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Part One

# Philosophy



**John Hittinger**

University of St. Thomas, Houston, Texas, USA

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0660-9653>

# The Sway of Evil on Culture: on *The Prince of This World*<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** In this essay, the connections between philosophy and culture in John Paul II's *Fides et Ratio* and *Gaudium et Spes* are discussed. The orientation towards transcendence can be inhibited by cultural trends and intellectual attitudes. Faith purifies and elevates culture. The designation of Jacques Maritain as a model for the integration of faith and reason is also discussed here. In the light of this recommendation, we consider the argument of Jacques and Raïssa Maritain that culture is under the sway of evil especially through the ministrations of the prince of this world. The passage from *Ephesians* 6:10 is interpreted as the scriptural source for this view. The thought of John Henry Newman in *The Dream of Gerontius* is also brought into consideration in reference to the evil sway of the demons. We conclude with a look at the project of the Maritains as an apostolate to culture.

**Key words:** faith/culture, philosophy/culture, Maritain, John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, *The Prince of This World*, *The Dream of Gerontius*

## Introduction

In his encyclical letter *Fides et Ratio* (*On the Relationship between Faith and Reason*) Pope John Paul II richly develops the theme of culture and the role of both faith and reason in advancing an authentically human culture.<sup>2</sup> The mystery of the cross plays

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<sup>1</sup> A variation of this paper was presented at American Maritain Association Meeting in Notre Dame, Indiana, USA in 2007.

<sup>2</sup> John Paul II, *Faith and Reason: Encyclical Letter Fides Et Ratio, on the Relationship between Faith and Reason* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1998). Some key references

a prominent role in the relationship between faith and reason. The cross is said to be a “reef” whose submerged mystery will either break up the relationship between faith and reason (actually he says that reason may come to grief on the shoals of its devising) or reason will be freed through the mystery of the cross to set forth upon a “boundless ocean of truth.” For John Paul II, the cross represents the mystery of love — a mystery which cannot be eliminated. Indeed, love provides the “ultimate answer” that reason seeks to the truth and meaning of human existence. The encounter of the philosopher with the word of God and the mysteries of faith provides access to a more comprehensive study of the true, the good and the beautiful. Philosophy serves as a “mirror” which reflects the culture.”<sup>3</sup> By attenuating this search for transcendence by philosophizing about faith, the Catholic philosopher serves the evangelization of culture. Indeed, philosophy which, by its proper activity, is one of the “noblest of human tasks” should now “be seen as a fundamental and original contribution in service of the new evangelization.”<sup>4</sup>

Pope John Paul II commends Jacques Maritain and others, such as Edith Stein, St. John Henry Newman and Etienne Gilson for their efforts as philosophers to encounter the mysteries of faith.<sup>5</sup> Each of them developed an authentic philosophy “consonant with the Word of God.”<sup>6</sup> John Paul II expressed a particular interest in “the spiritual journey of these masters” as our appreciation of their journeys “gives greater momentum to both the search for truth and the effort to apply the results of that search to the service of humanity.”<sup>7</sup> The service to humanity is found above all in their contribution to an integral humanism and the renewal of culture. Jacques and Raïssa Maritain were in the forefront of the apostolate to culture, or the new evangelization. Maritain and Wojtyła both looked “more deeply at man, whom

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to culture may be found in sections 3–6 and 69–71. On the issue of culture, see John Hittinger, “John Paul II’s Core Teaching on Culture”, *Communio* 48 (Summer 2021): 247–279.

<sup>3</sup> *Fides et Ratio* §103

<sup>4</sup> *Fides et Ratio* §3, §103.

<sup>5</sup> *Fides et Ratio* §104

<sup>6</sup> *Fides et Ratio* §80–84. The first thing that philosophy must do is “recover its sapiential dimension as a search for the ultimate and overarching meaning of life.” “This sapiential dimension is all the more necessary today because the immense expansion of humanity’s technical capability demands a renewed and sharpened sense of ultimate values.” (§81) This leads to the second requirement, viz., “that philosophy verifies the human capacity to know the truth, to come to a knowledge which can reach objective truth by means of that *adaequatio rei et intellectus* to which the Scholastic Doctors referred.” (§82). The first two requirements entail the third one: “the need for a philosophy of genuinely metaphysical range, capable, that is, of transcending empirical data in order to attain something absolute, ultimate and foundational in its search for truth.” (FR §83) See John Hittinger, “St. Thomas Aquinas, Thomism, and a ‘Philosophy Consonant with the Word of God.’” *Seminary Journal* 11, no. 1 (2005): 47–55.

<sup>7</sup> *Fides et Ratio* §74.

Christ has saved in the mystery of his love.”<sup>8</sup> Their philosophies made manifest that freedom is fully realized in the truth of the good. Ultimately, the call to know and love God constitutes “the supreme realization of their true self.”<sup>9</sup>

Both philosophy and theology must give particular attention to culture, for it is through culture that we come to see “the human being’s characteristic openness to the universal and transcendent.”<sup>10</sup> The very dynamic of culture “implicitly but authentically” points to the “manifestation of God in nature.”<sup>11</sup> John Paul II refers to the important passages on culture in *Gaudium et spes* (§53–59, footnote 94). Karol Wojtyła underlined the significance of the Christian’s responsibility for culture in *Sources of Renewal*.<sup>12</sup> One particular passage from *Gaudium et Spes* is worthy of being quoted here: “Furthermore, when man gives himself to the various disciplines of philosophy, history and of mathematical and natural science, and when he cultivates the arts, he can do very much to elevate the human family to a more sublime understanding of truth, goodness, and beauty, and to the formation of considered opinions which have universal value. Thus, mankind may be more clearly enlightened by that marvelous Wisdom which was with God from all eternity, composing all things with him, rejoicing in the earth, delighting in the sons of men. In this way, the human spirit, being less subjected to material things, can be more easily drawn to the worship and contemplation of the Creator. Moreover, by the impulse of grace, he is disposed to acknowledge the Word of God.”<sup>13</sup> The role of culture in drawing the man to the worship and contemplation of the Creator and disposing the man to acknowledge the Word of God goes awry in the modern world because of many trends stemming from the rise of technology, the quest for power and domination, as well as the increased specialization and the oblivion to the whole truth about the man and the world.<sup>14</sup>

However, the fundamental source of the persistent and devastating degradation of culture lies in the disorder of the human person: “The truth is that the imbalances under which the modern world labors are linked with that more basic imbalance which is rooted in the heart of man. For in man himself many elements wrestle with one another. Thus, on the one hand, as a creature he

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<sup>8</sup> *Fides et Ratio* §107.

<sup>9</sup> *Fides et Ratio* §107.

<sup>10</sup> *Fides et Ratio* §70.

<sup>11</sup> *Fides et Ratio* §70

<sup>12</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Sources of Renewal: the Implementation of the Second Vatican Council* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), 297–300. The translation of *U Podstaw Odnowy* (1972).

<sup>13</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* §57.

