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Philosophizing Within the Boundaries of Faith and Reason

Abstract: The article reflects on the situation of the man's desire for knowledge, drawing on Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Fides et Ratio* which stresses the importance of the union of faith and reason in search of truth. The Latin term *situatio* (literally *to place*) refers to the totality of circumstances, conditions and relationships in which the man comes to know himself, the world and God. The text warns of the risk of the Gnostic temptation which lies in denying the existential and cognitive limits of the man. This attitude leads to the loss of perception of the cosmic inner harmony, the rejection of critical attitudes, and the emergence of absurd constructions with negative consequences. At the same time, the article points to the importance of metaphysics and the need for openness to the transcendent truth that the Christian faith reliably conveys. It encourages intellectual dialogue between faith and philosophy in academic and personal life.

Keywords: reason, faith, man, philosophizing

Introduction

The Papal Encyclicals are circular letters issued by the Pope, originally addressed to bishops, but now also addressed to priests and Catholics in general throughout the world. These documents deal with serious issues of faith and morals that resonate in society. Some encyclicals seek to reach out not only to Christians, but also to everyone who seeks truth, justice and peace in the world.¹ Pope John Paul II issued the encyclical *Fides et Ratio* (*Faith and Reason*) on September 14, 1998, to

¹ See John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* (1963); Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* (1967); John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987); Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* (2009); Francis: *Fratelli Tutti* (2020).

emphasize the importance of the union of faith and reason in the process of discovering truth. The impetus for its writing was the situation of philosophy in the world at the end of the twentieth century, when relativism, scepticism and the rejection of the objective truth were increasingly asserted. The Pope, originally a professor of philosophy, warned of the danger that without the union of faith and reason men would lose their ability to find the truth about themselves, the world, and God. The encyclical responded to the growing distrust of metaphysics and stressed that authentic philosophy had to be open to truth, including the transcendent truth to which the Christian faith reliably leads.

The aim of the article is to reflect on the situation of the man with his desire for knowledge, with emphasis put on the meaning of the Latin word *situatio* (derived from *situare* which means “to place”). This term refers etymologically to a state or totality of circumstances, conditions and relationships, or to the position of something in space or time. The reflection includes a warning against the gnostic temptation which, ignoring its own existential and cognitive limits, ceases to notice the inner harmony of the cosmos. This in turn leads to the rejection of correct critical attitudes and to absurd claims and constructions with catastrophic consequences. Ultimately, the goal is to encourage intellectual debate between faith and philosophy in both academic and personal life.

What Is Philosophizing?

At first glance, discussing faith within the context of philosophy may raise concerns about the inappropriateness of venturing into the unfamiliar territory. According to the Nietzschean mentality, if philosophy is to speak of God, it should only speak of His death.² However, rejecting belief in God and shutting oneself off from the world of shadows is nothing new. The Sophists, the creators of subjectivist and relativist humanism, were the ones who reduced the man's view to mere fragments of the shadow and removed the transcendent focus. The statement of Protagoras in the 5th century B.C. confirms that the measure of all things is the man. However, the modern definition of humanism, which so firmly appeals to the ideal of Greek culture and humanism, forgets that the Greek cultural ideal was not only presented

² Marek Rembierz, “Refleksja moralna nad odpowiedzialnością i etosem filozofa w XX wieku,” in *Spółeczeństwo, kultura, moralność*, eds Zlatica Plašienková and Marek Rembierz (Bielsko-Biała: ATH, 2008), 265–282.

in a Sophistic form. The thoughts of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle show the humanism of the Sophists as a manifestation of the decline of Greek civilization, rather than its peak. These great Greek thinkers by way of reason, which is the Logos, approached the reality which religion described by the word Theos. The result of their intellectual efforts is theology as the culmination of philosophy. It was Plato who coined the word³ and made it the centre of philosophical thought⁴ in connection with the criticism of the ideas of the deities of the time. The term was taken up by Aristotle for whom theology represented the first philosophy, that is the science of the fundamental principles of being and knowledge.⁵ This centre of philosophical thought was born in the midst of the crisis of the Greek ideal of culture.

