicity and 2) the problem of providence and chance.

The aim of this paper is to critically appraise Professor Dariusz Łukasiewicz's original concept of so-called probabilistic theism in light of the classical doctrine of God's attributes, in particular the attribute of simplicity. In my opinion, the proposed concept of theism is not radically different from open theism or process theism.

The emphasis on the role of chance in the world suggests that it is a variant of open theism, although the argumentation is moved from the biblical level to the scientific level. To defend my thesis, I will first discuss Łukasiewicz's concept of God's simplicity, and then, I will analyze the metaphysics of chance offered in his book. My analysis aims to prove that the non-classical understanding of God's simplicity leads to a non-classical understanding of God's relationship with the world, which emphasizes the existence of chance in the context of God's providence.

THE PROBLEM OF GOD'S SIMPLICITY

Dariusz Łukasiewicz rightly states that a proper understanding of God's providence requires a correct presentation of the most important attribute in this context, i.e., the attribute of God's simplicity. It is a founding attribute and has special significance for the doctrine of providence, because any consideration of God's providence leads to the recognition of God as the First Cause, and this is inseparably connected with simplicity. For if we deny that God is simple, then we must deny His necessity and uniqueness, and hence, we must deny that He has some providential influence on the world. Accordingly, for the tradition of classical theism, the doctrine of simplicity was a non-negotiable part of the concept of God.

Emphasizing the importance of the doctrine of classical theism, Łukasiewicz begins by presenting a metaphysical description of God's simplicity, or what he calls "the mechanics of God's simplicity" (p. 43). He points to two main problems related to this attribute; they concern the internal coherence of the concept of simplicity and its external coherence (i.e., coherence of simplicity with other attributes of God). However, he begins his argumentation by pre-defining the concept of simplicity in a way similar to classical Thomism. First, he presents the doctrine of simplicity from the negative side, as a lack of physical or spatial

(space—time) composites and a lack of metaphysical composites (potency/act; essence/existence). Then, he provides an affirmative definition of the doctrine of simplicity; it is emphasized that, in Thomistic theism, simplicity in a positive sense comes down to the statement that “God is identical with each of his attributes, and hence it follows that each attribute is identical with each other; for example, the will of God is identical with His omniscience. And if God is identical with each of His attributes, and each of them is identical with each other, then God is identical with His nature (being)” (p. 33). Łukasiewicz concludes that the outlined doctrine of God’s simplicity abounds with difficulties and generates considerable criticism (p. 36).

The question immediately arises whether this definition of God’s simplicity is in line with the intentions of the representatives of classical theism? This question is justified because Łukasiewicz, while characterizing the classical doctrine of simplicity, refers more often to contemporary analytical philosophers than to the main representatives of classical theism. In particular, he recalls objections against the Christian doctrine of simplicity formulated by Alvin Plantinga and his adversaries. The result is that he is entangled in distinctions that seem to have had no significance for thinkers such as Saint Augustine, Saint Anselm or Saint Thomas. Since the critique of the attribute of God’s simplicity carried out by Plantinga there has been a widespread belief in modern philosophical theology that the classical doctrine of simplicity suffers from ineradicable contradictions. In the well-known passage from the book *Does God have a nature?* Plantinga writes:

There are two difficulties, one substantial and the other truly monumental. In the first place if God is identical with each of his properties, then each of his properties is identical with each of his properties, so that God has but one property. This seems flatly incompatible with the obvious fact that God has several properties; he has both power and mercifulness, say, neither of which is identical with the other. In the second place, if God is identical with each of his properties, then, since each of his properties is a property, he is a property – a self-exemplifying property. Accordingly God has just one property: himself. This view is subject to a difficulty both obvious and overwhelming. No property could have created the world; no property could be omniscient, or, indeed, know anything at all. If God is a property, then he isn’t a person but a mere abstract object; he has no knowledge, awareness, power, love or life. So taken, the simplicity doctrine seems an utter mistake. (Plantinga, *Does God Have a Nature?* 47)

Plantinga maintains that the doctrine of God’s simplicity undermines the most fundamental beliefs of theism and introduces paradoxical consequences. The doctrine recognizes that: 1) God has certain properties, such as omniscience, omnipotence, etc., and is identical with these properties (or at least with examples of

these properties, His instantiations of these properties); 2) each of these properties is identical to all other properties; 3) God cannot be an individual personal agent, but rather a property, or an abstract object.

