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# Reason in the Environment of Faith, Hope and Love

**Abstract:** There is no conclusive and universally valid answer to the question whether reason is an accidental result of mindless evolution, or whether the world is the creation of reason while human intellect is its essence derives from the Divine Creative Reason. Every thinking person should choose the proper concept. Such a choice entails serious consequences since it decisively affects the interpretation of human facts and generates an overall attitude towards reality. The article presents some consequences concerning both choices and particularly focuses on the characteristics of the life environment seen from the perspective of a rational and believing person. The author presents his understanding of faith, based on the texts by Martin Buber, Josef Pieper, Józef Tischner and Stanisław Wszolek, and models the optimal form of the relationship between faith and reason. He elaborates on the idea that a Christian's faith is Man's response to being chosen by God. Everything essential in faith begins with interpersonal experiences. A person who lives in the environment of faith, hope and love will more easily discover that God is close to him. As a result, he will become a credible witness to the Gospel truth in his society.

**Keywords:** reason, faith, hope, love, Josef Pieper, Józef Tischner

## Introduction

“Mankind – that has a proud sound,” claimed Maxim Gorky.<sup>1</sup> The opinion is shared by many writers and philosophers, as well as ordinary people. Indeed, Man has reason to pride himself on the fact that he has been equipped with unique gifts that no other creature has. He is most proud of his reason – he even considered it

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<sup>1</sup> It was one of the most repeated phrases in the 20th century. It appeared in Gorky's drama *The Lower Depths* written in 1902 and produced by the Moscow Art Theatre on December 18, 1902.

the defining feature of the human race, referred to for centuries by the terms *homo sapiens* and *animal rationale*.<sup>2</sup> Many questions arise in connection with this uniqueness of Man. Among them, two come to the foreground when considering human self-knowledge. The questions are following: Where did our reason come from? and What does it serve? We would like to get to know reliable and comprehensive answers to these questions. The lack of such, however, indicates that people do not have enough reason to sufficiently explore these fundamental problems. Scholars and thinkers continue to multiply hypotheses and argue, but there is still no clarity on the matter.

## The Basic Dilemma of the Rational Man

In the current phase of the development of human self-knowledge, the main dispute is between two concepts.<sup>3</sup> Reason and the whole reality may be accidental results of mindless evolution and, therefore, two of many tools serving pragmatic purposes. If so, they are subject to instrumental evaluation relativized to the context of their use. Or the world is the work of reason and the human intellect is in its essence derived from the Creative Reason.

If the first hypothesis is true, it follows that reason is an aberration rather than a rule, a kind of substitute organ instead of teeth and claws (as Nietzsche claimed)<sup>4</sup>, or one of the vital functions of an organism serving to sustain and develop life

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<sup>2</sup> "Man is only a reed, the weakest in nature, but he is a thinking reed. There is no need for the whole universe to take up arms to crush him: a vapour, a drop of water is enough to kill him. but even if the universe were to crush him, man would still be nobler than his slayer, because he knows that he is dying and the advantage the universe has over him. The universe knows none of this. All of our dignity consists in thought" – wrote Blaise Pascal. Peter Kreeft, *Christianity for Modern Pagans. Pascals Pensées Edited, Outlined and Explained* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1966), 55.

<sup>3</sup> "Profound differences of opinion are revealed when trying to determine the ultimate sense that would explain the nature and conditions of the observed phenomena. When trying to define this meaning, the theistic vision of evolution developed by Teilhard de Chardin, Thomas Dobzhansky or Arthur Peacocke differs radically from the atheistic vision popularized by Edward O. Wilson or Richard Dawkins. [...] Due to the continuing diversity of positions in this area, it is impossible to see how the polemic can be brought to an end unequivocally. Depending on interpretative preferences, both sides may accuse each other of introducing anthropomorphisms or escaping into irrationalism." Józef Życiński, "Introduction to the Second Edition," in Michał Heller and Józef Życiński, *Dylematy ewolucji* (Kraków: Copernicus Center Press, 2016), 8–9.

<sup>4</sup> See Bolesław J. Gawecki, "Nietzsche's Pernicious Doctrine," *Studia Philosophiae Christianae* 1(1965): 7–16.

(such a view was propounded by Ortega y Gasset).<sup>5</sup> Such reason should optimally realize itself as a force plugged into the great cycle of nature. However, history demonstrates provably that Man did not stop at this stage, but crossed the borders of the realm of nature: he created culture and civilization. Through the creative application of the methods of rational thinking, he develops<sup>6</sup> agency in many fields of activity, the existence of which cannot be explained in terms of satisfaction of life needs or competition in the struggle for existence. These fields include, for example, artistic creativity, science, technology, philosophy and religious life.

Why do we do it? What purpose does it serve? These are further questions in the face of which the wisest people stand helpless, and the answers they give are most often either verbal or tautological. An equally unsatisfactory solution is to try to abrogate these questions as wrongly posed (similarly to the Kantian critique of the so-called antinomies of pure reason whose fallacy, according to Kant, lies in the transcendental misemployment of immanent categories).<sup>7</sup>

Is there really no meaningful answer to the questions posed above, or – so far – is it hidden from us? With the help of AI tools, it would probably be possible to generate a map of directions of the modern civilization in all its areas. Can we read on this map any clear patterns from which it would be possible to deduce what humanity is heading for and what its crucial goals are? This seems highly doubtful, unless we pay heed to any of the numerous conspiracy theories that can reduce even the most complex phenomena and processes to a few simple, convincing principles.<sup>8</sup> Leaving aside this strategy, we are left with the conclusion that the knowledge accumulated by humanity to date is still too modest to allow science and philosophy to radically transcend the boundaries of facts and their interpretation towards an all-encompassing synthesis.

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<sup>5</sup> See José Ortega y Gasset, *Ni vitalismo ni racionalismo* (Madrid: Revista del Occidente, 1966).