The relationship between philosophy as the love of knowledge and wisdom and theology is manifold. Already in the first centuries of Christianity, the question of the relationship between the revealed knowledge and the knowledge that is the product of human reason was an issue. In the multiplicity of interpretations of this relationship, one can discern not only indications of the absorption or separation of faith and reason, but also of a necessary collaboration. These three paradigms accompany the history of theological and philosophical reflection, whose differences in form and content are conditioned by context. From the beginning, philosophy has always been understood in relation to religion, and religion, through philosophy, has taken on a rational form as theology. Theology, however, aims higher than humanism. Protagoras's words have been modified, and thus the measure of all things is God.⁶ The question concerning the man's relation to God has a home ground in philosophy. In the encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, the Pope states: "The axis of every culture is man's attitude towards the greatest mystery: the mystery of God."⁷

In the first chapter of the encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, John Paul II suggests that according to the teachings of the First Vatican Council the truth arrived at through a philosophical reflection and the truth of Revelation are neither mixed nor mutually exclusive. Faith and reason, theology and philosophy, are thus presented in autonomous separation. "There exists a twofold order of knowledge, distinct not only as regards their source, but also as regards their object. With regard to the source, because we know in one by natural reason, in the other by divine faith. With regard to the object, because besides those things which natural reason can attain, there are proposed for our belief mysteries hidden in God which, unless they

³ Platón, *Ústava*, trans. František Novotný (Praha: Oikymenh, 2017), 379a.

⁴ Werner Jaeger, *Humanizm i teologia*, trans. Marian Plezia (Warszawa: PAX, 1957), 41–42.

⁵ Aristoteles, "Metafyzika," in: *Od Aristotela po Plotina*, trans. Július Špaňár (Bratislava: Pravda, 1973), VI, 1.

⁶ Jaeger, *Humanizm i teologia*, 47.

⁷ Wojtyła, *Centesimus Annus*, 24.

are divinely revealed, cannot be known. Based upon God's testimony and enjoying the supernatural assistance of grace, faith is of an order other than philosophical knowledge which depends upon sense perception and experience and which advances by the light of the intellect alone. Philosophy and the sciences function within the order of natural reason; while faith, enlightened and guided by the Spirit, recognizes in the message of salvation the "fullness of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14) which God has willed to reveal in history and definitively through his Son, Jesus Christ (1 Jn 5:9; Jn 5:31–32)."⁸

In the very next paragraph, the Pope cites the teaching of the Second Vatican Council which presents Jesus as the revealer of God's plan in history. The emphasis on the sapiential character of philosophy represents John Paul II's view of the role of philosophy in search of the ultimate and global meaning of life in accordance with God's Word and not in separation. The Word of God reveals the final destiny of men and women, and provides a unifying explanation of all that they do in the world. This is why it invites philosophy to engage in looking for the natural foundation of this meaning, which corresponds to the religious impulse innate in every person. A philosophy denying the possibility of an ultimate and overarching meaning would be not only ill-adapted to its task, but also false.⁹

With these ideas, John Paul II follows the great thinkers of early Christianity in his understanding of philosophy. Here we mention in particular Clement of Alexandria, who sees in philosophy "a footprint of God's wisdom and an impulse moving towards God."¹⁰ Philosophy has a "preparatory function."¹¹ The most important task in the man's life is the knowledge of God, which is to be manifested in active goodness. This takes place in the long path of *paideia* on which God and the man form a man. Human freedom, which must respond to the educational initiative of God, has its essential and irreplaceable room.

Freedom is the capacity for self-determination, but not in an entirely arbitrary way. It is not merely the capacity to choose anything, but it possesses a certain direction, the aim of which is the most faithful likeness to God. "Freedom is not realized in decisions made against God."¹² Such an understanding of human freedom is close to the understanding of the man in ancient Greek Christianity, in which the man is understood as a being altogether directed towards God. There is no sharp distinction between natural and supernatural ends, and any horizontal ori-

⁸ Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 9.

⁹ Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 81.

¹⁰ Klemens Aleksandryjski, *Kobierce*, trans. Janina Niemirska-Pliszczyńska (Warszawa: PAX, 1994), I.28,1–4.

¹¹ Aleksandryjski, *Kobierce*, I.87, 1.