Plantinga's objections caused a lively discussion among analytical philosophers of religion, including authors such as William Mann, Thomas V. Morris, Brian Leftow, and William F. Vallicella, who presented various argumentative strategies aimed at repealing or weakening Plantinga's criticism. Łukasiewicz refers broadly to these thinkers and points to the weaknesses of the whole debate; moreover, he tries to interpret the debate in such a way as to defend the classical concept of God's simplicity. In my opinion, however, these efforts are not quite successful, mainly because he is too dependent on the terms and categories of modern analytical philosophy that was foreign to thinkers of classical scholasticism.

First, when Łukasiewicz considers the problem of the identity of attributes among themselves, this mainly refers to Plantinga's objection that the doctrine of simplicity maintains that "God is identical with each of His own properties," which implies that "His every property is identical with every other property, so God has only one property." For Plantinga, this seems to contradict the belief that God has different properties and entails that "God Himself is a property, and therefore a mere abstract object." To reject this view, Łukasiewicz refers to two contemporary theories explaining the problem of the identity of God's attributes. The first, formulated in the framework of constitutive metaphysics, captures God's nature as a pure actualization of all God's properties, so that all self-realizing properties are in fact one property under the principle of transitive identity. In this approach, all properties are identical with each other, and at the same time, God, as the subject of these properties, is identical with all His properties. The second theory of identity refers to the analogy between the identity of the set and its only element. In this approach, God would be at the same time a concrete and abstract object, because he would be at the same time the subject of property and the property itself, i.e., the set of all real and possible individuals for whom we declare a given property. According to Łukasiewicz, both theories correctly reconstruct the doctrine of simplicity in modern language and are completely adequate to the intuition of Thomas Aquinas. They allow us to understand that God is a being where *id quod esse* is identical with *esse*. Łukasiewicz concludes as follows:

Anyone who is willing to acknowledge the doctrine of God's simplicity must be ready to recognize that there is a being who is the subject of property and the property itself. They must therefore be ready to accept "quantum metaphysics." A supporter of simplicity can say, however, that this is not so unusual, because we are talking about God Himself. (p. 43)

However, when Łukasiewicz defends God against the accusation that He is not a personal being, he rightly observes that the Plantinga objection is based on the predicative understanding of God's attributes. This leads to the identification of the attribute "with the feature understood as a Platonic universal" (p. 37). However, he further states that this objection, which deprives God of being a person, can be formulated only within a certain type of ontology, the so-called non-constitutive or relational ontology. This ontology clearly separates the existence of specific things and abstract objects in such a way that no individual can be an abstract object. Each specific thing can only exemplify a feature, but it cannot be identical to that feature. Łukasiewicz believes that it is only within such an ontology that Plantinga's complaint is correct. However, he thinks that when we use an alternative ontology, constitutive or non-relational one, in which it can be assumed that the property of a thing is part of it, we can easily defend the concept of God's simplicity. In this conviction Łukasiewicz follows one of Plantinga's critics, Vallincella, who rejects the radical gap between properties and particulars, recognizing that at least in the case of God, it can be assumed that He possesses His numerical unity by Himself, and not by way of exemplification of abstract properties independent of His being. Łukasiewicz acknowledges that this results from the fact that "self-individualization of God's nature can be understood as another way of expressing the Thomistic doctrine of God as a pure act (*actus purus*)" (p. 38).

According to Łukasiewicz, constitutive ontology also solves the problem of the identity of the Divine nature with the Divine existence, because it assumes that existence is not a first-order property, so God does not exemplify the property of existence as if He were identical to it, as with abstract property. He adds, however, that although constitutive ontology does not recognize existence as a predicate, it is not sufficient to overturn Plantinga's objection that existence is not a person. He therefore claims that one must refer to Thomism, which does not recognize existence as a property at all, but as an act which is only a condition of having all other properties.