<sup>6</sup> “Ordinary people [...] confront the world, meaning nature and practice rather than just society, for, as functioning human beings, [...] they are hanging on to the bare bones of agency which are the necessary pre-conditions for human activity rather than passivity. Margaret Archer, *Being Human: the Problem of Agency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 2.

<sup>7</sup> See: Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan & Co, Ltd. 1929), 298–299 (A 296).

<sup>8</sup> Contrary to appearances, such theories and views should not be taken lightly. Łukasz Lamża, after examining a number of examples, states: “A truly in-depth analysis always leads to the discovery of a complex web of motivations, in which one can find all the usual human psychological and social phenomena that are also shared by ‘sceptics’ and ‘rationalists’. Pseudoscientific theories thrive on a complex breeding ground, where one can find not only ignorance and factual misunderstandings, but also anxiety, fear and hope, an exaggerated tendency to seek order (especially in the case of conspiracy theories), a lack of trust in public institutions and science, and a misunderstanding of how they function [...]. It is never simply a case of someone making up some nonsense.” Łukasz Lamża, *Światy równoległe. Czego uczą nas płaskoziemcy, homeopaci i różdżkarze* (Wołowiec: Czarna Owca, 2020), 7.

The prospect of ever finding an answer to our initial questions presents itself differently in each of the two arguing concepts. In the evolutionist paradigm, we are rather doomed to perpetual wandering and permanent conjecture, since the entire domain of human reason presents itself here as just a tiny part of the universe with all the intricate constellations of its objects and relations. It is known by the laws of logic that a proper part cannot contain the whole in which it itself is contained. The second theoretical perspective under consideration presents itself differently. If the whole reality is the conscious work of a rational creator, it means that there is a reason encompassing the whole being. Although it is not human reason, communication with it and knowledge of its resources remain possible, at least in the light of faith.<sup>9</sup> If this is the case, then the knowledge that allows us to provide accurate answers to the questions posed above is at least potentially available to us, and this potential can be realized to the extent that communication between rational entities is mutually open and conducted in good faith, the communication channel sufficiently capacious, and the communicated content comprehensible to the recipients. These are not obvious or easy conditions to meet but also as long as one takes a faith-based perspective, they do not seem impossible. So, let us revisit the alternative outlined at the beginning.

## The Naturalistic Hypothesis and Its Logical Consequences

**Concept 1.** We assume a natural beginning and order of things. The world originated by itself and is developing in a spontaneous, uncontrolled process of pan-cosmic evolution, of which the genesis and history of organic life on earth is a fragment. For reasons that we cannot be certain of, life on earth evolved into intelligent beings who used their ability to think rationally and other qualities acquired during their evolution to create culture and civilisation. This has taken various forms throughout history, including the currently dominant scientific and technological civilisation,

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<sup>9</sup> "Revelation is a transition from the implicit to the explicit, from thinking to speaking, from speculation to narration, from reciting to dialogue." Jean-Louis Schlegel, "La révélation du prochain," in *Les Cahiers de la nuit surveillée: Franz Rosenzweig*, eds Olivier Mongin, Jacques Rolland and Alexandre Derczansky (Paris: Broche 1960), 93; quoted in: Józef Tischner, "Spór w królestwie metaphor," in *Rozum i Słowo*, eds Bogdan Baran *et al.*, (Kraków: Papieska Akademia Teologiczna, 1988), 57–68.

as well as a pluralistic culture that is open to many value systems and describes itself as “postmodern”.

Human reason has cognitive access to the past history of mankind and fragmentary knowledge of the spatio-temporal structure of the universe, the laws governing the order of phenomena, physical processes and all real events that have been successfully observed, recorded and scientifically elaborated, although this access and knowledge are limited by the condition of humanity. This accumulated intellectual heritage provides a basis for formulating hypotheses and presenting a comprehensive model of reality that contains answers to the most important metaphysical questions.

Any such model is characterised by uncertainty, arising from an incomplete set of output data and the existence of multiple logically possible answers to the same questions. Which model should be chosen as the valid one? Being the basic science containing the complete set of instructions for the correct use of human reason, logic is capable of providing an unequivocally conclusive answer to this meta-question. Instead, the law of expediency begins to operate, giving priority to the theory that explains the meaning of reality in a certain way. This brings the greatest profits to the people and institutions that decide on the strategy of knowledge management as a sector of social heritage in a certain set of circumstances.<sup>10</sup>

It can be considered a paradox that the fate of scientific theories and philosophical systems, constructed with full respect for the principles of reason, is often determined by non-rational factors. It is evidenced by an abundance of examples. Probably this is why Barbara Skarga warns: “Reason, however we define it, aims firstly at generalizing human experience, secondly at ordering the world around us, subordinating everything to its authority, and thirdly at recognizing its power to become the arbiter of every issue. It aims at a rationalistic monopoly. Finally, reason aims at making everything that exists, including Man, its object. Reason is, thus, the power to objectify everything that exists. It is an unbelievable power. Whichever way it turns, it makes everything the object of its possession.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> “When we examine the current status of scientific knowledge – at a time when science seems more completely subordinated to the prevailing powers than ever before and, along with the new technologies, is in danger of becoming a major stake in their conflicts – the question of double legitimation [...] necessarily comes to the fore [...]: who decides what knowledge is and who knows what needs to be decided? In the computer age, the question of knowledge is now more than ever a question of government.” Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: a Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 8–9.

<sup>11</sup> Barbara Skarga, *Człowiek to nie jest piękne zwierzę. Wykłady i artykuły* (Kraków: Znak 2007), 30.