¹² Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 13.

entation is spontaneously interpreted in terms of a vertical orientation.¹³ Thus God does not destroy our freedom but leads us to develop it. This takes place through Christ, who with his whole existence calls human freedom to follow him. The central idea of such humanism is the deification of the man, which does not mean the destruction of humanity, but the way to its own fulfillment. The man becomes a human in the fullest way, not through identification with God, but through drawing closer to Him.

Similarly, in the medieval thought we see philosophy as a mediator of faith and reason. Anselm of Canterbury was inspired by Augustine's questions regarding the matters of faith and reason, which he sought to answer using Aristotelian dialectics. This Benedictine monk expressed deep confidence in the power of reason and was convinced that the main ideas of the Christian faith, the acceptance of Christian doctrine and ecclesiastical authority, could be gradually justified by natural reason. Faith and reason can be in harmony because they point to the same truth, to the vision of God. Reason (*intellectus*) mediates insights into truth as we progress along the path between faith and a full vision. An insight brings closer the goal (vision) toward which faith is directed.¹⁴ Anselm spoke of *fides quaerens intellectum* (faith seeking understanding) and *sola ratione* (mere reason). The religious person should not take human reason as the final authority of faith, but should use reason to seek an explanation for what he believes in. Such a thing was attempted by Anselm in his works *Monologion*, *Proslogion* and *Cur Deus Homo*.¹⁵

John Paul II highlighted the contribution of the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas, who significantly deepened the understanding of the harmony between reason and faith. He showed that the light of reason and the light of faith cannot contradict each other since they both come from God. In the first chapter of his *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Thomas Aquinas shares with Anselm great respect for human reason, but he understands it in a more limited way. The reason for this is his explanation of the nature of human cognition, which is primarily focused on the cognition of material objects. God is incorporeal and therefore cannot be known directly. He often writes that we cannot even know directly who God is (*quid est*). We cannot develop a proper knowledge of God because He is not an object of sensorial experience. We speak of God not on the basis of our understanding of who He really is,

¹³ Dariusz Oko, *Łaska i wolność* (Kraków: WAM, 1997), 85.

¹⁴ Anselm von Canterbury, *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, trans. Lenka Karfíková (Praha: Kalich, 1990), 246.

¹⁵ St. Anselm, *Proslogium; Monologium; an appendix In behalf of the fool by Gaunilon; and Cur Deus homo*, trans. Sidney Norton Deane, B.A. (Chicago: Open Court Pub. Co, 1903). <https://archive.org/details/stanselmeproslog00anseuoft/page/n5/mode/2up>, 2024.

but on the basis of our knowledge of His creation. From our knowledge of material things and the man we can derive some characteristics of God.

One of the reasons for Thomas's limitation of philosophical knowledge in the field of religion is his understanding of the concepts of "faith" and "knowledge." These two concepts are radically different. According to Aquinas, our faith, unlike true knowledge, can be false. Moreover, when we know something, we also know why it is so, which presupposes overall true understanding. To achieve such comprehensive understanding in religion, true knowledge of divine revelation is necessary. However, this presupposes faith, which has its basis in the authority of God. Therefore, rational knowledge, according to Aquinas, is much more limited than religious faith. We cannot know for sure whether the doctrine of the Trinity or the incarnation is true, but we can reasonably point out some things that will help us accept these doctrines. Similarly, we can argue against theories that question these doctrines. However, religious doctrines themselves are not a question of knowledge, but rather a question of faith. This is reflected by John Paul II in the encyclical *Fides et Ratio*. Faith therefore has no fear of reason but seeks it out and has trust in it. Just as grace builds on nature and brings it to fulfilment,¹⁶ so faith builds upon and perfects reason.¹⁷ The desire for truth, therefore, spurs reason always to go further. The harmony between philosophical knowledge and the knowledge of faith is aptly expressed: "Faith asks that its object be understood with the help of reason; and at the summit of its searching reason acknowledges that it cannot do without what faith presents."¹⁸