I agree that when we talk about God, and especially about God's simplicity, our intuitions can be completely unreliable. On the other hand, we must remember that Aquinas was convinced that his approach to simplicity was consistent and understandable, despite the fact that he did not have at his disposal the models developed by quantum mechanics that he might refer to. Furthermore, Łukasiewicz seems to have fallen into the trap of using a modern formula to analyse the problem of God's simplicity, imposed by Plantinga and his adversaries, which instead of facilitating the understanding of the doctrine of simplicity, significantly confuses the whole issue. He does not see that Plantinga interprets the doctrine of classical

theism in the light of his metaphysics, not the metaphysics of Aquinas and other classical theists. First, Plantinga uses the term “property” extremely broadly, for almost anything that is a predicate. Secondly, he recognizes God as dependent on these properties and treats this relationship in purely Platonic terms, as a matter of God’s participation in eternally existing properties. This leads to the conclusion that God is causally dependent on something external to His own nature, and thus that God is not the First Cause. All these assumptions seem completely foreign to thinkers working within the framework of classical theism, who would undoubtedly reject Plantinga’s every metaphysical assumption.

When we turn to the thoughts of Aquinas (also Saint Augustine and Saint Anselm), we see that his doctrine of simplicity says nothing about God having any properties that are different from His nature. God can be said to be omniscient, omnipotent, and perfectly good, but these are not properties on which God would somehow be dependent. Since being and existence are the same in God, God is simply Omniscience, Omnipotence, and Perfect Goodness. Aquinas brings us closer to the concept of simplicity by eliminating all possibilities of composites. The final result of this method is identifying the essence and existence. The essence of God is completely exhausted in His existence, which means that God is identical not only with His essence but also with His existence. Therefore, God is an Act of Pure Existence, an eternal, unchanging and absolutely simple Act (*actus purus*). In His unity and simplicity, God cannot be divisible even conceptually, because even in a conceptual sense, He cannot be attributed any non-actualized potentialities. Aquinas profoundly expressed the doctrine of simplicity in *Summa Theologiae* (ST), where he stated that “... the first active principle must needs be most actual, and therefore most perfect; for a thing is perfect in proportion to its state of actuality, because we call that perfect which lacks nothing of the mode of its perfection” (*Maxime esse in actu, et per consequens maxime perfectum*; ST I, q. 4, a. 1, resp.). It follows that God is an act and not a property; He not only acts, but He is the one who acts, and He is His own action.

However, if God is an Act, a Pure Act of existence, how can He be a personal being and not an abstract object? Aquinas answered this question by pointing out that the perfect unity of God’s being has the nature of a Pure Personal Act. Acts refer to action, not to property, i.e., they are associated with personal entities rather than with abstract objects. Let us try to show this by the example of omnipotence. When we say that God is all-powerful, we should not understand it as an absolute ability to bring about every possible (and even impossible) state of affairs. God’s omnipotence is not an opportunity to do everything He wants, but rather a personal choice of rationally and creatively doing what is good. God’s omnipotence is

therefore unlimited only in the sense that it is identical to the perfect good, which cannot be limited by anything, because it is God Himself. God, being a Pure Act, cannot do anything other than what He does without becoming different than He is. Therefore, God does everything He does because His nature is simple. Therefore, instead of saying that God has the power to bring about a certain state of affairs, we should rather say that God causes a certain state of affairs.

Łukasiewicz, despite the fact that he recognizes that the doctrine of simplicity is closely connected with the concept of *actus purus*, does not draw from this relationship all the consequences for the nature of God's being. This is especially evident when he analyzes God's attributes such as omnipotence, omniscience or freedom. This leads him to attribute to classical theism the concepts that arise from contemporary debates about the nature and attributes of God. For example, according to Łukasiewicz, God is omnipotent in such a wide range that He can do everything He wants, even what is logically contradictory. However, this is not a position that the classical theist can accept. In *Boża opatrność, wolność, przypadek* we can read that, on the one hand, God is absolute omnipotence; on the other, there are accidental or pointless events in the created world that He not only cannot predict, but over which He has no direct control. If Łukasiewicz answers that God does not have that control, because He does not want to have it, then such an answer is not satisfactory. The point is not about what God wants and what He does not want, but about what He can and cannot bring about in the world He has created.

In addition, according to Łukasiewicz, the doctrine of classical theism assumes that there is no libertarian freedom in God, because God does not have to choose between good and evil, or between various good things with varying degrees of good. However, this does not lead to the conclusion, as Łukasiewicz wants, that God's freedom should be understood in a strictly compatible manner. Well, it follows from the doctrine of classical theism that God, as a Pure Act, is the only entity in which freedom defies the characteristics of either libertarianism or compatibilism. And this allows one to understand God's simplicity properly.