The same happens not only in science and philosophy, but in general in the entire field of human social activity. On a daily basis, there are situations in which someone else makes a design for an activity or construction that meets the highest norms of rationality, and someone else makes decisions about the implementation, execution and specific application of that design. It also happens (not infrequently though) that the manner and scope of application of the product radically exceeds the imagination of its creator. Sometimes it arouses his fundamental opposition. A glaring example is the history of the atomic bomb, constructed as part of the Manhattan Project by a team of scientists led by J. Robert Oppenheimer. “Now, I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds.”<sup>12</sup> Oppenheimer quotes the Hindu scripture as a reaction to the news of the terrible consequences brought by the use of nuclear weapons by the US military services in Japan in 1945. The beginning of the atomic age was as much the result of an effective solution to a purely scientific problem, requiring the rational use of available knowledge in theoretical physics, as it was the result of a political-military decision of the 33rd US president and the supreme commander of the US armed forces, Harry Truman, to drop two atomic bombs on two Japanese cities. Was this decision as rational as the one reached by the team of the Manhattan Engineering District? Undoubtedly, the American president acted rationally when considering various options for ending the war quickly, ultimately choosing the nuclear option.<sup>13</sup> However, this was not objective rationality – a line of reasoning whose results would be accepted by anyone who independently traced all subsequent steps and logical transitions<sup>14</sup> – but rather an overtly biased calculation of interests from the perspective of one side of the conflict.

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<sup>12</sup> “We knew the world would not be the same. A few people laughed, a few people cried, most people were silent. I remembered the line from the Hindu scripture, the Bhagavad-Gita. Vishnu is trying to persuade the Prince that he should do his duty and to impress him takes on his multi-armed form and says, ‘Now, I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds.’ I suppose we all thought that one way or another.” Julius Robert Oppenheimer, *Now I Am Become Death*, accessed July 1, 2024, <https://www.atomicarchive.com/media/videos/oppenheimer.html>.

<sup>13</sup> “Truman [...] maintained for the rest of his life that the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki saved hundreds of thousands of Allied lives by hastening the end of the war. He repeatedly defended himself against arguments that a demonstration of the bomb in an uninhabited area might have forced Japan’s surrender without loss of life. ‘The president cannot duck hard problems; he cannot pass the buck,’ Truman said in 1948, ‘I made the decision after discussions with the ablest men in our government and after long and prayerful consideration. I decided that the bomb should be used to end the war quickly and save countless lives, Japanese as well as American.’” Colin McEvoy, *Why President Harry Truman Didn’t Like J. Robert Oppenheimer*, November 28, 2023, accessed July 9, 2024, <https://www.biography.com/political-figures/a44361438/why-harry-truman-didnt-like-oppenheimer-atomic-bombs>.

<sup>14</sup> See J.-F. Lyotard, “The Postmodern Condition,” *The Pragmatics of Scientific Knowledge*, 23–26.

As one of the main political arguments of the Cold War era, nuclear blackmail can be considered a rational solution from a certain point of view. However, it is embroiled in deep ethical controversies, and has been strongly opposed from the beginning of the Cold War by many prominent intellectuals with different political sympathies and worldviews. As an example, let us quote just one statement made by André Malraux in 1946: “the 19th century placed immeasurable hope in science, in peace, in the pursuit of human dignity. A hundred years ago, it was clear that all the hope that humanity carried within itself would inevitably lead to a totality of discoveries that would serve humanity, a totality of views that would serve peace, a totality of feelings that would serve human dignity. As for peace, I think it is really not necessary to dwell on this.”<sup>15</sup>

Examples of situations in which a person or a group of people equipped with a prerogative to make key decisions by appealing to rational reasoning but, at the same time, making choices in the name of the particular interests of one group or community at the expense of others, are innumerable. It can even be said that the daily life of countries, associations and communities of various kinds is a constant sequence of such situations. In most cases, it is known exactly who makes a particular decision and whose interests are involved, be that the head of a state, the head of a company, the head of a Church diocese, a collegial body, a supervisory board, a stockholders’ assembly, or a diocesan synod. Decisions made by these entities may be subject to consultation, evaluation, audit, criticism, and may be contested or generate active opposition from those who consider them unjust or taken in the wrong way. But not all areas of social life are as transparent as in the examples quoted above. There are many social processes, the course of which is so complex that their sources and perpetrators cannot be clearly identified, while at the same time their very occurrences become sources of conflict, discrimination or injustice.

Josef Pieper ponders about the meanings of words,<sup>16</sup> determining their so-called reporting definition.<sup>17</sup> It all comes down to asking who (what kind of subject) sets the rules of coexistence that apply in a given community, e.g. in a political organ-

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<sup>15</sup> André Malraux, “L’homme est-il mort?,” in *Panorama des idées contemporaines*, ed. Gaetan Picon (Paris: Gallimard, 1957), 620. The mental shortcut in this statement refers to the test explosion of a bomb code-named ‘Able’ over Bikini Atoll on July 1, 1946.

<sup>16</sup> “Who really determines what is meant by ‘belief’? Who is empowered to decide what should be the ‘true’ meaning of this and other root words in the language of men?” Josef Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press 1997), 19.

<sup>17</sup> “The task of such a definition is to faithfully convey the meaning of the term being defined as it functions in the language in question. Such a definition is a ‘report’ of the generally accepted content of the term in question. An enormous number of reporting definitions can be found in the dictionary of any language.” Krzysztof Wieczorek, *Wprowadzenie do logiki* (Warszawa: Skrypt, 2005), 121.



ization, as well as to what extent and on what basis this subject has the ability to make rational decisions. The kind of rationality that lies behind these decisions is also important here. Analyzing specific manifestations of social life, especially in areas of conflict and tensions between community members, in many cases it is impossible to point to a specific source of disorder in the social order (such as, for example, the internet hate speech, bullying or manifestations of racism in multi-ethnic communities). Just as the meanings of words used in colloquial communication are determined by social usage, the occurrence of phenomena that create a specific social climate – among them also those that cause disruption and bring much evil – is determined by a complex interplay of factors that co-create a network of relations between members of a given community. It is virtually impossible to rationally control these processes because they are too opaque and complicated.