In modern thought, we can document the primacy of rational reasoning by referring to John Locke, one of the founders of modern philosophy, who says that "reason must be our last judge and guide in every thing."¹⁹ He acknowledges, of course, that if God reveals something that transcends human knowledge, it is surely true and is an object of faith. But all that is presented to us as divine revelation may not really be so. This is what reason must judge. We should never accept what is false, or merely probable, at the expense of an unquestionable revelation. Of course, in science everything can be questioned in principle, and nothing is considered definite and fully proven, but in revealed religion authority is unquestionable. However, it can be argued whether it is reasonable to admit religious authority and under what conditions. If authority is admitted in religion, it is because there are good reasons to do so, and to the extent that this authority is exercised in the modalities

¹⁶ Tomáš Akvinský, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Emilián Soukup (Olomouc: Krystal, 1938), I, 1, 8 ad 2.

¹⁷ Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 43.

¹⁸ Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 42.

¹⁹ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: T. Tegg and Son, 1836), 538.

proper to it. Moreover, the mystery proper to religious truths has the advantage that, in the light of these truths, a much broader, deeper and more reasonable vision of the meaning of human life is achieved.²⁰

In the twentieth century, Karl Jaspers called his thinking philosophizing because he considered asking questions to be more important than having ready answers. He dealt with the question of being, which, according to him, remained always unfinished. The German philosopher continues in the line of Husserl's critique of the exact sciences, emphasizing the limits of knowledge. Science can indeed think objectively with an emphasis on facts with which it can calculate, but what is thus obtained by way of abstraction is only the result of reduction. What might things be as such, independent of the forms of our thought or the theoretical assumptions of any science, is the aspect of the subject that escapes us. This leads to the fact that scientific knowledge can appear to be the one and only reality. The problem that is forgotten is that the sciences are inherently unable to justify themselves, and the object of scientific research is always at the same time a certain construct that depends on the methodology and interest of the researcher, as well as on the theory that creates a particular paradigm appearing as a whole.

Every method always shows only some being of the world, not the world; something special, not everything; a certain perspective of the world, not the world itself.²¹ But Jaspers does not condemn science as such. On the contrary, science makes our existence in the world immeasurably easier. The problem arises in its misunderstanding, which leads to a pseudo-scientific picture of the world. The unhappiness of human existence begins when what we know through science is taken to be existence itself, and when everything that cannot be known scientifically is declared to be non-existent. Science becomes a scientific superstition, and this superstition, in the mantle of science, generates a heap of stupidities in which there is neither science, nor philosophy or faith.²² Knowing the limits of science opens up for the man the possibility of transcending to the ultimate origin and ground, which, according to Jaspers, refers to the divine.

Philosophizing for him is the penetration and transcendence of all concrete kinds of being as "encompassing." In this process we come to know being as transcendence and ourselves as existence. For him, philosophy is not an unchanging set of dogmas, but a personal dynamic search for truth. Philosophizing is a living

²⁰ Mariano Artigas, "The Science-Faith Dialogue in the Encyclical *Fides et Ratio*," *Filosófico* 32 (1999): 611–639.

²¹ Radovan Šoltés, "Transcendencia ako 'šifra' u Karla Jaspersa," *Testimonia Theologica*, 1 (2013): 60–68.

²² Karl Jaspers, *Malá škola filozofického myslenia*, trans. Patrícia Elexová (Bratislava: Kalligram, 2002), 24.

dialogue between reason and existential experience that leads one to self-knowledge, freedom, and transcendence. This process enables one to go beyond the limits of ordinary thought and to understand liminal situations, such as death, suffering or guilt.

We also see this approach in the encyclical: “Driven by the desire to discover the ultimate truth of existence, human beings seek to acquire those universal elements of knowledge which enable them to understand themselves better and to advance in their own self-realization. These fundamental elements of knowledge spring from the *wonder* awakened in them by the contemplation of creation: human beings are astonished to discover themselves as part of the world, in a relationship with others like them, all sharing a common destiny. Here begins, then, the journey which will lead them to discover ever new frontiers of knowledge. Without wonder, men and women would lapse into deadening routine and little by little would become incapable of a life which is genuinely personal.”²³

The Man as a Seeker of Truth

Faith and reason are the fundamental pillars of human knowledge and self-awareness.²⁴ Their original genetic link has accompanied human history for millennia and has been articulated in the philosophical thought, constantly raising questions about the limits of knowledge, truth and the meaning of life. With a certain amount of simplification, we can say that rational thinking, a critical analysis and the search for both logical connections and transcendental aspects of existence constitute the domain of philosophy, and such thinking, linked to faith that appeals to revelation, is the domain of theology. Contemporary research in general, and thus in philosophy and theology as well, is characterized by two centrifugal tendencies. On the one hand, the search for the unity of knowledge is evident, but on the other hand, we see its unprecedented fragmentation with its negative social and ecological consequences.