<sup>14</sup> Wojtyła summarizes these points in *Sources of Renewal* 298 and elaborates on them in detail in *Fides et ratio* (§§ 5–6, 81–82).

experiences his limitations in a multitude of ways; on the other he feels himself to be boundless in his desires and summoned to a higher life. Pulled by manifold attractions he is constantly forced to choose among them and renounce some. Indeed, as a weak and sinful being, he often does what he would not, and fails to do what he would.”<sup>15</sup> At the heart of the struggle is the reality of sin: “As a result, all of human life, whether individual or collective, shows itself to be a dramatic struggle between good and evil, between light and darkness. Indeed, man finds that by himself he is incapable of battling the assaults of evil successfully, so that everyone feels as though he is bound by chains. But the Lord Himself came to free and strengthen man, renewing him inwardly and casting out that ‘prince of this world’ (*John* 12:31) who held him in the bondage of sin. For sin has diminished man, blocking his path to fulfillment.”<sup>16</sup> In the section on culture in *Gaudium et Spes*, the Council Fathers speak of the need to “purify and elevate the morality of peoples” and to “fortify, complete, and restore” the trajectory of culture towards transcendence.<sup>17</sup>

The new evangelization, especially the evangelization of culture, must acknowledge the full challenge of the distortions in culture originating in sin and the struggle with the powers of darkness. In *Lumen Gentium*, the apostolate to culture is described as follows: “Through her work, whatever good is in the minds and hearts of men, whatever good lies latent in the religious practices and cultures of diverse peoples, is not only saved from destruction but is also cleansed, raised up and perfected unto the glory of God, the confusion of the devil and the happiness of man.”<sup>18</sup> The very mission of the Church is defined as the effort to enlighten and heal the very attempts of human beings as persons in community and culture to look for the good and true — “the leading strings towards God.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, the mission of Church must work very closely with cultural signs and patterns so as to bring Christ to men and women in all nations. As a result, “whatever truth and grace are to be found among the nations, as a sort of secret presence of God, He frees from all taint of evil and restores to Christ its maker, who overthrows the devil’s domain and wards off the manifold malice of vice. And so, whatever good is found to be sown in the hearts and minds of men, or in the rites and cultures peculiar to various

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<sup>15</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* §10.

<sup>16</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* §13. Cf. “For a monumental struggle against the powers of darkness pervades the whole history of man... Caught in this conflict, man is obliged to wrestle constantly if he is to cling to what is good, nor can he achieve his own integrity without great efforts and the help of God’s grace.” (*GS* §37).

<sup>17</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* §58–59; *Sources of Renewal*, 300.

<sup>18</sup> *Lumen Gentium* §17.

<sup>19</sup> *Ad Gentes* §3.

peoples, not only is not lost, but is healed, uplifted, and perfected for the glory of God, the shame of the demon, and the bliss of men.”<sup>20</sup>

The path and spiritual journey of Jacques and Raïssa Maritain to live the unity of faith and reason indicate many features of the apostolate to culture outlined by *Gaudium et Spes* and Pope John Paul II. Many accounts of faith and culture, and the new evangelization, may overlook the factor of *The Prince of the World* and the sway of evil over culture. For this reason, I wish to summarize and discuss a short work by Raïssa Maritain titled *The Prince of this World*, published in 1931 and translated by Gerald Phelan.<sup>21</sup> Jacques Maritain acknowledges in the first chapter of *The Degrees of Knowledge* (“The Grandeur and Poverty of Metaphysics”) the sway of the prince of the world in the realm of metaphysical thinking: “it would be surprising if the metaphysical eros, wherever Christ does not dwell, did not call for some kind of collusion with superhuman intellectual natures, the *rectores huius mundi*.”<sup>22</sup> Maritain alludes to *Ephesians* 6:12: “For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”<sup>23</sup>

Maritain uses the allusion to conclude an aside about Plotinus and the aspiration for metaphysical purity, which must finally elude the grasp of rational human understanding. Maritain seizes upon the story concerning Plotinus and his “daemon” as evidence that there is “collusion” with superhuman intellectual natures. Prior to the Christian era it was all but inevitable.<sup>24</sup> Augustine also proposed this view.<sup>25</sup> As I shall argue below, the allusion comes at the point of transition in the chapter concerning the two fundamental weaknesses or poverties of metaphysics, its abstractness on the one hand, and its dryness on the other hand. However, I shall suggest that this allusion to *Ephesians* 6 concerning the rulers of this world indicates the ultimate context of his work and his own self-understanding of his role as a Christian philosopher. His work in philosophy was understood to be an apostolic venture, or an apostolate to culture. The project of Jacques and Raïssa was to redeem the times.

<sup>20</sup> *Ad Gentes*, §9.

<sup>21</sup> Raïssa Maritain, *The Prince of This World*, trans. Gerald Phelan. Toronto: Institute of Medieval Studies, 1931. Raïssa Maritain, *Le Prince De Ce Monde*, in *Œuvres Complètes: Volume 14 1921–1944*, 205–15. Fribourg/Suisse Paris: Editions Universitaires/Éditions Saint-Paul, 1982.

<sup>22</sup> Jacques Maritain, *Distinguish to Unite, or the Degrees of Knowledge*. Works, vol. 7. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 6.

<sup>23</sup> The revised standard version. “Quia non est nobis colluctatio adversus sanguinem et carnem sed adversus principatus, adversus potestates, adversus mundi rectores tenebrarum harum, adversus spiritalia nequitiæ in caelestibus.” *New Vulgate*. Both found in *Captivity Epistles – The Navarre Bible* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1992), 97.

<sup>24</sup> In footnote 3, page 6, Maritain refers to the account in *Porphyry, Life of Plotinus*, II.5.

<sup>25</sup> *City of God*, X.2, 16, 23.

They took St Paul's words to heart, but the apostolate of culture meant a spiritual warfare. Apostolate is defined in the documents of Vatican II as follows: "The Church was founded to spread the kingdom of Christ over all the earth for the glory of God the Father, to make all men partakers in redemption and salvation, and through them to establish the right relationship of the entire world to Christ. Every activity of the Mystical Body with this in view goes by the name of 'apostolate.'"<sup>26</sup>

Apostolate to culture, such as the Maritain's one, involves rigorous thinking and appreciation of what is authentic in contemporary art, science and philosophy. It involves friendship with the leading figures in the fields of culture. It is characterized by the dynamic unity of faith and reason. It is rooted in metaphysics with a profound grasp of the proper ordering of knowledge and wisdom. It is sustained through the prayer and the Eucharist, for it is animated by charity, "the soul of the apostolate."<sup>27</sup>

In his introduction to the Notre Dame edition of *The Degrees of Knowledge*, Ralph McInerney mentions the book *Prayer and Intelligence*, co-authored by Jacques and Raïssa as exhibiting the "theme of the interdependence of the spiritual and intellectual lives. Philosophy was not a career for Jacques Maritain, it was not a profession, it was a vocation, his way of salvation."<sup>28</sup> Jacques often looked to Raïssa for a spiritual insight, which is clear due to his inclusion in "The Peasant of the Garonne — an essay on the Law and Love" derived from her journal that Jacques published in 1973.<sup>29</sup> I was intrigued to find the following passage in Jacques's foreword to Raïssa's *Journal*: "Looking back on our past, one thing stands out more clearly for me about our life during the period between the two wars, in particular during the years at Meudon. It is that the work naively undertaken by us consisted in reality (like all work which tries to open the world of profane culture, of art, poetry and philosophy, to the energies of the Christian ferment) in attacking the devil on his own territory. It was a matter of dislodging from their positions those whom St Paul calls *Principes et postestates, mundi rectores tenebrarum harum, and spiritualis nequitiae*, and against whom he tells us the Christian has to fight more than against flesh and blood. Raïssa was well aware of it — she wrote *The Prince of this World*."<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Apostolate of the Laity, §2. See Ferdinand Klostermann, "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. 3, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 272–316.

<sup>27</sup> Allusion to Jean-Baptiste Chautard, OCSO, *Soul of the Apostolate* (New York: Tan Books, 1946).

<sup>28</sup> *The Degrees of Knowledge*, xix. See Jacques and Raïssa Maritain, *Prayer and Intelligence* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1928).

<sup>29</sup> Jacques Maritain, *The Peasant of the Garonne; an Old Layman Questions Himself About the Present Time* (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston), 1968.

<sup>30</sup> Raïssa Maritain, *Raïssa's Journal*, presented by Jacques Maritain (Albany, NY: Magi Books, 1974), 13–14.

Raïssa wrote this short work when Jacques was working on the *The Degrees of Knowledge*. It is a remarkable little work explaining the definition of culture and the essence of Christianity. I propose to use the argument set forth by Raïssa as a way to understand some aspects of *The Degrees of Knowledge*. It also opens us for a number of themes in Maritain's work, such as the relation of faith and reason, the importance of theoretical knowledge or contemplative knowledge, and the role of culture and tradition in human education. It also assists us in understanding how the trajectory of the Maritain's life and work leads to themes central in the documents of the Second Vatican Council and those that appeared in Pope John Paul II's writings. It allows us to look at philosophy as a vocation and a way of salvation.