Let us emphasize that the simplicity of the Pure Act entails two different things in our understanding of God's action in the created world. First, God cannot act contrary to how He acts, or He would not be absolutely simple. In addition, as an entity that exists timelessly or out of time (eternalism), He never finds Himself in a situation where it would be possible for Him to choose otherwise. For Aquinas, just like for Saint Augustine, freedom does not imply the ability of choosing options alternative to the one that is chosen. The libertarian concept of freedom, understood as a free choice among the various possibilities available, refers to in-

telligent creatures, but not to God, because all that God wants He wants eternally. So if God wants to create the world, it only means that He wants to create the world from eternity. If we assume that God is a Pure Act, then His action cannot be different from what it is. To say that “God created the world” means, from our perspective of the action of the timeless Act of Existence, that God “had to” create the world. This does not mean, of course, that in God Himself there is some internal necessity of nature that forces creation, but rather that since God’s will decides to create, this decision is identical with God Himself. Nor does it mean that God wants to create a world in eternity, and that He actualizes only one of all possible worlds. For God as a Pure Act, there is never a particular moment of time when He decides to choose an option from a range of pure possibilities. Since God created this world, it means that He always wanted to create this world; so out of necessity of His will, God wanted and created this world. However, let us repeat that this is not due to an essential necessity or to the necessity of nature, but to conditional necessity, that is, the necessity of will. We can say that in a logical order God first wants and then creates, but as a simple being, His will is completely identical to the power of action, so wanting something is identical to bringing it into existence. In short, God cannot not create if He creates, but He creates not because of the necessity of His nature, but because of His will that always wants to create the world that currently exists.

It seems that all these issues can best be understood in scholastic terminology, which captures God as a Pure Act of Existence. Hence, to avoid various misunderstandings (not only terminological, but also conceptual), the safest way to reconstruct the doctrine of God’s simplicity is avoiding attempts to present it in contemporary language.

THE PROBLEM OF PROVIDENCE AND CHANCE

Dariusz Łukasiewicz’s understanding of God’s simplicity, which is not very precise and not entirely consistent as indicated above, has an obvious impact on his presentation of the issues of providence and God’s relationship with the created world, which is the main subject of the second part of the book. In this context, a very original conception of so-called “probabilistic theism” is developed, in which the important role of chance in the created world is emphasized as something consistent with the weak version of God’s providence. According to Łukasiewicz:

Given the proposed model of God’s action in the world as part of the metaphysics of open systems and the postulates of attributive theology, it seems possible to preserve

the classical attribute of God's simplicity for theism. The existence of chance is not evidence for refuting the existence of God understood as *actus purus* (pure act, an absolutely simple being), nor does the existence of thus understood God exclude the possibility of the existence of chance in the world. What is more, the claim that God uses chance to implement his plan may be conceived of as the essence of the theistic metaphysics of chance. (p. 344)

What is important in this context is the understanding of chance, which is basically taken from modern natural sciences. Łukasiewicz describes chance as "everything that is an indeterminate event, without a cause and unpredictable, and sometimes irreducibly and objectively unpredictable" (p. 314). In determining the place of chance in God's providence plan, however, we come across some ambiguities. On the one hand, we read that "chance is part of God's plan and is not the antithesis of providence (anti-providence)" (p. 341). On the other hand, in many places we find definitions of chance that almost completely exclude God's providence; chance is described as "a pointless event, unpredictable both subjectively and objectively, as well as an event for which a causal explanation cannot be given" (p. 341).