As a conclusion, starting with an assumption, we will get a view of reality according to which the rationality of human thinking and acting turns out to be functional at certain stages of the global process of occurrence and development of reality, for example, where it serves the creation of science, technology, certain branches of material and spiritual culture, the solution to certain theoretical and practical problems and the explanation of issues that the human mind encounters when reflecting on the world. The fruits of this rationality, on the other hand, are distributed and consumed in the name of particularistic goals defined by entities (more often collective, with a complex internal structure and characteristics, than individual) pursuing interests that strengthen the position of some groups, generally already significantly privileged at the expense of others. They become of economic and political elites, parasitizing them.

Indeed, we can easily create a justification for this mechanism rich in rational argumentation. However, it will certainly not be accepted with understanding and approval by all circles. A more universal explanation remains, according to which human reason operates in an environment of ruthless struggle for the primacy of interests of some individuals and groups over others. This struggle is governed by rules other than those of classical logic. Barbara Skarga claims that “those who realize the frailty of human reason, denying its absolute power, see in it simply a tool of adaptation, imperfect and not malleable enough in its functions. [...] Everything we do while maintaining that we act rationally is a mere struggle for existence, clothed only in beautiful words. And in this struggle, we are cruel.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Barbara Skarga, *Człowiek to nie jest piękne zwierzę*, 31.



## What If In the Beginning There Was Logos?

**Concept 2.** We assume that human reason is not a lonely island in the ocean of omnipresent chances, whose locally rational structures sometimes emerge by fluctuation. On the contrary: we assume that in the beginning there was the Logos or, according to Roman Brandstaetter's interpretive proposal, "before all there is the Logos."<sup>19</sup> This "before everything" implies the ontological primacy, not chronological in the sense that reason precedes everything that exists in the order of being. We can find such a focused intuition already in the *Book of Proverbs*<sup>20</sup> and in the prologue to the Gospel according to St. John.<sup>21</sup> What is conceived as the object of presupposition is pre-eternal and unconditioned Reason, identical to Kant's *intuitus originarius*.<sup>22</sup> Juxtaposing them both, human reason is but a weak echo, subject to multiple limitations due to the imperfect nature of its bearer.

The essential difference concerning the naturalistic concept is that this limited and imperfect human reason is not the only existing form of rationality. The similarity, in turn, lies in the fact that reason alone and all the tools of rational thinking are not sufficient to prove the existence of the *intuitus originarius* and to recognize the truths that come from it. By analogy, human reason is incapable of independently and definitively resolving fundamental ontological questions, such as the one that

<sup>19</sup> Roman Brandstaetter describes his work concerning the translation of "the Prologue to the Gospel according to St. John" as follows: "I took out of the library shelf the *New Testament* in the Hebrew translation by Prof. Franz Delitzsch and read the first verse: 'Bereshit haja ha Dawar, weha Dawar haja et ha Elohim, we Elohim' haja ha Dawar.' I translate: [...] 'Before all things is the Word, and the Word is with God, and God is the Word.' Earlier he explains: 'The Word, of whom St. John will speak in a moment, existed eternally, existed before the creation of the world, so this 'beginning' is not to be identified with the work of creation accomplished on the first day of Genesis, but with the Power that never began and never ended, and is eternal and infinite Being.'" Roman Brandstaetter, "JEST, czyli historia jednego przekładu," in Roman Brandstaetter, *Księgi Nowego Przymierza. Przekłady biblijne z języka greckiego* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo M, 2009), 548–550. "The choice of the adverb 'before all' was intended by the translator to convey the transcendent sense of the Being being before all and above all." Grzegorz Ojcewicz, "Hymn o Słowie Romana Brandstaettera, czyli co jest przed wszystkim?," 185–198, *Acta Neophilologica* 2 (2012): 193.

<sup>20</sup> "The Lord brought me forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old; I was formed long ages ago, at the very beginning, when the world came to be." "Proverbs 8:22–8:23," in *Holy Bible – New International Version*®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.®, accessed July 22, 2024, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs%208&version=NIV>.

<sup>21</sup> "Ὁ ἄρχὴ ἦν ὁ Λόγος", ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ ΚΑΤΑ ΙΩΑΝΝΗΝ 1:1, accessed July 22, 2024, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=john+1:1-1:5&version=THGNT>.

<sup>22</sup> "Such intellectual intuition [as *intuitus originarius*] seems to belong solely to the primordial being, and can never be ascribed to a dependent being, dependent in its existence as well as in its intuition." Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 90 (B 72).

Kant referred to as the “philosophical scandal.”<sup>23</sup> In order to accept this assumption and its consequences, it is necessary to adopt an attitude of faith in what has been revealed about Eternal Reason.

A believer is not so different from a non-believer as the defenders of the tradition of Enlightenment libertinism want to convince us. Faith (though not of the same kind) is a necessary condition for building any coherent system of beliefs because no human being is capable of independently carrying out all the verification procedures necessary to ascertain the truth of all the statements considered to be true. There is nothing irrational about the fact that people commonly believe textbooks, school teachers and scholars who publish peer-reviewed articles and monographs, and experienced practitioners who give some good advice based on their own proven knowledge.<sup>24</sup> Is belief in divine revelation, rooted in biblical accounts and the tradition of the *Magisterium Ecclesiae*, attested to by prophets and confirmed by numerous witnesses of God’s presence and actions in the world, so deviant as to be counted among the superstitions that defile reason, as Voltaire argued<sup>25</sup> and modern ‘enlightened atheists’ continue to do? Alternatively, we could ask another question: is there a rational justification for accepting the truths of faith as the foundation of one’s worldview?