## The Argument of Raïssa Maritain's *The Prince of this World*

In her work, *The Prince of this World*, Raïssa asks the reader to entertain the following notion as a theological hypothesis. God placed angelic powers in authority over various parts of creation. Lucifer was assigned authority over the earth. She derives this idea from certain patristic sources, particularly John Damascene, but also Gregory of Nyssa and St Augustine. In addition, she appeals to Aquinas's notion of the hierarchy of beings according to which the overlapping of degrees of intelligence demands that the higher exercise be over the lower, hence the angelic influence on the human.<sup>31</sup> Raïssa elaborates on these notions in the following way: "Had sin not touched him, he would have governed this universe in the gaiety of love. He would have made beauty grow as a flower of praise, under the hands of men. Amid the chant of hymns and canticles he would have led innocent festivities, the liturgy of unfallen nature."<sup>32</sup> However, he refused to give God his due glory as he refused to serve him — "non serviam."

Because principality, she says, beseems the nature of Satan, he seeks to regain his rule over the man through an affinity between his sin and the sin of the man. He uses his "presiding power" to turn men away from God and to join his refusal and disobedience. Thus, "he holds sway over peoples and their civilizations."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *The Prince of this World*, 8–9. *Le Prince De Ce Monde*, 208.

<sup>32</sup> *The Prince of this World*, 9. *Le Prince De Ce Monde*, 208.

<sup>33</sup> *The Prince of this World*, 12. *Le Prince De Ce Monde*, 209.

He does this, according to Raïssa's account, through his very affinity between the man and his creative powers, particularly the cultural dimension of human existence. In other words, he does this not in the manner portrayed by Hollywood, as the vile possessor of William Blatty's *Exorcist*, or as the pale leering presence of Mel Gibson's *Passion*, but through his urbanity and his appeal to the humanity of cultural achievement. As Raïssa states, "The predestined friend of man, his eldest brother, as it were, becomes his seducer. He displays to him a charming countenance. He knows all the secrets of his feelings and imagination, all the re-sources of intoxicating rapture in this world — a double keyboard upon which he combines the stops of voluptuousness and art, of knowledge and power."<sup>34</sup>

Art and the knowledge, the hallmarks of culture, are his special field. Rather than seeking the praise and glory of God, voluptuousness and power are the ends in themselves to which he appeals. He uses this art and knowledge to draw men away from God and, therefore, he is a "prince of illusory independence." He casts a "strong though invisible net of illusion upon us."<sup>35</sup> He leads one to "choose the finite present rather than the infinite to come." "He makes one love the passing moment above eternity, uncertainty above truth." He detaches love from its transcendent reference and aspiration — "he persuades us that we can only love creatures by making Gods of them."<sup>36</sup> Again, it is in the field of culture that the temptation is so great. Raïssa believes that "not the least of the devil's victories is to have convinced artists and poets that he is their necessary, inevitable collaborator and the guardian of their greatness."<sup>37</sup> He pretends to be the guardian of art because he enshrines the beauty of the moment, the power of freedom, and the authenticity of the search. The result of this independence, of course, is despair and death, for the passing moment cannot sustain itself. A single being cannot sustain itself without the creative power of God. We cannot rise without the grace of God.

You can hear the sadness of her poetic and artistic soul when Raïssa laments: "in truth it seems that all belongs to him and that all must be wrested from him."<sup>38</sup> But in faith she finds her hope. Through the cross of Christ all has been redeemed. The meaning of the passion is the "epiphany of love, a voluntary sacrifice of filial and fraternal affection, offered to the uncreated holiness by Holiness incarnate."<sup>39</sup>

<sup>34</sup> *The Prince of this World*, 13–14. *Le Prince De Ce Monde*, 210.

<sup>35</sup> *The Prince of this World*, 19. *Le Prince De Ce Monde*, 213. Raïssa refers to St. Paul II's *Thessalonians*, 2.10: "Satan acts with wicked deception for those who are to perish because they refuse to love the truth." *The Prince of this World*, footnotes 23 and 24.

<sup>36</sup> *The Prince of this World*, 19. *Le Prince De Ce Monde*, 213.

<sup>37</sup> *The Prince of this World*, 19. *Le Prince De Ce Monde*, 213.

<sup>38</sup> *The Prince of this World*, 19. *Le Prince De Ce Monde*, 213.

<sup>39</sup> *The Prince of this World*, 14. *Le Prince De Ce Monde*, 211.

Raïssa says that Christ did not dispute Satan his claim to offer him a kingdom. Satan did not foresee that humiliation and pain were the better part. Raïssa speaks of the “lust of the saints” as poverty, contempt and suffering — they are the weapons against “the prince of lusts.”<sup>40</sup> Saint Paul said: “redeem the time, for the days are evil.”<sup>41</sup> The Maritains took this phrase to heart. Redemption must come, she says, “point by point” and “moment by moment” by the participation in the one sacrifice of the Mass and by the prayer of the saints. “The usurper holds sway wherever that Blood has not yet touched.”<sup>42</sup> Through the apostolate of friendship and cultural engagement, the Maritains sought to redeem the time. Under the sign of the cross, the Maritains wrested what they could from the prince of this world. Raïssa came to the following conclusion: “Let [the blood of Christ] be received and all will be reborn. All that now is but the magic and the fruit of death, — art lost in lewdness, knowledge frenzied with pride, power consumed with avarice — all that can be reborn like man himself. New births like these have come to light along the track of all the saints and men of good-will.”<sup>43</sup>

The understanding of the influence of the devil in cultural affairs is not used by the Maritains as an excuse for puritanical denunciations of art or pious excoriations of science. We know their story well — they sought to be “at the crossroads of culture” and they befriended many of the top writers, scientists, and artists of their day. But neither were they naifs nor Pelagians who uncritically embraced modern movements or praised great talents in these fields. Theirs was an openness to the world, especially the world of culture, to free its true achievement from distortion and to win souls for Christ.

It is also worth briefly mentioning the important essay in Raïssa’s *Journal* titled “On Poetry as Spiritual Experience,” written in 1941.<sup>44</sup> In this essay she speaks about the spiritual dimensions of creativity. She discusses the connection between the search for poetic creation and the life of the spirit and a connection to God. She again laments over the fact that “more often than not poets and artists deem the demands of God and poetry to be in mutual opposition.”<sup>45</sup> She ends with a hopeful note that creativity and the creation of beauty are brought into existence with love. So she alludes again to the work of redemption against the prince of this world: “Somewhere a weight of love and sanctity is found which adds, to a temporal good, a good of eternal value, which saves the beauty of this world that passes, which

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<sup>40</sup> *The Prince of this World*, 14. *Le Prince De Ce Monde*, 211.

<sup>41</sup> *Ephesians*, 5:16. See Jacques Maritain, *Redeeming the Time* (New York: Scribners, 1946).

<sup>42</sup> *Ephesians*, 5:16. See Jacques Maritain, *Redeeming the Time* (New York: Scribners, 1946).

<sup>43</sup> *The Prince of this World*, 20–21. *Le Prince De Ce Monde*, 214.

<sup>44</sup> *Raïssa’s Journal*, presented by Jacques Maritain (Albany, NY: Magi Books, 1974), pp. 373–377.