John Paul II writes that one can see how the concepts of the problem are gradually becoming more complete. “It is the nature of the human being to seek the truth. This search looks not only to the attainment of truths which are partial, empirical

²³ Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 4.

²⁴ George F. McLean, *Faith, Reason and Philosophy Lectures at the al-Azhar, Qum, Tehran, Lahore and Beijing* (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2000), 121–134.

or scientific; nor is it only in individual acts of decision-making that people seek the true good. Their search looks towards an ulterior truth which would explain the meaning of life. And it is therefore a search which can reach its end only in reaching the absolute.”²⁵

The encyclical *Fides et Ratio* reflects on the man as a being who throughout history has been asking questions about his identity, origin, direction, the existence of evil, or life after death. Pope John Paul II's thirteenth encyclical analyzes in a theological context the ancient problem of the relationship between reason and faith at the time when a part of western society resigned from the knowledge of truth in the light of modernism, associated with rationalistic optimism, and was moving into a postmodern period in which the view that there was no certainty, permanence, or meaning prevailed.

The Pope described the development of the relationship between theology and philosophy and was critical of the reductionist ideological movements: eclecticism, historicism, nihilism, agnosticism, pragmatism, scientism and relativism. John Paul II sees philosophy not only as an academic discipline but, in a much broader sense, in line with its origins in classical philosophy. He regards philosophy as an indispensable aid in deepening the understanding of faith and in proclaiming the truth of the Gospel to those who do not yet know it.²⁶ According to Joseph Ratzinger, the encyclical is an attempt to rebuild philosophy, a discipline in crisis, from a Christian perspective: “His question about truth is whether man can recognize the truth, the basic truths about himself, his origins and his future, or whether he lives in darkness and must ultimately return to the question of utility. The peculiarity of the Christian faith among religions is that it believes that it tells us the truth about God, the world and man and claims to be *religio vera*, the true religion. I am the way, the truth, and the life, in these words of Christ from the Gospel of St. John (14:6), the fundamental task of the Christian faith is expressed. The missionary dimension of faith is based on this statement. Only if the Christian faith is true does it apply to all people; if it is merely a cultural variant of man's symbolically encoded and unresolvable religious experience, then it must remain in its culture and leave other people in their cultures.”²⁷

Everyday life shows the man's great interest in the knowledge of phenomena, things and facts, which is accompanied by verification and investigation. Part of this search for truth is not only to seek partial, revealed, or scientific truths, but to

²⁵ Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 33.

²⁶ Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 5.

²⁷ Joseph Ratzinger, “Wiara, prawda i kultura – refleksje w związku z encykliką *Fides et Ratio*,” *Wiara – prawda – tolerancja. Chrześcijaństwo a religie świata*, ed. Joseph Ratzinger, trans. Ryszard Zajączkowski (Kielce: Jedność – Herder, 2004), 147–167.

move towards another truth that can explain the meaning of life.²⁸ It is the need for certainty and definiteness, that is truth of the absolute value. And what is true must be true for all and forever.²⁹ John Paul II points out that the search for truth does not always appear to be equally lucid and consistent. He points to the inherent limitations of reason and our understanding.³⁰ But this does not mean that the search in this case will be futile or unhelpful. “The capacity to search for truth and to pose questions itself implies the rudiments of a response.”³¹ The first step is hope. The same is true for finding answers to existential questions and questions about the last things.