Referring to certain fragments, it can be argued that Łukasiewicz wants to show that the accidental and purposeless events that science mentions are part of God's plan; thus, chance is inscribed in a divine providential plan for the world. "Not only is chance reconcilable with God's plan and God's very existence, but it is even part of this plan," we can read on page 287. It follows that God does not need to act in the world in some extraordinary and extraordinarily coordinated way that breaks or suspends the laws of nature to achieve His goals and realize His plan for the world. For chance can be a tool through which God's providence works in the world. In other places, Łukasiewicz claims that God can afford to create a world in which not everything will be planned in the smallest detail. "The creative act consists in calling into existence from nothingness a mechanism with its own enormous creative potential, that is cosmos, and in maintaining this mechanism in existence. This mechanism, acting as if on its own, is able to implement the plan intended by God" (p. 296). In this approach, God's action in the world is highly narrowed and it comes down to the act of creation. On page 343 we read: "The only kind of God's action that is necessary in relation to the natural world is the very act of creation consisting in creating from nothingness the materials and principles (laws) of cosmic evolution and, perhaps, sustaining everything that exists in existence. Therefore, God's providence does not care about the fate of each individual atom and does not work at lower levels of the world." Łukasiewicz claims that if philosophy wants to present the general theory of the world created by God, it should develop the metaphysics of the "God of chance"

(p. 343), because essentially the only action of God that was necessary for nature was the creation act (*creatio ex nihilo*).

The metaphysics of “God of chance” postulated by Łukasiewicz is to be set within the conception of probabilistic theism. This new orthodoxy might be considered a variant of open theism, though unlike the latter, it does not draw inspiration primarily from the Bible, but rather from modern science, especially from natural sciences (so these two may be regarded as different theisms). It can therefore be concluded that, according to Łukasiewicz, modern science enriches the revelation contained in the Bible. By emphasizing the role of chance and randomness of events, the probabilistic theist should accept the thesis of an open and undetermined future and the belief in the limited knowledge of God associated with it. He must also accept that in the world created by God there are phenomena that are subject only to statistical description and probabilistic assessment, which can be predicted with some probability.

According to Łukasiewicz, the naive orthodoxy represented by classical theism maintains that God’s providence consists in detailed control over every element of the universe and there is a detailed plan for all individuals that was designed when the world was created. The new orthodoxy revises this concept of providence. It is important in this context that probabilistic theism fully accepts the achievements of modern natural sciences. Not only does it recognize the main scientific theories about the natural world, but it also adopts their philosophical foundations. Thus, the probabilistic theist says that there is no strict determinism in the world, that nature is a conglomerate of complex dynamic systems that generate random and unpredictable events, and God does not have full and direct providential control over everything, but He gives the world a primary impulse only. Łukasiewicz emphasizes that God’s action in the natural world does not consist in causing individual events and participating in cause–effect chains, but in creating a dynamic structure that realizes His plan by itself (p. 299).

However, it seems that the scientific perspective preferred by the supporter of probabilistic theism fundamentally obscures the metaphysical perspective from which God’s relationship with the world should be viewed. The conviction about the arbitrariness and unpredictability of certain events in the world results from certain metaphysical assumptions related to God’s providence. A probabilistic theist describes the relationship of God to the world referring to a model of two types of things: on the one hand, there is a first and transcendent being in relation to everything that exists, and on the other, there is a set of entities identical with the created world, and this set of beings is totally dependent on God. This model operates in the scheme of two types of things with different ontological status; on

the one hand, God, a first transcendent being, and on the other, a created world that is a set (closed or open) of created things. But from the perspective of classical theism, this scheme, although formally correct and *prima facie* impeccable, is not completely accurate. Thomas says that “God is not related to creatures as though belonging to a different genus, but as transcending every genus, and as the principle of all genera” (*ST* I, q. 4, a. 3, ad. 2). It seems that this slight departure from classical theism actually determines an incorrect way of thinking about God’s providence and the specificity of God’s action in the world. After all, God does not recognize the world from the outside and does not recognize it as a collection of external objects. Creation is a special act of God, bringing about to existence *ex nihilo*. Thus, creation involves a very special relationship to the world, whose only analogy is the artist’s attitude towards his work—a kind of closeness and intimacy associated with the knowledge of every detail in the work, even completely invisible and unknown to anyone except the Creator. In this way Saint Thomas understood that God is the First Cause of all existence: “We must say, however, that all things are subject to divine providence, not only in general, but even in their own individual selves. ... Since, therefore, as the providence of God is nothing less than the type of the order of things towards an end, as we have said; it necessarily follows that all things, inasmuch as they participate in existence, must likewise be subject to divine providence” (*ST* I, q. 22, a. 2, resp.).