<sup>45</sup> Raïssa Maritain, *Journal*, 375.

redeems the beauty created by poets and snatches it away from him who claims he has rights over all created beauty because he is the Prince of this world.”<sup>46</sup> The work is done not by self-righteous preaching, but by ranging ourselves “in the ranks of sinners” and recognizing ourselves as “responsible for the blood of Christ and for the martyrdom of the saints.”<sup>47</sup>

We can now better understand Jacques’s preface to the journal about their work and attacking the devil on his own territory, which is the field of culture because that is where the “two fold keyboard” with the stops of voluptuousness and power are found. Jacques and Raïssa Maritain’s apostolate involved friendship with the men and women of art and culture, the appreciation of their work, the philosophical arguments concerning their meaning and the understanding of this work, and finally the apostolate of friendship. In his brief preface to the life of Father Lamy, Jacques recounts the story of running through the streets of Paris to find a priest to bring to the sickbed of Eric Satie.<sup>48</sup>

## The “Grandeur and Poverty of Metaphysics” and the “*Rectores huius mundi*”

If we now return to the opening chapter of *The Degrees of Knowledge* on the Grandeur and Poverty of Metaphysics we may use the notion of Maritain’s apostolate of culture to illuminate our argument. It is easier to see how Raïssa would use the case of poetry to worry about the sway of the prince of this world. How do metaphysics and the life of the mind come into play so well? Why is there an allusion to the *rectores huius mundi* in this chapter? If the Prince of this world is as Raïssa describes him, why would he not take an interest in metaphysics, the height of human wisdom with the office of ordering? “For that truth is the food of the spirit. Useless metaphysics puts order in the speculative and practical intellect. It gives back to man his balance and his motion ... [it] reveals to him authentic values and their hierarchy. It provides a center for ethics. It binds together in justice the whole universe of his knowledge.”<sup>49</sup> The distortion or destruction of metaphysics is vital to

<sup>46</sup> Raïssa Maritain, *On Poetry as a Spiritual Experience*, p. 377.

<sup>47</sup> Raïssa Maritain, *On Poetry as a Spiritual Experience*, p. 377.

<sup>48</sup> Jacques Maritain, “Introduction” to Comte Paul Biver, *Père Lamy 1855–1931* (Rockford: Tan, (1951), 7–12.

<sup>49</sup> *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 5–9.

the life of culture. Therefore, apostolate to culture requires an education in metaphysics and it is a field for the spiritual battle. The distortion and destruction of metaphysics are related and result in a failure to appreciate the grandeur and poverty of metaphysics, hence this chapter serves as a preface to “an apostolate to culture” which *The Degrees of Knowledge* serves.

The majesty of metaphysics is two-fold: the knowledge of God, a divine science, which in turn serves to order all knowledge. Following the path of Aristotle, particularly the first two chapters of *Metaphysics I*, Maritain praises metaphysics for its uselessness. The uselessness of metaphysics does not detract from its worth as a contemplative knowledge. It serves as the ordering science. It also plays a role in establishing and defending the hierarchy of goods. Its poverty, on the other hand, is also two-fold. First, it is wisdom, a divine science, but it is, nevertheless, a human science and a rational discourse relying upon abstraction and discursive movement of the mind. It must always be partial and incomplete. It must be given to a great dialectical skill and construction. Because of the great dialectical skill and rational argumentation required by philosophy and metaphysics, it opens the temptation to self-sufficiency. It engenders a pride that seeks to complete its own comprehensive grasp of the whole reality. Maritain singles out Plotinus as one who most evinces the struggle with the poverty of metaphysics as he sought to mount beyond the dialectical play and behold a simple and unitary vision of the one. His disciple Porphyry claimed that Plotinus was inspired by a “higher daemon” or spirit and that the spirit showed itself as a serpent upon the death of Plotinus.<sup>50</sup>

Maritain sees the temptation to seek in intellectual sufficiency alone the call for contemplation, which in fact requires revelation, faith and love. So it is with reference to Plotinus that Maritain speaks of the “collusion” with superhuman intelligences or the *rectores huius mundi*. When it comes to Plotinus, it is a case of the extreme self-sufficiency of mind in its quest for the absolute. For the modern people, the distortion follows similar, yet different paths. Sufficiency today is found in scientific explanation and its mastery over nature, or in various sorts of ideologies about the man and the political order. The second danger is that metaphysics arouses a desire which it cannot satisfy. Thus, Maritain claims that it needs a complement. The life of the mind must issue in desire and we face the problem of Faust: “if human wisdom does not spill upwards into the love of God, it will downwards towards Marguerite.”<sup>51</sup> We know from personal experience that the forms in our head fail to fully transform our hearts. Socrates and Plato propounded the vain

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<sup>50</sup> *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 5–9 6; see Porphyry’s “Life of Plotinus” found in *Works of Plotinus*, Loeb Library Vol. 1 (Cambridge/Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1889), 6–7.

<sup>51</sup> *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 7.

hope that intellectual virtue is a virtue and that the philosopher king will be self-ruled and well-ruled. However, the experience of a moral disorder in the professoriate and among philosophers is the reason for greater humility and an acknowledgement of the lack of self-sufficiency in the life of the mind. Some philosophers can baptize their own disordered desires and call it deconstruction. Metaphysics becomes transformed or deconstructed to will and desire. Maritain spends the second half of the chapter elaborating upon the true nature of mystical contemplation against its counterfeits. He assumes that the chapters on the highest type of wisdom, the infused contemplation of faith, are the very reason for the book.

In his book on *Thomas Aquinas*, Maritain considers Aquinas to be “The Apostle of Our Time” because he provides the means for addressing the “The disease afflicting the modern world [which] is in the first place a disease of the mind.”<sup>52</sup> Just as at the moment when the original sin was committed, all the harmony of the human being was shattered because the order insisting that the reason would be subject to God had first been violated. Therefore, the root of all our disorders is apparent. In the first place and above all, it is a rupture in the supreme ordinations of the mind. The responsibility of philosophers in this respect is enormous. In the sixteenth century, and more particularly in the age of Descartes, the interior hierarchies of the virtue of reason were shattered. Philosophy abandoned theology to assert its own claim to be considered the supreme science — the mathematical science of the sensible world and its phenomena taking precedence at the same time over metaphysic. The human mind began to profess independence from God and being. Independence from God, that is from the supreme Object of all intelligence, whom it had accepted only half-heartedly until it finally rejected the intimate knowledge of Him supernaturally procured by grace and revelation, comes first. Independence from being, that is independence from the connatural object of the mind as such, against which it ceased to measure itself humbly, comes second. It can be finally deduced from the seeds of geometrical clarity which it conceived to be innate in itself.<sup>53</sup>

Jacques Maritain elaborates upon this root disease in three manifestations. The first is “agnosticism” by which “the mind imagines that it is giving proof of its own native strength by denying and rejecting as science first theology and then metaphysics, [and] by abandoning any attempt to know the primary Cause and immaterial realities.”<sup>54</sup> The second is “naturalism” by which the “mind at the same

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<sup>52</sup> Jacques Maritain, *St. Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Meridian Books, 1958), chapter 3. See John Hittinger, “On the Catholic Audience of Leo Strauss,” in *Leo Strauss and his Catholic Readers*, ed. Geoffrey M. Vaughn (Washington, D.C.: CUA Press, 2018), 167–189.

<sup>53</sup> Jacques Maritain, *St. Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Meridian Books, 1958), 89.

<sup>54</sup> Maritain, *St. Thomas Aquinas*, p. 91.

time refuses to recognize the rights of primary Truth and repudiates the supernatural order.”<sup>55</sup> These are the modern manifestations of self-sufficiency, which the plan of *The Degrees of Knowledge* seeks to overcome and restore the wholeness of knowledge and wisdom. The movement of independence of mind is that which is used by the Prince of this world to shut the thinker off from God. The third manifestation he names variously is individualism or angelism. It endorses the fallen human nature as perfect or complete, needing no cultivating through virtue or religious discipline.<sup>56</sup>

One may find a poetic confirmation of the Maritain’s allusions to the Prince of this world as it pertains to cultural ideas and attitudes in the work of John Henry Newman. He used the terms “liberalism” and “rationalism” to describe a movement of mind and culture. It withdraws the human from God and denies the supernatural and the certitudes of faith: “When Newman received the Red Hat, he summed up his life’s work in a single phrase, when he said he had always fought against liberalism. What he meant by that term was the claim of man to do without God, to act by himself and for himself, whether it be a matter of comprehending the Universe or ordering his own life. The ‘reason’ which, in the *University Sermons*, is contrasted in so definite a manner with ‘faith,’ is reason in which self-reliance amounts to pride, and which refuses, on principle, to rely on any power external to itself.”<sup>57</sup> In his *Apologia*, he describes the drift towards liberalism as a preference for intellectual excellence to moral excellence.<sup>58</sup> He refers to a long appendix/“note A,” which contains an analysis of liberalism, including seventeen points that constitute this complex notion of the rationalist’s pride. It forces the truths of God to conform to his own mind, to his own mental capacity, and ultimately, in the form of liberalism, to whatever one desires.