In order to find a convincing answer to these questions, it is first necessary to clarify in what sense the term “faith” is used here. Otherwise, we are at risk of getting lost in a thicket of misunderstandings, since the term is sometimes understood and interpreted very differently. Without clarifying it, it would be difficult to understand it properly. As Josef Pieper notes, “Every historical language that is the product of natural growth is characterised by something that does not occur in an artificial terminology: namely improper use of words. [...] Impropriety in usage of a word

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<sup>23</sup> “Kant considered it to be scandalous that philosophy still had not found a rational proof of the existence of the external world during his time. Arguably, the scandal continues today because scepticism remains a widely debated and extremely divisive issue among contemporary thinkers.” Luigi Caranti, “Summary,” in *Kant and the Scandal of Philosophy: the Kantian Critique of Cartesian Scepticism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), accessed September 3, 2025, <https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/50/monograph/book/104142>.

<sup>24</sup> “The relationship of trust depends upon a state of contact, a contact of my entire being with the one in whom I trust, the relationship of acknowledging depends upon an act of acceptance, an acceptance by my entire being of that which I acknowledge to be true. [...] The faith-principle of acknowledgment and acceptance in the sense of a holding henceforth that so and so is true [...] was made possible [...] through the comprehension reached by Greek thought of an act which acknowledges the truth.” Martin Buber, *Two Types of Faith*, trans. Norman P. Goldhawk (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957), 8–11.

<sup>25</sup> See Marek Jędraszewski, „Oświecenie i konieczność nowej racjonalności,” in *Kultura fundamentem tożsamości człowieka*, ed. Tadeusz Chłipała (Wrocław: Papieski Wydział Teologiczny, 2009), 29.

can be recognised by our unmistakable sign: a word used in its improper sense can be exchanged for another without altering the meaning of the sentence.”<sup>26</sup> Applying these criteria, it is easy to see that, for example, Voltaire – an ardent defender of freethought and an enemy of faith – freely exchanges the word for such terms as fanaticism, dogmatism, superstition, idolatry, etc.<sup>27</sup> We can, therefore, give up a next debate concerning the opinion that does not refer to properly understood faith properly understood.

Instead, it is worth contemplating over the distinction that Martin Buber makes in his book *Two Types of Faith*. In his view, “there are two – and ultimately only two – types of faith distinct from each other. [...] One involves the fact that I have confidence in someone, even though I cannot sufficiently ‘justify’ this confidence, the other involves the fact that – also without being able to sufficiently justify it – I recognize as true a certain state of affairs.”<sup>28</sup> Religious communities to which Buber assigns particular types of faith will be discussed later. Now, I would like to look at the thinker’s opinion on the relationship between faith and reason. Buber provides the following definition of faith as: “a relationship that, by its very nature, is not based on or derived from ‘arguments’; while I can give arguments for my faith, they will never fully justify it. [...] My rationality, my rational thought-function, however, is only a part, a partial function of my being; and where – in one way or another – I ‘believe’, my whole being, the totality of my life, participates in the process; moreover: this process is only possible at all because this relation of belief is a relation of my whole being. Personal wholeness in this sense, however, is possible only if the entire thought functions as if included in it and determined by.”<sup>29</sup>

In Buber’s personalist anthropology, faith is, as we read, a whole-person commitment to what could be called the Cause or life’s calling. Thus, it involves taking total responsibility for all actions motivated by faith. In this sense, faith must be based on a very strong foundation that will not crumble even at the moment of the most severe test. This foundation cannot be reason, which, according to Buber, is only a part of the functional equipment of a human being, helpful in solving the problems and puzzles posed by life, but insufficient in extreme situations. Thus, something more reliable than reason is needed. This something – if we believe in Józef Tischner’s reflections on Buber’s philosophy of encounter – is fidelity which has its source in the experience of the meeting.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, 26.

<sup>27</sup> See *Dictionnaire philosophique de Voltaire* (Paris: Bacquenois, 1836), 520–521.

<sup>28</sup> Buber, *Two Types of Faith*, 17.

<sup>29</sup> Buber, *Two Types of Faith*, 17.

<sup>30</sup> See Józef Tischner, *Zrozumieć własną wiarę* (Kraków: Znak, 2012), 12.

A truth similar to that reached by taking naturalistic assumptions as a starting point is revealed here: reason shows its insurmountable limitations, and human life abounds in situations and events when it must rely on another, more solid or primordial basis. Here it can be deduced that reason operates in an environment that is not always conducive to its nurturing and development. What kind of environment is it? Its conceptual characterization depends on the discussed assumptions. A proponent of a secular worldview will maintain that the world is an environment of ruthless struggle for existence, constant rivalry between competitors and striving to best satisfy one's own needs.<sup>31</sup> In such an environment, reason proves to be a valuable ally, and the circumstances of its use depend on the subject's current position in the race for the increased quality of life and the balance of power in the competition for resources. A man of faith will respond differently: reason operates in an environment of faith, hope and love. I will discuss this answer in detail.

## The Environment of Faith, Hope and Love

Faith and reason are two closely related authorities of the human spirit forming a relationship. As John Paul II states in the first sentence of the encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, "Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth."<sup>32</sup> Stanisław Wszolek in his book *The Rationality of Faith* claims that: "the first step of a rational and believing Man belongs to reason. It is reason that prepares faith, works out the rationales that make faith possible, making it a rational act [...] the second is the work mainly of the will. [It is] an act of faith in the proper sense [...] it is followed by the third step, which again belongs to reason. This time it is [...] a matter of exploring what man has already believed." This thought pattern shows how "thinking and believing coexist in the same man."<sup>33</sup>

The relationship between faith, will and reason is presented somewhat differently by Josef Pieper. In his treatise *On Faith*, he writes, citing sources he values: "Newman is forever stressing, in one guise or another, the one idea that belief is something other than the result of a logical process; it is precisely not 'a conclusion

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<sup>31</sup> See Skarga, *Człowiek to nie jest piękne zwierzę*, 31.