Let us add that science never comprehensively captures the world in its full metaphysical nature. Therefore, it always appears to us as incomplete, imperfect or not fully realized. But God grasps His creation timelessly, having access to the whole world, from its creation, through its entire duration, to the end of the shape of the world in which it exists today. So, God knows the world at the same time in all its states of existence, from the past, through the present, to the future. This cognition is not only timeless or everlasting, but fully structured. Therefore, God has access to his creation to the fullest extent possible. And from this perspective, everything that seems imperfect or simply wrong from our incomplete human perspective can appear as an indispensable element of a larger perfect whole. This is the crux of Leibniz’s intuition when he claims that we live in the best of the worlds. Knowledge of this truth is not available to any creature today, but perhaps, in eschatological perspective, created individuals will have access to this truth when they are in a state of complete union with God.

Lukasiewicz sometimes softens his position and, trying to get as close to classical theism as possible, advocates for the Anselmian version of probabilistic theism. He writes: “... one can also claim that eternal probabilistic theism is a contemporary variation of classical Anselmian free will theism. Thus, even chance is not an antith-

esis for God, whom we understand as a pure act (*actus purus*)” (p. 325). However, in order to reconcile the problem of the occurrence of chance in the world with the theistic doctrine that there is God who is absolutely simple, omnipotent and omniscient, we should free Him from dealing with details in the world and allow Him to direct only general processes. Łukasiewicz proposes a solution related to the views of the Polish cosmologist and theologian, Michał Heller. In this perspective, the cosmos is an open system, dynamically self-organizing and having some redundant and dysfunctional elements that increase the adaptability of the entire system. Thus, probabilistic theism can be called the theism of open systems. In an open system, a higher order may arise out of chaos; it often emerges as an interplay of random, pointless and blind events and undetermined (unpredictable) evolution. The natural sciences speak of the occurrence of random events in the world: the behavior of atoms, particle movements, genetic mutations, or acts of will. But according to the law of large numbers, complex and ordered structures arise from these pointless and accidental events. Importantly, the occurrence of chance events is not contrary to God’s plan but is part of it. Therefore, supporters of God’s action in the world speak about the irrelevance of individual action at a lower level for maintaining regularity at the level of higher generality.

Łukasiewicz is aware of the basic dilemma of probabilists which, on the plane of theism, will ultimately relate to the difference between the theism of risk and God’s limited omniscience and the theism of the infallible certainty of God existing in timeless eternity. However, he believes that by adopting the eternalist version of probabilistic theism we come across the insoluble problem of God’s freedom of creation. It is insoluble precisely because Łukasiewicz attributes the libertarian concept of freedom to God. He writes: “we cannot comprehend how God’s creative action is free, assuming that God’s freedom consists in choosing one action amidst many possibilities” (p. 325). Therefore, the only solution he proposes refers to the most powerful concept of God’s omnipotence: God can bring into existence even what is incomprehensible or contradictory to us. By adopting an additional assumption about the causal autonomy of the world, he acknowledges that even with the acceptance of the eternalist concept, in which God’s knowledge covers absolutely everything and God has a complete view of the entire history of the world, “objectively unpredictable events remain unpredictable also for God with absolute omniscience covering the future (from our point of view), because God knows them in an infallible way not by deduction—by definition they cannot be deduced or calculated (the nature of freedom)—but only by insight. Pointless events, if they exist, remain causeless, because God’s knowledge of the event is not the cause of the event” (p. 319). An additional problem, which has already been

mentioned, is theological determinism; in the eternalist version of probabilistic theism there is a difficulty whether freedom in the world is possible as a choice of one of the options from a set of different possibilities.

Therefore, Łukasiewicz admits that the proposal of probabilistic theism seems interesting only in the version that includes limitations to God's omniscience. Only then can one develop a strong version of risk theology in which the act of creation is an adventure taken by God, without full knowledge of its final result. Therefore, one should adopt the variant of probabilistic theism which limits God's knowledge and violates God's simplicity. It is a variant similar to open theism in a scientific version or to process theism. Chance is responsible for all the diversity and multitude in the world, and God is only responsible for starting the initial processes and allowing the world to create itself. We read: "probabilistic theism, which assumes God's limited omniscience and the existence of chance in the world, at first glance seems to be the only possible variant of theology of chance. For if chance is an objectively unpredictable event, no subject can (infallibly) know that it will happen and predict it" (p. 318). Łukasiewicz realizes that the weakening of God's omniscience also leads to the rejection of eternalism and acceptance of presentism. Admittedly, he sometimes hesitates in this matter and claims that "it can be concluded that God's atemporal eternity (eternalism) is a neutral thesis for probabilistic theism with God's limited omniscience" (p. 319). Nevertheless, he is inclined to reject eternalism, which is clearly seen in those matters where probabilistic theism is most convergent with open theism.