John Paul II discusses the various faces of the man’s truth. In paragraph 30, he speaks of truths: “Most of them depend upon immediate evidence or are confirmed by experimentation. This is the mode of truth proper to everyday life and to scientific research. At another level we find philosophical truth, attained by means of the speculative powers of the human intellect. Finally, there are religious truths which are to some degree grounded in philosophy, and which we find in the answers which the different religious traditions offer to the ultimate questions.”³² Further, John Paul II defines the person who seeks the truth as a being who lives by faith. He describes the fact that the man does not live alone and is a part of his community and culture since birth. He says that: “Nonetheless, there are in the life of a human being many more truths which are simply believed than truths which are acquired by way of personal verification.”³³

There is something more involved in these truths. It is an interpersonal relationship based on trust, friendship and loyalty.³⁴ Here the truths achieve security and safety. And even knowledge through faith is also based on interpersonal trust in relation to truth. In the act of believing, men and women entrust themselves to the truth which the other person declares to them.³⁵ As an example, he refers to the testimony of the martyrs. “This vital truth, essential to human existence, is attained not only by reason, but also by trusting in others who can guarantee

²⁸ Angelo Scola, “Human Freedom and Truth According to the Encyclical *Fides et Ratio*,” *Communio* 26 (1999): 486–509.

²⁹ Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 27.

³⁰ Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 13 and 28.

³¹ Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 29.

³² Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 30.

³³ Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 31.

³⁴ Alexandru Buzalic, “La beatificazione dei vescovi romeni uniti, alla luce della teologia del martirio,” *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai Theologia Catholica* 1–2 (2021): 57–74.

³⁵ Peter Vansač, Elena Kenderošová, “Etické problémy človeka s civilizačným ochorením” in *Ružomberské zdravotnícke dni 2024*, eds Jozef Babečka, Martin Bereta and Lucián Zastko (Ružomberok: VERBUM KU, 2024), 221–229.

the certainty and authenticity of this truth.”³⁶ Reason, too, needs support in its search, such as through a sincere friendship or dialogue. One is thus on a journey in search of truth and in search of a person to whom one can confide. And this is the truth revealed in Jesus Christ, which does not contradict other truths acquired through philosophizing. Both ways of knowing lead to the one truth in its fullness.³⁷ John Paul II stresses that “the search for truth, even if it concerns a limited reality of the world or of man, never ends, but always leads to something beyond the immediate object of study, to questions that open access to the Mystery.”³⁸

Reason and Faith as Limits

An open approach to the mystery in no way means the elimination of the mystery, and this also applies to the Mystery that John Paul II writes about. An open approach primarily reflects the situation in which a person finds himself, that is, his condition, definition, relationship, position, status or possibilities in the field of knowledge. The rejection of essential limits in the approach to the Mystery has two main opposing positions. On the one hand, there is fideism which does not trust the natural abilities of reason and does not recognize the importance of rational cognition and philosophical debate in understanding faith and the possibility of believing in God.³⁹ On the other hand, there is extreme rationalism, which rejects the meaning of faith, absolutizes human reason, and attributes to natural reason what is knowable only in the light of faith.⁴⁰

It is characteristic of our situation in the field of knowledge that the man, as a knowledgeable subject, does not have a certain knowledge, but has the authentic knowledge that grasps the fundamental questions about the nature of the man and his relationship with the world and its meaning in a holistic context. Without dealing with these questions, he will never achieve cognitive satisfaction. This is a fact that has always been the subject of philosophy and religion, which was also confirmed in the era of general resignation from metaphysical questions. Of course, it was not a return to the dogmatically simple past. Rather, the opposite was true.

³⁶ Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 32.

³⁷ Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 34.

³⁸ Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 5.

³⁹ Karol Tarnowski, “Wiara i przemoc,” *Horyzonty Wychowania* 5 (2017): 203–222.

⁴⁰ Hans Georg Gadamer, *Rozum, słowo, dzieje: szkice wybrane*, trans. Małgorzata Łukasiewicz and Krzysztof Michalski (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2000), 78.

For Pascal, turning to religious questions was associated with going beyond any schematic and dogmatic thinking as it did not open up a theological and ecclesial space, but a dimension of philosophical anthropology grasped in its individualized and autonomous aspect.