<sup>32</sup> John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter "Fides et Ratio" of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Relationship Between Faith and Reason*, 14 September 1998, accessed August 30, 2025 [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_14091998\\_fides-et-ratio.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091998_fides-et-ratio.html).

<sup>33</sup> Stanisław Wszolek, *Racjonalność wiary* (Kraków: Copernicus Center Press, 2016), 69–71.

from premises': "For directly you have a conviction that you ought to believe, reason has done its part, and what is wanted for faith is, not proof, but will."<sup>34</sup> Pieper refers to a German theologian, Matthias Joseph Scheeben, and quotes his statement: "Assent of the intellect to the witnessed truth takes place only to the extent that the will [...] seeks and wishes to bring about consent or agreement with the judgement of the speaker, participation in and communion with his insight or, in other words, a spiritual union with him; the will seeks this union as a good and thus motivates the intellect to accept the insight of the witness as if it were its own."<sup>35</sup>

As can be seen, the accents are distributed differently here. According to Pieper – unlike in the case of Wszolek – both in coming to faith and in remaining faithful, the intellect plays only a supporting role. Decisive is the act of the will, directed towards the good, which obtains primacy over the truth understood as the result of cognition. The picture that emerges is following: truth is desirable insofar as it is good, and the will decides what is good. However, it is difficult to accept such an interpretation of faith. Can free will be considered a sufficient guarantor of the rightness of decisions beyond control of reason?

It is worth recalling in this context Karol Wojtyła's warning: "Appeal is made today to freedom alone. It is often said: what matters is to be free, released from all constraint or limitation, so as to operate according to private judgement, which in reality is often pure caprice. This much is clear: such liberalism can only be described as primitive. Its influence, however, is potentially devastating."<sup>36</sup> The strength of this objection is not entirely weakened by the fact that, according to Scheeben, the overriding good and ultimate goal of the will is spiritual communion with the witness of the faith we meet. After all, it can happen that the role of witness is played by someone whom Pope Francis describes as a "false prophet,"<sup>37</sup> and the pursuit of communion with someone like this can prove fatal. This is why I consider the presence of reason in the environment of faith to be essential at every stage of the formation of a believer's attitude – not necessarily in the form of the final authority

<sup>34</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, 35-36. See Wilfried Ward, *The Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman*, Vol. 1 (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1912), 242.

<sup>35</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, 39-40. See Matthias Josef Scheeben, *Handbuch der Dogmatik, I Band - herausgegeben von Martin Grabmann* (Freiburg: Herder, 1948), 291.

<sup>36</sup> John Paul II, *Memory and Identity. Personal Reflections* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005), 38.

<sup>37</sup> "Let us [...] try to understand the guise such false prophets can assume. They can appear as 'snake charmers,' who manipulate human emotions in order to enslave others and lead them where they would have them go. [...] These swindlers, in peddling things that have no real value, rob people of all that is most precious: dignity, freedom and the ability to love." Pope Francis, *Message of the Holy Father Francis for Lent 2018*, accessed July 9, 2024, <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2018/02/06/180206c.html>.

whose verdicts are unchangeable, but rather as a wise counselor, similar to the biblical Wisdom, who accompanied the divine act of creation: "Then I was constantly[a] at his side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence, rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in mankind."<sup>38</sup>

If not reason (in the sense of personal, individual knowledge of truth) and not will (in the sense of personal, individual striving for what appears to me good), then what should become the proper foundation of mature faith? On the horizon of these considerations, Buber's proposal has already appeared, distinguishing between two types of faith: based on a personal relationship of trust (to believe someone) and based on the psychological act of assertion, i.e. recognizing as true a certain set of declarative sentences (to believe something). Are these two models complementary, forming one overarching whole, or are they mutually exclusive, constituting a dialectical pair of thesis-antithesis? Buber's position is quite surprising. Namely, he states: "The first of these two types of faith has its classical example in the ancient history of Israel – a community of faith that came into being as a nation, and a nation that came into being as a community of faith – and the second in the early period of Christianity [and its] preliminary step is the recognition as truth of something that has so far been regarded as a mere absurdity – and there is no other access here [...] the principle of faith, consisting in recognition and acceptance in the sense of: 'from this moment I consider it true,' is of Greek origin [...] it became possible as soon as Greek thought grasped the act of recognizing truth."<sup>39</sup>

The embedding of the two types of faith in such different cultures as Israeli and Greek shows quite clearly that the author of this distinction sees above all the contrast and difference between them. In fact, he writes explicitly, "Considering the types of faith in their mutual dissimilarity leads to considering the differences in the contents of faith, where these types and contents are intrinsically related to each other."<sup>40</sup> However, this does not necessarily mean that experiencing faith in one of these ways precludes the other way. I believe that the opposite is true. Josef Pieper is of the same opinion: "Strangely enough, in theological disputation the two elements of belief that we here present as linked – assent to the truth of a subject and assent to a person – have repeatedly been isolated and played off against one another, as though they were by nature incompatible. [...] But the Christian concept of belief, at any rate, explicitly embraces both the material and the personal element."<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> "Proverbs 8:30-31," in *Holy Bible, New International Version®*, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.®, accessed July 29, 2025 <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs%208%3A30-31&version=NIV>.

<sup>39</sup> Buber, *Two Types of Faith*, 19-20.

<sup>40</sup> Buber, *Two Types of Faith*, 21-22.

<sup>41</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, 29.

The link between the two is, we might say, deeply rational in nature, due to the fact that knowledge and faith cover adjacent areas, and thus complement each other. If a person has knowledge about something, the content of this knowledge does not become an object of faith for him – at least in the proper sense. At most, he could say: “I believe that what I know is true,” but only in the specific (‘wrong’) sense, which could be expressed in the words: “I am not absolutely certain of the validity of my knowledge, but I assume with reasonable probability that it is true.” This is not the kind of faith in question in the present discussion, but the one that combines the recognition of the truthfulness of a judgment with the conviction that the testimony of the one who presents that judgment is credible. An additional condition for proper understanding of faith is that knowledge is mediated by a witness. In Pieper’s precise formulation, the definition of faith is as follows: “The believer – in the strict sense of the word – accepts a given matter as real and true on the testimony of someone else. That is, in essence, the concept of belief,”<sup>42</sup> and this happens when the only way to get to know this state of affairs is through the testimony of someone who had direct access to it.