The Rationalist makes himself his own centre. He does not go to God, but he implies that God must come to him. This is the spirit in which multitudes of us act at the present day. Instead of looking out of ourselves, trying to catch a glimpses of God’s workings, or throwing ourselves forward upon Him and waiting for Him, we sit at home bringing everything to ourselves, enthroning ourselves

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<sup>55</sup> Maritain, *St. Thomas Aquinas*, p. 91.

<sup>56</sup> Maritain, *St. Thomas Aquinas*, p. 91.

<sup>57</sup> Louis Bouyer, *Cardinal Newman: His Life and Spirituality* (Notre Dame: Private printing, 1960), 17, 71, 311. On Newman and Liberalism, see Marvin R. O’Connell, “Newman and Liberalism,” in *Newman Today*, ed. Stanley L. Jaki (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 79–94; Francis McGrath, “The Challenge of Liberal Anglicanism,” in John Henry Newman, *Universal Revelation* (Kent: Burns and Oates, 1997), 51–68.

<sup>58</sup> John Henry Newman, “Note A – On Liberalism,” in *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, ed. Ian Ker (London/New York: Penguin Books, 1994), 253–262.

in our own views, and refusing to believe anything that does not force itself upon us as true.<sup>59</sup>

Newman considers Rationalism and Liberalism in religion as a “pernicious scourge on the world” because they attack God by way of indifference to truth. Rationalism attacks the Church by a denial of the importance of truth, sometimes with a scoff or a sneer. Rationalism seeks to reduce all things to scientific causation in the form of material/mechanical causes. Similarly in the realm of morals, it reduces to either the calculation of utility or “respectability.” It was most appropriate that Saint John Paul II lifted up Newman as one who properly related faith and reason, and who developed a philosophy consonant with the word of God through his recovery from the sapiential dimension and his humble respect for what exists. He dared to think about being, God and the good.

Through his poetry, Newman rendered this vision of proud opposition to mystery and truth through powerful set of images. In his poetic account of death and the journey to God in the after-life, *The Dream of Gerontius*, the soul is attacked by three demons as it is *en route* to the throne of God.<sup>60</sup> The three demons seem to track the diseases of the mind described by Maritain. The first demon exhibits great Pride in mind:

As if aught  
 Could stand in place  
 Of the high thought,  
 And the glance of fire  
 Of the great spirits,  
 The powers blest,  
 The lords by right,  
 The primal owners,  
 Of the proud dwelling  
 And realm of light,—<sup>61</sup>

The Prince of this World claims the “realm of light” or intelligence itself, seeking to influence the centers of academia and culture with this appeal to pride of accomplishment (the place of high thought) and innate superiority (lords by right and

<sup>59</sup> Newman, *Essays Critical and Historical*, 33–34. See Avery Cardinal Dulles, SJ, *Newman* (New York/London: Continuum, 2002) 34–37, 142–144.

<sup>60</sup> John Henry Newman, *The Dream of Gerontius*. “Introduction” by Rev. Gregory Winterton (New York: Alba House, 2001), *Section IV*, 44–53. See Michael Sharkey, “Newman’s Search for Holiness in His Search for Truth,” in *Newman Today*, 184–185.

<sup>61</sup> *The Dream of Gerontius*, 45–46.

the primal owners of knowledge). A Catholic thinker faces today many distortions, such as the appeal to the excellence or autonomy of mind and reason over and against fidelity to the Church.<sup>62</sup> The exclusion of faith and theology by academia as a whole is mirrored in these words. The second demon exhibits a reductive spirit, which affirms only the realm of matter, and refuses to acknowledge the realm of the spirit. Both Marxism and Positivism adopt a systematic materialism which excludes the existence of the soul and God. Since matter is all that exists, death and degradation are the common lot of all human beings, even saints. Clearly materialism is characterized by the refusal of faith in God and the resurrection of the body:

What's a saint?  
One whose breath  
Doth the air taint  
Before his death;  
A bundle of bones, Which fools adore,  
Ha! ha!  
When life is o'er,  
Which rattle and stink, E'en in the flesh<sup>63</sup>

The third demon expresses a position of relativism about virtue and cynicism about love:

VIRTUE and vice,  
A knave's pretence,  
'Tis all the same;  
Dread of hell-fire,  
Of the venomous flame,  
A coward's plea.  
Give him his price,  
Saint though he be,  
For shrewd good sense  
He'll slave for hire;  
And does but aspire  
To the heaven above

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<sup>62</sup> Frank O'Malley, "The Thinker in the Church: the Spirit of Newman," *Review of Politics* 21 (1959) 5–23.

<sup>63</sup> *The Dream of Gerontius*, 46–47.

With sordid aim,  
And not for love.<sup>64</sup>

Cynicism and relativism promote the rationalization of the moral life and the joy in discharge of intellectual power alone.

Newman and Maritain have a similar proposal for overcoming the demons of pride and skepticism, and thereby resist the allure of the Prince of this world. Men and women of culture must discover the life of prayer and pursue holiness.<sup>65</sup> Maritain provides a brief explanation of this cultural imperative in *The Degrees of Knowledge*.<sup>66</sup> The failure of Plotinus and the Neo-Platonists to achieve union with the divine testifies to the insufficiency and ultimate barrenness of the intellectualist approach to God. The search for truth, as well as the appreciation of the other transcendentals such as goodness and beauty, arouse the desire for the absolute but all human conceptions of the divine are limited by their derivation from the finitude of all created reality.<sup>67</sup> Maritain cites the passage from St. John of the Cross that inspired the doctoral dissertation of Karol Wojtyła – “no creature can serve the intellect as a proportionate means to the attainment of God,” and consequently, faith is the only “proximate and proportionate means to union with God.”<sup>68</sup> The contemplation leads to union with God under the aegis and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Humanity must transcend itself and go beyond reason to find its true source in the truth of faith and charity. Maritain acknowledges that the age of faith and the cultural mediation of Christendom are gone. Indeed, he claims that “the trend of modern times is set under the sign of a disjunction between flesh and spirit, or a progressive dislocation of the shape of human things.”<sup>69</sup> The radical dualism installed by Descartes has proceeded apace such that the intellect and the culture is progressively

<sup>64</sup> *The Dream of Gerontius*, 49.

<sup>65</sup> See John Henry Newman, “Holiness Necessary for Future Blessedness,” in *Parochial and Plain Sermons* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), 5–13; Stanley L. Jaki, “Assent to Truth: Natural and Supernatural,” in *Newman’s Challenge* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Press, 2000), 197–228. Jacques and Raïssa Maritain, *Liturgy and Contemplation* (New York: P. J. Kennedy, 1960) and Jacques Maritain, “Contemplation in the World,” in *Peasant of the Garonne* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), 194–256.

<sup>66</sup> “The Majesty and Poverty of Metaphysics,” *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 1–19.

<sup>67</sup> Maritain cites Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I.13.5: “When the name wise is said of man, it describes and envelops the thing signified: but not so when said of God, for it leaves the reality signified uncontained and uncircumscribed.” *Degrees of Knowledge*, 14.

<sup>68</sup> John of the Cross, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel: Book Two*, chapters 8 and 9, in *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross* (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1991), 174, 177. Cited in Maritain, *Degrees of Knowledge*, 12. See also Karol Wojtyła, *Faith According to Saint John of the Cross* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1981), 33–45.