When in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the need for metaphysical philosophy began to revive intensively (Hegel, Schelling, Bergson, Nietzsche, neo-Thomism, Russian philosophy, existentialism, etc.), in most cases this happened through a positive religious inspiration, or in an inspirational dispute with religion / the religious dimension of human consciousness and its connection to the world. This proves the significant relationship between religion and philosophy, and it is not a matter of subordinating philosophy to dogmatic and confessional faith, but of the fact that the religious horizon of understanding the world and the man has to some extent proved to be a storage space for fundamental philosophical problems. Contemporary thinking is significantly influenced by the unprecedented achievements of natural sciences and technology.

Religion, and the question of God within it, is easily corrupted by a simplistic scientism that uncritically adopts the obsolete vocabulary of the natural sciences and perpetuates new myths.⁴¹ But the fact is that science, with all its impressive knowledge of the physical and biological world, and our physical human nature can tell us nothing about why we have the experience of subjectivity. It is what creates all the language, personal experience and personal interaction that is for most people an essential part of their lives. It is reflected in culture, visual arts, music and indeed our culture.

The Christian faith is a guarantee in the search for the unity of knowledge. It is easy to see that when one seeks the unity of knowledge from an atheistic or materialistic perspective, one easily ends up accepting a kind of irrational faith that cannot be demonstrated, proven, or truly understood. For example, one is asked to admit that the universe could have come into existence from nothing, without being the work of its Creator, or that the nature we know is the result of purely blind forces, or finally that human characteristics are reduced to simple epiphenomena of basic biological reality.⁴²

Denying an adequate definition for philosophizing through faith and reason deforms the perception of reality itself. It is the ancient gnostic temptation, which Erich Voegelin explains as a secret knowledge that transcends reason and faith

⁴¹ Arthur Peacocke, *Teológia pre vedecký vek*, trans. Dezider Kamhal (Bratislava: Kalligram, 2009), 15.

⁴² Mariano Artigas, "The Science-Faith Dialogue in the Encyclical *Fides et Ratio*," *Filosófico* 32 (1999): 611–639.

in many ways, whose goal is the perfect transformation of the order of the world. The encyclical *Fides et Ratio* was written at the end of the century in which the gnostic projects of the nineteenth century were being realized. Ultimately, it led to world wars, state terrorism, concentration camps, lies transmitted by various media, persecution reinforced by modern technology and psychology, deepened contradictions concerning our civilization, and the devastation of nature with catastrophic ecological dimensions.

The problem lies in the fact that the state has taken the place of the transcendent God as the ultimate condition and source of its own existence. The man becomes a mere instrument and particle of a greater whole.⁴³ Mariano Voegelin revealed the effort to transfer the transcendent content of human existence to the immanent sphere of life, which led to the rise of ideas associated with the utopian plan to create a paradise on earth. Voegelin's theory of knowledge is based on the premise that the immanent content of experienced reality cannot fill the space of the transcendent. The problem and cause of totalitarian movements is the emptied content of experienced reality which causes alienation from true reality. In other words, the place of truth in the era of modernity has been emptied of its transcendent content, which cannot be replaced by immanent content. The divorce of truth from reason constitutes the main source of the crisis. The solution is a free and full human life, defined not only by a measure of unrestricted freedom in all spheres of life, but defined by the conditions of freedom based on social traditions and natural human virtues referring to the transcendent as well as to the immanent reality.⁴⁴

In the second half of the final chapter and at the very end of the encyclical, John Paul II explores the current challenges for theology, of which philosophy is an important auxiliary. He stresses "the value that philosophy has for the understanding of faith, as well as the limits it encounters when it forgets or rejects the truths of Revelation."⁴⁵ John Paul II is aware of the task of theology, which consists in a renewed relationship with philosophy. But the converse is also true. Philosophy should renew its relationship with theology.⁴⁶ He addresses some of his thoughts directly to theologians and those responsible for the priestly formation, asking them to pay attention to the philosophical implications of the Word of God.⁴⁷ In addition, he addresses himself to philosophers as well as to scientists, encouraging them to continue their efforts to know the truth.

⁴³ Eric Voegelin, *Politická náboženství*, trans. Jan Frei (Praha: Oikymenh, 2015), 17.

⁴⁴ Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 54

⁴⁵ Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 100.

⁴⁶ Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 101.

⁴⁷ Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 105.