The faith that leads a person to trust in someone’s testimony is based not only on reason, but also on the will. St. Augustine prudently notes: “*Nemo credit nisi volens*” (no one believes unless he wills).<sup>43</sup> The will enables not only the act of faith itself, but co-determines what a person believes in. Josef Pieper writes: “Nevertheless, there remains that old statement that the believer’s mind is directed toward that which he hopes for and loves.”<sup>44</sup> “Before the human act of belief is possible, we must presuppose that the believer experiences the subject to be believed as something that really concerns him, as an object of hope, longing and love, and in that sense as a goal of volition.”<sup>45</sup> These words synthetically characterize the environment in which the believer lives. It consists not only of the elements Margaret Archer points out in her characterization of critical realism, i.e. “all three orders of reality – natural, practical and social,”<sup>46</sup> but also of a spiritual space, constituted by values experienced as a result of cognitive and existential contact with another human being – a space that can be described using the language of Tischner’s philosophy of drama.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, 29.

<sup>43</sup> Wszolek, *Racjonalność wiary*, 70.

<sup>44</sup> The author refers here to St. Thomas: „*Per fidem apprehendit intellectus quae sperat et amat.*” Thomas de Aquino, „Prima pars secundae partis, Questio 62,” in *Summa Theologiae*, accessed September 3, 2025, <https://www.corpusthomisticum.org/sth2055.html>.

<sup>45</sup> Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, 38.

<sup>46</sup> Archer, *Being Human: the Problem of Agency*, 9.

<sup>47</sup> “As a result of the test of language, we will try to gain insight into the phenomenon [...] which we define as ‘the space of cognitive interaction with the other.’ The *a priori* organization of this space is



From this perspective, the following answer to the question about the origins and foundations of Christian faith emerges: alongside reason which develops arguments and prepares evidence to support them and alongside the will which turns towards the good found in the event of spiritual union with a credible witness of faith, there is also the experience of encounter and election. The most important vehicle for an encounter that results in belief is the word, and the fundamental experience of the source of faith is listening. “St. Paul writes: ‘faith from hearing.’ There is no faith without an encounter with the word. In the beginning was the word, and it still is. Faith is the introduction of Man into another world [connected] by the bond of free and good beings.”<sup>48</sup> Where good meets freedom, not everything is clear. Tischner refers to the Spiritual Life experienced by St. John of the Cross and quotes his formula: “faith is a habit of the soul, certain and obscure.”<sup>49</sup>

Darkness can be illuminated to find the right path, not to go astray. The tried-and-true way of illuminating darkness is the light of reason, but reason has its limits. In a life subordinated to faith, there are times when, instead of compulsively seeking the light of reason, it is better to remain in the darkness and listen to the voice carrying words of truth – sometimes different from the truth of rational inquiry – and then follow that voice.

In order to abandon the lighted path and follow the darkness, we need to trust the one who calls out. When and whom is it permissible to trust if we are believers? Here comes the most difficult moment, when – to use a metaphor – we need to switch to another control system. The stakes are high: if we choose wrongly and

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the basis of the order of all possible judgments that define what a person is. But the space of cognition and intercourse does not owe this organization to itself. The organization arises [...] from an experience of value that is more fundamental than the experience of space. Thus, our need for synthesis will lead us through phenomena of the linguistic type and through the experience of space toward elementary axiological data. Without taking into account the axiological dimension of human being, an understanding of this being is not, it seems, possible.” Józef Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu* (Kraków: Znak, 1998), 271.

<sup>48</sup> Józef Tischner, *Zrozumieć własną wiarę*, 41–43. See St. Paul’s *Letter to the Romans*, 10:17: “Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.” *Holy Bible, New International Version*®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® accessed September 29, 2025, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%2010%3A17&version=NIV>.

<sup>49</sup> Tischner, *Zrozumieć własną wiarę*, 43. The author refers to the second book *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, where the following formula is found: “Faith, say the theologians, is a habit of the soul, certain and obscure. And the reason for its being an obscure habit is that it makes us believe truths revealed by God Himself, which transcend all natural light, and exceed all human understanding, beyond all proportion.” St. John of the Cross, *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, trans. Edgar Allison Peers (New York: Image Books, 1958), 82.

trust the wrong person, doom awaits us. This, according to Tischner, is the drama of human existence.<sup>50</sup> The man must choose without being able to be sure that his choice is correct. He cannot evade the decision because not choosing is also choosing. The choice in question includes three aspects: to believe or not to believe, and if to believe, then in what? Finally, if to believe, then in whom?

## The Christian's Right Choice

The choice of a Christian can be described as follows: to believe, to trust, to be faithful. This consideration seems to indicate that faith is an object of free choice (but also that the criteria for choice exceed the competence of reason). However, a deeper insight into the content of the message of faith reveals another truth: faith is Man's response to God's choice.<sup>51</sup> Tischner refers to this truth of faith when he writes: "God chose Man and revealed himself to Man [...] God, who is the Good, freely reveals himself to Man, chooses Man, saves Man."<sup>52</sup> Immediately afterwards he adds, "Where lies the difficulty? Someone who has never experienced having to choose may not know what it means that God has chosen. Someone who has never been told that no one loves him may not know what revelation is. Someone who has not experienced any salvation in life, and who has not saved anyone from anything, may not know what salvation is."<sup>53</sup> Why? Because "everything essential in faith begins with interpersonal experiences [...] we cannot believe in God without believing in Man [...] one cannot believe in man without believing in himself."<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> "Man lives in such a way that he takes part in a drama – he is a dramatic being. [...] Taking part in some drama, Man knows more or less clearly that [...] doom or salvation is in his hands. [...] Being convinced that doom and salvation are in his hands, Man directs his life according to this conviction." Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu*, 10.