<sup>69</sup> Maritain, *Degrees of Knowledge*, 15.

reduced to the mechanical and materialized and spirituality has become disincarnate and free of material constraints. The result is a loss of a true human measure, the for the human measure must respect the substantial unity of body and soul, or flesh and spirit.

Maritain believes that a “decisive choice” must be made concerning this crisis of humanism: “the stake must be either set above reason and still on its side, or below reason and against it.”<sup>70</sup> The quotation touches upon a decision about the relation of faith and reason and as to whether reason is open to supernatural revelation and willing to proceed in harmony with the greater truth, or seeks a radical autonomy and a control of the earth. The world has made itself to be delivered from “the *forma rationis*” (or the full human measure) and from God and the eternal law.<sup>71</sup> The presumed antinomy of God and divine law versus human freedom and creativity, entice many to revolt in a form of “metaphysical suicide” will lead to a spiritual fall “like the Devil of old when he fell from heaven like lightning.” The “great mass of men” will follow the downward course without will or courage. On the other side, grace is at work in a “secret and invincible” movement stirring the “blessed awakening of souls under the sign of the Virgin and the Spirit.”<sup>72</sup> However, there springs from this piety the hard edge of reason and metaphysics. Where there is faith, philosophy will be saved. Jacques asserts at the end of the chapter: “wherever the living faith has taken root, we shall see that adherence to what is truly beyond reason, to uncreated Truth, to the wisdom of the saints, will bring in its train a restoration of the very order of, reason itself – a restoration implied by supernatural life as a condition of its existence. Thus, do the Gospel and philosophy, mysticism and metaphysics, the Divine and the human, go hand in hand?”<sup>73</sup> The same argument is proposed by Pope John Paul II in *Fides et Ratio*. John Paul II talked about the need for a renewal of metaphysics, particularly in establishing a philosophy consonant with the word of God. He set forth the three-fold task: to recover the sapiential dimension and vocation of philosophy, to elaborate upon realism connecting mind and being, and to rediscover the full range of being, including the knowledge of the human soul and the knowledge of God.<sup>74</sup> *The Degrees of Knowledge* certainly represents one of the best works accomplishing the task put forth by John Paul II.

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<sup>70</sup> *Degrees of Knowledge*, 16–17.

<sup>71</sup> *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 17.

<sup>72</sup> *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 17.

<sup>73</sup> *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 18.

<sup>74</sup> *Fides et Ratio*, §81. See John Hittinger, “St. Thomas Aquinas, Thomism, and a ‘Philosophy Consonant with the Word of God.’” *Seminary Journal* 11, no. 1 (205): 47–55.

The spirit of Newman's search for truth is captured well with the phrase "I have not sinned against the light."<sup>75</sup> Newman emphasizes the importance of mystery as an experience in our everyday lives, in love, in the appreciation of beauty, in the contemplation of nature and the order of causation, and in personal encounter. Revealed religion builds on this predisposition to acknowledge a mystery and order beyond our reason. God wills to reveal Himself to human beings in veiled ways, and thereby he humbles the proud and lifts up the lowly. The visible world is said by Newman to be but a veil beyond which stands Almighty God.<sup>76</sup> In the visible world each human being acts and is acted on by other persons. Aware of the interactions between substances in the visible world, the human person — a knower and an actor — often fails to perceive that in each moment he lives as if with one foot standing also in the invisible world, among Angels and God Himself.

In the realm of conscience, we often do grasp the fact of our subordination to a truth, which is like the voice of God in our heart. Just like Augustine on the restless heart, Newman said that "the earth that we see does not satisfy us; it is but a beginning; it is but a promise of something beyond it." The world is "the outward shell of an eternal kingdom: and on that kingdom we fix the eyes of our faith." Things in creation "speak of heaven, but they are not heaven . . . , they are but crumbs from the table."<sup>77</sup> The man cannot know the whole God, for the man is finite and God is beyond limits. Nevertheless, rather than being the cause for dismissal or despair, the truth that the human condition betrays our "absolute incapacity to contemplate things as they really are"<sup>78</sup> is a call for the human person to wait for the Lord and to listen at his feet. The encounter with the mysteries of faith is a reason for joy and humility. We come to realize that we are in the presence of God and cultivate an attitude of thankfulness: "wonder and awe must always mingle whith the thankfulness which the revealed dispensation of mercy raised in our minds."<sup>79</sup>

Newman would not consider "the truths of the Gospel as a burden, because they are beyond our understanding, [and] we shall rather welcome them and exult in them, nay, and feel an antecedent stirring of the heart towards them, for the very

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<sup>75</sup> *Apologia*, chapter 1, 30. I would like to acknowledge the work of Rev. Pieter van Rooyen, Assistant Professor at Sacred Heart Seminary, Detroit Michigan, who as a seminarian wrote two papers on Newman and mystery for an independent study course with me in 2005. We chose the following Newman sermons, all from *Parochial and Plain Sermons* for exploration of the theme of rationalism and mystery: in *Sermons*, set I, §1 "Holiness Necessary for Future Blessedness," §15 "Religious Faith Rational," §16 "The Christian Mysteries," §24 "The Religion of the Day"; Set II, §18 "Mysteries in Religion,"; set IV, §13 "The Invisible World," §19 "The Mysteriousness of Our Present Being."

<sup>76</sup> "The Invisible World," set VIII, §13, in *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 867.

<sup>77</sup> All previous quotes are from "The Invisible World."

<sup>78</sup> "Mysteries in Religion," *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 359.

<sup>79</sup> "Mysteries in Religion," 358.

reason that they are above us.”<sup>80</sup> Newman would argue that the scholar should be on his knees along with the humblest worker manifesting piety and gratitude: “Mystery in religion is a high invisible grace lodged in an outward form, a precious possession to be piously and thankfully guarded for the sake of the heavenly reality contained in it [...], the pledge of a doctrine which reason cannot understand.”<sup>81</sup> Faith is an act that is quite similar to the process of assent in ordinary human activities. Human assent involves some measure of trust. It depends upon external proofs and evidence, as well as upon the disposition of the believer.

The human person must develop and cultivate antecedent prepossessions to see God: “None but the holy can look upon the Holy One. There are bodily dispositions that affect the taste, so that the sweetest flavors become ungrateful to the palate [...] in like manner, there is a moral malady which disorders the inward sight and taste.”<sup>82</sup> Raïssa Maritain agrees that the pursuit of truth must be in the context of the pursuit of holiness lest we succumb to the illusion proposed by the prince of this world. We should not love the passing moment above eternity and uncertainty above truth.<sup>83</sup> She celebrates “poverty, contempt, suffering — these are the lust of saints. They must be skilled in them. Truly fair weapons against the prince of lusts. Wielded by grace, they are weapons full of grace.”<sup>84</sup> We can appreciate why St. John Paul II selects the Maritains and Newman as exemplars of the dynamic unity of faith and reason.

## Pope John Paul II on Vatican II and Cultural Renewal

It is interesting to note that Pope John Paul II makes use of the very notion of “the Prince of this world” in a key encyclical. His third encyclical is on the Holy Spirit, *Dominum et Vivificantem*. We find in this encyclical, as well as in many others, a certain amplification of the Maritains’ pioneering efforts to redeem the modern times, and also a vindication of their work. Although Maritain was rebuffed for his criticism in *The Peasant of the Garonne* of the implementation and interpretation of

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<sup>80</sup> “Mysteries in Religion,” 358–359.

<sup>81</sup> “Mysteries in Religion,” 361.

<sup>82</sup> “Holiness Necessary for Future Blessedness,” *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 8.

<sup>83</sup> *The Prince of this World*, 19.

<sup>84</sup> *The Prince of this World*, 16.

*Vatican II*, John Paul II cautions the Church to discern the “fruits of the council” so as to recognize what may come from “the prince of this world.” Because the church opened itself widely to the contemporary world, such discernment is necessary.