These issues include all of God's intended purposes where by means of chance higher order is generated. This is associated with some of the productive power of independent creative development that God has given to the world to produce order at higher levels emerging from the chaos of randomness. This mechanism assumes the existence of unpredictable, pointless or unlikely, and even causally undetermined events at the rudimentary level, from which an ordered stream is created at the level of rational and free beings. Thanks to this, man becomes a collaborator of God in the creation process.

As Łukasiewicz claims, it is only at the level of the mind that detailed providence works; it does not occur at lower levels of the world. God's special action takes place in human souls and in the minds of other intelligent beings (if they exist). Let us remember that Łukasiewicz adopts the model of God's action "from above," which "implies God's special actions at the highest level of the created world, which is the sphere of human spirituality. Such agency is not, however, a causal activity, but God's persuasion, inspiration, or showing opportunities" (p. 328). These words echo not only the claims of open theism but also the ideas found

in process theism. According to Łukasiewicz, detailed providence which operates at the level of human minds is not a determining element, but rather “God’s spark.” He writes: “God can influence, inspire, fascinate, or use persuasion, as is often claimed by the proponents of process theology, but He will not be certain about the outcome, since human nature is free in such a way that it can effectively resist God’s love” (pp. 314–15).

In addition, the concept of chance, when related to human life, may also incline us to construct a theodicy of chance, whose task will be to show how individual chance events, causing individual evil and suffering, can take on a full sense at a higher and more general level of the world. According to Łukasiewicz, “the distribution of good and evil is a product of the probabilistic mechanics of the world, and not an expression of God’s special will” (p. 301). Despite this, the existence of chance events generating evil and suffering is not only consistent with the existence of God’s providence, but also plays a positive role in the world. Furthermore, chance (randomness) is a good and necessary condition for the existence of other goods (the laws of physics, the laws of evolution, human development, the existence of risk, etc.). Hence, probabilistic theodicy seems to be an extension of the metaphysics of “God of chance.” Although it is characterized by considerable optimism, one cannot escape the feeling that it too easily frees God from the accusation of evil in the world.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, it should be stated that the version of probabilistic theism with unlimited omniscience does not differ fundamentally from classical theism. It does not seem very interesting because it significantly weakens the role of chance in the world. More interesting is the version of probabilistic theism which limits God’s omniscience, rejects eternalism, and significantly weakens the attribute of God’s simplicity. However, this form of theism is not radically different from open or process theism. It seems that it can be reduced to open theism supplemented with a scientific component. Therefore, one can say that if open theism—based mainly on the testimony of the Bible—was supplemented with theology of nature, we would obtain probabilistic theism with limited omniscience. In other words, the version of probabilistic theism proposed by Łukasiewicz is in fact convergent with open theism; it is an approach to open theism from the perspective of modern natural sciences.

It is worth emphasizing, however, that despite the fact that the concept of probabilistic theism turns out not to be truly original, the book written by Dariusz

Łukasiewicz has unquestionable merits. It is the first systematic attempt to develop, within open theism, a coherent theory presenting the relationship of God to the world based on the achievements of modern natural sciences. Thus, it is a valuable supplement to open theism, and this cannot be underestimated.

However, the question remains whether the metaphysics of God and philosophical theology should adapt our understanding of God's relationship with the world to the changing concepts of modern science. Or, on the contrary, scientific natural concepts should be secondary to the classical doctrine of Christian theism. It seems that contemporary philosophers are doing everything to adapt the concept of God to the modern world theories; in other words, they tailor the Creator to His creation. Is this the right way? Of course, many will answer that we must take the results of modern science seriously. This is true, but if we acknowledge this, then we must assume that the current state of science sets the only measure for us to understand and evaluate the theistic doctrine. The point of the dispute presented here is not that Łukasiewicz misrepresents the results of contemporary science regarding chance, but rather that he employs scientific data in what is a metaphysical misinterpretation, claiming that this is a new conception describing God's relationship with the world.