<sup>51</sup> "God speaks to Man through natural and supernatural revelation. The other half of this communication is Man's response, the way he listens and responds. We call this faith." Peter Brown, *God, Man and the Universe*. Faith: Man's Response, accessed July 10, 2024, <https://scalar.usc.edu/works/god-man-and-the-universe/faith-mans-response>. See also: "By his Revelation, the Invisible God, from the fullness of his love, addresses men as his friends, and moves among them, in order to invite and receive them into his own company. The adequate response to this invitation is faith." *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Part I, Chapter III, pt. 142, accessed September 29, 2025, [https://www.vatican.va/content/catechism/en/part\\_one/section\\_one/chapter\\_three.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/catechism/en/part_one/section_one/chapter_three.html).

<sup>52</sup> Tischner, *Zrozumieć własną wiarę*, 42-43.

<sup>53</sup> Tischner, *Zrozumieć własną wiarę*, 43-44.

<sup>54</sup> Tischner, *Zrozumieć własną wiarę*, 45.

The word of God comes from the darkness.<sup>55</sup> Very rarely – if ever – it is immediately directly heard, assimilated and accepted. This may be the case in the experience of a mystical union with God, but it is difficult to imagine that such an experience would occur without prior spiritual preparation. This preparation is to grow in an atmosphere of trust, fidelity, love and respect between people.

Religion is a bond between Man and God, but the force of attraction that constitutes this bond is formed and matures in the space of human relations. Where this space is built of injustice and harm, distrust and contempt, greed and rivalry, there is little chance for the seed of faith to sprout. A person who has learned to love because he himself has experienced someone else's love, has learned to trust because someone has placed hope in him, has learned to persevere in faithfulness because he has not experienced betrayal from those closest to him, will more easily discover that "God is close to him. That he is closer to Him than he is to himself."<sup>56</sup>

In such an environment, in which faith, hope and love find coverage in the reciprocal relationship between neighbors, reason, too, with its light, will be ready to affirm that God is the Creator and Savior, who "so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life"<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> "The transcendence and immanence of human life [...] causes God to be discovered in darkness, simultaneously as near and far" Jan Machniak, "Odkrywanie Boga w ciemności," in *Światłość w ciemności*, ed. Jerzy Gogola, (Kraków: Wyd. OO Karmelitów Bosych, 2003), accessed July 10, 2024, <https://www.karmel.pl/odkrywanie-boga-w-ciemnosci/>.

<sup>56</sup> Tischner, *Zrozumieć własną wiarę*, 44.

<sup>57</sup> "John 3:16," in *Holy Bible, New International Version*®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.®, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%203%3A16&version=NIV>, accessed July 22, 2024.

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Krzysztof Wieczorek

## La raison dans l'environnement de la foi, de l'espérance et de l'amour

### Résumé

Il n'existe pas de réponse concluante et universellement valable à la question de savoir si la raison est le résultat accidentel d'une évolution aveugle, ou si le monde est la création de la raison, tandis que l'intellect humain tire son essence de la raison créatrice divine. Chaque personne réfléchie doit choisir le concept qui lui convient. Un tel choix a des conséquences importantes, car il influence de manière décisive l'interprétation des faits humains et génère une attitude générale envers la réalité. L'article présente certaines conséquences concernant ces deux choix et se concentre en particulier sur les caractéristiques du cadre de vie vu du point de vue d'une personne rationnelle et croyante. L'auteur présente sa conception de la foi, basée sur les textes de Martin Buber, Josef Pieper, Józef Tischner et Stanisław Wszolek, et modélise la forme optimale de la relation entre la foi et la raison. Il développe l'idée que la foi chrétienne est la réponse de l'homme à son élection par Dieu. Tout ce qui est essentiel dans la foi commence par des expériences interpersonnelles. Une personne qui vit dans un environnement de foi, d'espérance et d'amour découvrira plus facilement que Dieu est proche d'elle. Elle deviendra ainsi un témoin crédible de la vérité de l'Évangile dans sa société.

Mots-clés : raison, foi, espérance, amour, Josef Pieper, Józef Tischner

Krzysztof Wieczorek

## La ragione nell'ambiente della fede, della speranza e dell'amore

### Sommario

Non esiste una risposta definitiva e universalmente valida alla domanda se la ragione sia il risultato accidentale di un'evoluzione casuale, o se il mondo sia la creazione della ragione mentre l'intelletto umano ne deriva la sua essenza dalla Ragione Creativa Divina. Ogni persona pensante dovrebbe scegliere il concetto appropriato. Tale scelta comporta conseguenze serie poiché influenza in modo decisivo l'interpretazione dei fatti umani e genera un atteggiamento generale nei confronti della realtà. L'articolo presenta alcune conseguenze relative a entrambe le scelte e si concentra in particolare sulle caratteristiche dell'ambiente di vita visto dalla prospettiva di una persona razionale e credente. L'autore presenta la sua comprensione della fede, basata sui testi di Martin Buber, Josef Pieper, Józef Tischner e Stanisław Wszolek, e modella la forma ottimale del rapporto tra fede e ragione. Egli approfondisce l'idea che la fede cristiana è la risposta dell'uomo all'essere stato scelto da Dio. Tutto ciò che è essenziale nella fede inizia con le esperienze interpersonali. Una persona che vive in un ambiente di fede, speranza e amore scoprirà più facilmente che Dio le è vicino. Di conseguenza, diventerà un testimone credibile della verità del Vangelo nella sua società.

Parole chiave: ragione, fede, speranza, amore, Josef Pieper, Józef Tischner