John Paul II expounds *John* 16:7 and the idea that the Holy Spirit will convince the world about sins, righteousness and judgment. A sin is a rejection of the mission of Christ and it is a refusal of faith. Righteousness is the filial oblation of the son on the cross. Judgment pertains to the claim of the prince of this world. The Prince of this world is judged according to the Pope’s formulation because he “exploits the work of creation against salvation, against the covenant, and the union of man with God.”<sup>85</sup> This sounds much like Raïssa’s account of 1931, but the Polish Pope further states that this influence of the Prince of the World not only has a subjective dimension, i.e. a personal temptation we may undergo, but it also has “an external dimension” in concrete form as “the content of culture.”<sup>86</sup> This includes philosophical systems, especially forms of materialism and systems which exclude the presence and action of God. Modern culture tends towards the complete falsification of truth about God: “God the creator is placed in a state of suspicion, indeed accusation.”<sup>87</sup> Raïssa remarked in her article that the “spirit of darkness” shows God as “an enemy of his own creature [...] a source of danger and a threat to man.”<sup>88</sup> We are led to see God as a limitation of our being and not the source of our freedom and fullness of good.<sup>89</sup> The root of the heart of sin is disobedience and refusal of the gift of God.

According to John Paul II, we are engaged in a dramatic struggle between good and evil and that Christ came to “break the stranglehold of personified evil.”<sup>90</sup> John Paul II’s long elaboration of *John* 16:7 culminates in a statement of hope for renewal by the action of the Holy Spirit. The ideologies, determinisms, and falsifications of culture have been erected into “dominating structures and mechanisms in various spheres of society” and such social factors, he says, subject the human spirit to “the prince of this world.”<sup>91</sup> “In the ordinary conditions of society, Christians, as witnesses to man’s authentic dignity, by their obedience to the Holy Spirit contribute to the manifold ‘renewal of the face of the earth’, working together with their

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<sup>85</sup> John Paul II, Pope, *The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World: Dominum et Vivificantem: Encyclical Letter of John Paul II* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1986), §27.

<sup>86</sup> *The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World: Dominum Et Vivificantem: Encyclical Letter of John Paul II*, §60.

<sup>87</sup> John Paul II wrote about the attempt “to place in doubt the truth about God who is Love and leaving man only with a sense of the master-slave relationship.” *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, 228.

<sup>88</sup> *The Prince of This World*, 12.

<sup>89</sup> *Dominum et Vivificantem*, §38.

<sup>90</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, §2; *Dominum et Vivificantem*, §29.

<sup>91</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, §2; *Dominum et Vivificantem*, §60.

brothers and sisters in order to achieve and put to good use everything that is good, noble and beautiful in the modern progress of civilization, culture, science, technology and the other areas of thought and human activity.”<sup>92</sup>

Jacques and Raïssa Maritain were pioneers in the Catholic apostolate to culture. Their work is reflected in the documents of *Vatican II*. They were engaged in the evangelization of key sectors of modern culture, as Pope John Paul II explains in *Mission of the Redeemer*.<sup>93</sup> They enjoyed many successes, but they warn us that any territory gained is not gained for long: “For where the prince of this world has his kingdom, the Christian cannot establish his permanent dwelling as on definitely conquered soil.”<sup>94</sup> The Maritains cast the Lord’s fire on earth and ignited a cultural blaze. But what matters, Jacques continues, is less the “result that can be expected of the blaze than the work of the flame while the blaze lasts.” Their work is not that of a founder, for a founder “dreams of founding for eternity.” The Maritains did not seek to make a durable thing to last for centuries, but rather to set out on a venture which may “vanish overnight and must always start afresh.” Such is the apostolate to culture. However, even if one must see “everything go up in smoke,” Jacques states that “one’s pains are repaid by what is best in this world, the marvel of those friendships which God induces and the pure loyalties he inspires, which are like a mirror of the gratuitousness and generosity of his love.”<sup>95</sup> The flame of Jacques and Raïssa Maritain allows us to appreciate their life and the apostolic work.

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<sup>92</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, §2; *Dominum et Vivificantem*, §60; *Gaudium et Spes*, §§ 53–59.

<sup>93</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, “The Mission of Christ the Redeemer” (1990). §37.

<sup>94</sup> “Forward” to Raïssa’s *Journal* (New York: Magi Press, 1974), 14.

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John Hittinger

## L'emprise du mal sur la culture : à propos du *Prince De Ce Monde*<sup>96</sup>

### Résumé

Cet essai examine les liens entre philosophie et culture dans les documents *Fides et Ratio* et *Gaudium et Spes* de Jean-Paul II. L'orientation vers la transcendance peut être entravée par les tendances culturelles et les attitudes intellectuelles. La foi purifie et élève la culture. La désignation de Jacques Maritain comme modèle d'intégration de la foi et de la raison est également abordée ici. À la lumière de cette recommandation, nous examinons l'argument de Jacques et Raïssa Maritain selon lequel la culture

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<sup>96</sup> Une version de cet article a été présentée lors du congrès de l'American Maritain Association à Notre Dame, dans l'Indiana, États-Unis, en 2007.

est sous l'emprise du mal, notamment par l'intermédiaire du prince de ce monde. Le passage d'*Éphésiens* 6:10 est interprété comme la source scripturale de ce point de vue. La pensée de John Henry Newman dans *Le Rêve de Gerontius* est également prise en considération en référence à l'emprise maléfique des démons. Nous concluons par un examen du projet des Maritain en tant qu'apostolat de la culture.

M o t s - c l é s : foi/culture, philosophie/culture, Maritain, Jean-Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, *Le Prince De Ce Monde*, *Le Rêve de Gerontius*

John Hittinger

## L'influenza del male sulla cultura: sul *Principe di Questo Mondo*<sup>97</sup>

### Sommario

In questo saggio vengono analizzati i legami tra filosofia e cultura nelle encicliche *Fides et Ratio* e *Gaudium et Spes* di Giovanni Paolo II. L'orientamento verso la trascendenza può essere ostacolato dalle tendenze culturali e dagli atteggiamenti intellettuali. La fede purifica ed eleva la cultura. Viene inoltre esaminata la figura di Jacques Maritain come modello per l'integrazione tra fede e ragione. Alla luce di questa raccomandazione, prendiamo in esame l'argomentazione di Jacques e Raïssa Maritain secondo cui la cultura è sotto l'influenza del male, in particolare attraverso l'opera del principe di questo mondo. Il passo di *Efesini* 6:10 viene interpretato come fonte scritturale di questa visione. Viene inoltre preso in considerazione il pensiero di John Henry Newman in *Il Sogno di Gerontius* in riferimento all'influenza malvagia dei demoni. Concludiamo con uno sguardo al progetto dei Maritain come apostolato della cultura.

Parole chiave: fede/cultura, filosofia/cultura, Maritain, Giovanni Paolo II, *Fides et Ratio*, *Il Principe di Questo Mondo*, *Il Sogno di Gerontius*


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<sup>97</sup> Una versione di questo articolo è stata presentata al convegno dell'American Maritain Association tenutosi a Notre Dame, nell'Indiana, Stati Uniti, nel 2007.



**Krzysztof Wiczorek**

University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7987-168X>

# Reason in the Environment of Faith, Hope and Love

**A b s t r a c t:** 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.

**K e y w o r d s:** 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 orga-

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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.

nization, 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> "Ἐν ἀρχῇ 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 Chlipała (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 over-riding 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

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<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>

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<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%20%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



**Rev. Pavol Dancák**

University of Prešov, Slovakia

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8067-5651>

# 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.<sup>1</sup> Pope John Paul II issued the encyclical *Fides et Ratio* (*Faith and Reason*) on September 14, 1998, to

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<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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

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<sup>2</sup> Marek Rembierz, “Refleksja moralna nad odpowiedzialnością i etosem filozofa w XX wieku,” in *Spoleczeństwo, 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 word<sup>3</sup> and made it the centre of philosophical thought<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> 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."<sup>7</sup>

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

<sup>3</sup> Platón, *Ústava*, trans. František Novotný (Praha: Oikoymenh, 2017), 379a.