Łukasiewicz's proposal is the following: We should give up, for example, the strong version of God's omniscience in order to adapt omniscience to the image of the world in which chance and probabilistic laws of nature play an important role. However, one may ask whether the image of the world that contemporary researchers offer is the final and inviolable conception. What if it turns out that new theories will appear and indicate the existence of some form of meta-determinism, covering and explaining more deeply today's non-deterministic or not fully deterministic understanding of both the material world and the world of human freedom? After all, it may turn out—and this is to some extent a scholastic explanation—that determinism in God's plan is completely compatible with free will and the acceptance of chance in the plan of creation. Of course, we do not know the claims of future science. It appears that, in the current situation, a real challenge for philosophical theology would be to devise a theory explaining God's relationship to the world within which it would be possible, given the current state of knowledge about nature, to coherently inscribe the classical concept of God, Who is absolutely simple, a pure Act of Existence, all-powerful, all-knowing, existing timelessly and exercising full control over everything, even the smallest fragment of his creation. Whether this view of creation better matches God's perfection is, of course, another matter. It can be argued, however, that a God who escapes full control over the world He has created, and even deprives Himself of such control,

may appear to be a much weaker God from a metaphysical perspective, although perhaps much closer for existential reasons. Philosophical theologians, however, must take into account that the God they speak of may be greater, more surprising and less understandable than the one they are able to conceive.

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PROBABILISTIC THEISM AND THE TRADITIONAL DOCTRINE OF *ACTUS PURUS*

S u m m a r y

Dariusz Łukasiewicz's probabilistic theism arises from a non-classical understanding of the nature of God, especially the attributes of simplicity and omnipotence. The redefinition of these attributes in terms of modern analytical philosophy means that probabilistic theism is closer to open theism than to classical theism. However, an extremely important merit of this approach is the development of a comprehensive scientific component for open theism (which is built on biblical foundations), which means that probabilistic theism enables the extension of open theism to the perspective of modern natural sciences. The fundamental meaning of probabilistic theism is not so much the reconciliation of the occurrence of accidental events with the theory of providence, but rather it gives the possibility of open theism to enter into theistic debates among contemporary scientists, not only philosophers and theologians. Without this, open theism remains within a narrow theological perspective, interesting only to Christian theologians or scientists professing the Christian worldview.

Keywords: Dariusz Łukasiewicz; Aquinas; probabilistic theism; open theism; classical theism; attributes of God; omnipotence; simplicity; God as *Actus Purus*; providence vs. chance; philosophical theology vs. natural sciences.

TEIZM PROBABILISTYCZNY A TRADYCYJNA DOKTRYNA *ACTUS PURUS*

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Teizm probabilistyczny Dariusza Łukasiewicza wyrasta z nieklasycznego rozumienia natury Boga, zwłaszcza atrybutów prostoty i wszechmocy. Redefinicja tych atrybutów w kategoriach współczesnej filozofii analitycznej powoduje, że teizm probabilistyczny jest bliższy teizmu otwartego niż klasycz-

nego teizmu. Jednak niezwykle ważną zasługą tego podejścia jest opracowanie wszechstronnego komponentu naukowego dla teizmu otwartego (który jest ciągle budowany na podstawach biblijnych), co powoduje, że teizm probabilistyczny umożliwia poszerzenie teizmu otwartego o perspektywę współczesnej nauki (współczesnych nauk przyrodniczych). Fundamentalnym znaczeniem teizmu probabilistycznego jest nie tyle pogodzenie występowania zdarzeń przypadkowych z teorią opatrności, co raczej danie możliwości teizmowi otwartemu do wypłynięcia na szerokie wody dzisiejszych debat teistycznych, toczonych wśród współczesnych naukowców, a nie tylko wśród filozofów i teologów. Bez tego teizm otwarty pozostaje w ramach wąskiej teologicznej perspektywy, interesującej tylko dla teologów chrześcijańskich lub naukowców wyznających światopogląd chrześcijański.

Słowa kluczowe: Dariusz Łukasiewicz; Tomasz z Akwinu; teizm probabilistyczny; teizm otwarty; teizm klasyczny; atrybuty Boga; wszechmoc; prostota; Bóg jako *actus purus*; opatrność vs. przypadek; teologia filozoficzna vs. nauki przyrodnicze.