Conclusion

Nowadays, given the multiplication of philosophical systems, methods, concepts, and proofs, critical thinking in the light of faith is even more urgent.⁴⁸ This is not an easy discernment, for if the recognition of the innate and inalienable faculties of reason with its fundamental and historical limits is already arduous, yet it can become even more problematic in particular philosophical movements to discern what is valid and fruitful, and what they offer in terms of faith, from what is mistaken and dangerous in them. In any case, the Church knows that “the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2;3) are hidden in Christ. It therefore encourages a philosophical reflection, so as not to block the path that leads to the knowledge of the mystery.

The crucial aim of the encyclical is to demonstrate that faith and reason do not have to be in conflict with each other, but should complement each other so that reason does not fall into pride and faith does not turn into fideism. Faith, according to John Paul II, gives meaning to human existence, revealing its cause and purpose, while reason makes faith mature and justified. The Pope emphasizes the complementarity between the revealed truth and the truth that can be attained through reason. The truth that God reveals to us in Jesus Christ does not contradict the truths that can be attained by philosophizing. These two circumscribed orders of knowledge lead to truth in its fullness. “The unity of truth is a fundamental premise of human reasoning, as the principle of non-contradiction makes clear. Revelation renders this unity certain, showing that the God of creation is also the God of salvation history. It is the one and the same God who establishes and guarantees the intelligibility and reasonableness of the natural order of things upon which scientists confidently depend, and who reveals himself as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”⁴⁹

Here we can return to the primary ancient idea, which adequately defines philosophizing itself with the help of faith and reason: “Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth – in a word, to know himself – so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves.”

⁴⁸ Marek Rembierz, “Tropy transcendencji... Współczesne myślenie religijne wobec pluralizmu światopoglądowego i relacji międzykulturowych,” *Świat i Słowo* 2 (2014): 17–50.

⁴⁹ Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 34.

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Rev. Pavol Dancák

Philosopher dans les limites de la foi et de la raison

Résumé

Cet article réfléchit sur la situation du désir de connaissance chez l'homme, en s'appuyant sur l'encyclique *Fides et Ratio* du pape Jean-Paul II qui souligne l'importance de l'union de la foi et de la raison dans la recherche de la vérité. Le terme latin *situatio* (littéralement « placer ») désigne l'ensemble des circonstances, des conditions et des relations dans lesquelles l'homme apprend à se connaître lui-même, à connaître le monde et à connaître Dieu. Le texte met en garde contre le risque de la tentation gnostique qui consiste à nier les limites existentielles et cognitives de l'homme. Cette attitude conduit à la perte de la perception de l'harmonie cosmique intérieure, au rejet des attitudes critiques et à l'émergence de constructions absurdes aux conséquences négatives. Dans le même temps, l'article souligne l'importance de la métaphysique et la nécessité d'être ouvert à la vérité transcendante que la foi chrétienne transmet de manière fiable. Il encourage le dialogue intellectuel entre la foi et la philosophie dans la vie universitaire et personnelle.

M o t s - c l é s : raison, foi, homme, philosopher

Rev. Pavol Dancák

Filosofare entro i confini della fede e della ragione

Sommario

L'articolo riflette sulla situazione del desiderio di conoscenza dell'uomo, attingendo all'enciclica *Fides et Ratio* di Papa Giovanni Paolo II, che sottolinea l'importanza dell'unione tra fede e ragione nella ricerca della verità. Il termine latino *situatio* (letteralmente "collocare") si riferisce alla totalità delle circostanze, delle condizioni e delle relazioni in cui l'uomo giunge a conoscere se stesso, il mondo e Dio. Il testo mette in guardia dal rischio della tentazione gnostica che consiste nel negare i limiti esistenziali e cognitivi dell'uomo. Questo atteggiamento porta alla perdita della percezione dell'armonia cosmica interiore, al rifiuto degli atteggiamenti critici e alla comparsa di costruzioni assurde con conseguenze negative. Allo stesso tempo, l'articolo sottolinea l'importanza della metafisica e la necessità di aprirsi alla verità trascendente che la fede cristiana trasmette in modo affidabile. Incoraggia il dialogo intellettuale tra fede e filosofia nella vita accademica e personale.

P a r o l e c h i a v e : ragione, fede, uomo, filosofare