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

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

<sup>6</sup> Jaeger, *Humanizm i teologia*, 47.

<sup>7</sup> 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)."<sup>8</sup>

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.<sup>9</sup>

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."<sup>10</sup> Philosophy has a "preparatory function."<sup>11</sup> 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."<sup>12</sup> 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-

<sup>8</sup> Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 9.

<sup>9</sup> Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 81.

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

<sup>11</sup> Aleksandryjski, *Kobierce*, I.87, 1.

<sup>12</sup> Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 13.

entation is spontaneously interpreted in terms of a vertical orientation.<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup> 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*.<sup>15</sup>

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,

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

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

<sup>15</sup> 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,<sup>16</sup> so faith builds upon and perfects reason.<sup>17</sup> 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."<sup>18</sup>

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."<sup>19</sup> 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

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

<sup>17</sup> Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 43.

<sup>18</sup> Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 42.

<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup>

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.<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup> 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

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

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

<sup>22</sup> 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.”<sup>23</sup>

## The Man as a Seeker of Truth

Faith and reason are the fundamental pillars of human knowledge and self-awareness.<sup>24</sup> 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

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<sup>23</sup> Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 4.

<sup>24</sup> 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.”<sup>25</sup>

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.<sup>26</sup> 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.”<sup>27</sup>

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

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<sup>25</sup> Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 33.

<sup>26</sup> Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 5.

<sup>27</sup> 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.<sup>28</sup> 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.<sup>29</sup> 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.<sup>30</sup> 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.”<sup>31</sup> 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.”<sup>32</sup> 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.”<sup>33</sup>

There is something more involved in these truths. It is an interpersonal relationship based on trust, friendship and loyalty.<sup>34</sup> 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.<sup>35</sup> 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

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

<sup>29</sup> Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 27.

<sup>30</sup> Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 13 and 28.

<sup>31</sup> Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 29.

<sup>32</sup> Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 30.

<sup>33</sup> Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 31.

<sup>34</sup> 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.

<sup>35</sup> 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.<sup>36</sup> 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.<sup>37</sup> 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.”<sup>38</sup>

## 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.<sup>39</sup> 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.<sup>40</sup>

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.

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<sup>36</sup> Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 32.

<sup>37</sup> Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 34.

<sup>38</sup> Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 5.

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

<sup>40</sup> 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.<sup>41</sup> 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.<sup>42</sup>

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

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

<sup>42</sup> 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.<sup>43</sup> 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.<sup>44</sup>

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".<sup>45</sup> 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.<sup>46</sup> 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.<sup>47</sup> In addition, he addresses himself to philosophers as well as to scientists, encouraging them to continue their efforts to know the truth.

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<sup>43</sup> Eric Voegelin, *Politická náboženství*, trans. Jan Frei (Praha: Oikoymenh, 2015), 17.

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

<sup>45</sup> Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 100.

<sup>46</sup> Wojtyła, *Fides et Ratio*, 101.

<sup>47</sup> 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.<sup>48</sup> 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.”<sup>49</sup>

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.”

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

<sup>49</sup> 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



**Rev. Karol Jasiński**

University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, Poland

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7695-499X>

# Theology as a Rationalisation of Religious Faith and Its Different Models

**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to reflect critically on the model of theology as a rationalisation of religious faith (the revealed truth), and on different models of theology as the committed knowledge (sapiential) and hermeneutics. The first of these models is insufficient because it is dominated by a rationalistic concept of theology at the expense of its more existential and experiential nature. The paper consists of three parts. The first part presents a model of theology as a rationalisation of the revealed truth (the philosophical critique of revelation, the historical-doctrinal investigation of truths of faith, the explanation and systematisation of the content of revelation by philosophical categories, and the *a priori* system of knowledge). The second part focuses on the model of theology as committed and the wisdom knowledge (a commitment in the recognition of specific truths of faith and a religious way of life, a commitment in the experience of mystery and prayerful contemplation, a commitment in the realization of life's meaning and the transformation of the world). The third part presents a model of theology as hermeneutics, i.e. the art of reading and interpreting various components of reality (problems of human existence, historical events and religious texts).

**Keywords:** theology, rationality, experience, wisdom, hermeneutics

## Introduction

Science is an essential element of culture, along with art, morality, and religion. It is a form of human knowledge that is characterised by its use of precise language, logical order, and appropriate methods. Criteria such as adequate justification of premises, theorisation, criticality, as well as explanatory and predictive power also distinguish scientific knowledge from common knowledge. The use of specific

methods also makes it possible to differentiate between types of sciences, such as the humanities, natural sciences, and theoretical and practical sciences.

Theology represents a special type of scientific inquiry. It may be emphasised that it has no single definition. Instead, various understandings of what it is are in evidence. Among other things, the term is employed to refer to research activities, specific content taught at universities, a rational reflection on truths of faith, an attempt to comprehend revelation, or sciences explaining the substance of faith<sup>1</sup>. One also encounters more metaphorical descriptions of theology as a kind of “speech about God and the human”<sup>2</sup>.

One should perhaps bear in mind that theology is practiced as part of distinct paradigms. The Polish theologian Tomasz Węcławski distinguishes four such models. In the first one, theology is treated as the hermeneutics of the sources of revelation, i.e. the books of the Bible. In the second model, theology seeks to establish the rationale behind the doctrine, resolve difficulties and clarify doubts. In the third model, theology is a reflection on the history of the faith and the development of doctrine. The fourth model, on the other hand, emphasises the existential dimension of theology, for which the individual and social experience of faith constitutes the point of departure<sup>3</sup>.

The aim of these deliberations is to reflect critically on the model of theology which has predominated for a long time, whereby it is understood as a rationalisation of religious faith or, more specifically, of the revealed truth since, within this framework, faith is construed as an assertion of the revealed truth<sup>4</sup>. Another objective is to explore other models of theology approached as the committed (sapiential) knowledge and as hermeneutics.

The first of these models is inadequate because it is chiefly informed by a rationalist concept of theology. Thus, one is called upon to engage with a version of theology whose character would be more existential and experiential, ultimately leading to the emergence of a model of theology as the committed (sapiential) knowledge

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<sup>1</sup> Andrzej Bronk and Stanisław Majdański, „Teologia – próba metodologiczno-epistemologicznej charakterystyki,” *Nauka* 2 (2006): 88–89.

<sup>2</sup> Jerzy Szymik, „Teologia jako (roz)mowa o Bogu/człowieka,” *Studia Nauk Teologicznych PAN* 3 (2008): 121.

<sup>3</sup> Tomasz Węcławski, „Metodologia Teologii,” *Nauka* 3 (2004): 109–116.

<sup>4</sup> It is now common to speak of faith as a form of encounter. However, the author has elsewhere attempted to reflect critically on the paradigm of faith as an encounter. For, in his view, faith cannot be understood as an encounter because a human being never directly encounters the personal God, but only experiences Him through other beings. Adopting such a position is the result of reflection on the nature of encounters and religious experiences. See Karol Jasiński, “Encounter as a Paradigm of Faith,” *Teologia i Człowiek* 2 (2022): 35–51.

or hermeneutics. The analysis will therefore consist of three main parts corresponding to the three aforementioned models of theology.

## Theology as a Rationalisation of the Revealed Truth

According to the Polish philosopher, theologian and cosmologist Michał Heller, theology is first and foremost a reflection of reason on the substance of religion, i.e. the revealed truth<sup>5</sup>. On the other hand, the logician and methodologist Stanisław Kamiński draws attention to the fact that the fundamental model underlying systematic theology in the 20th century was to treat it as an instrument to rationalise the revealed truth. This was pursued through philosophical criticism of revelation, historical-doctrinal inquiries into the truths of the faith, as well as the elucidation and systematisation of the content of revelation with the use of philosophical categories<sup>6</sup>. In this case, the work of a theologian consisted of systematic attempts to understand the content of religious revelation by means of natural reason, drawing on philosophy or the detailed sciences. Hence, revealed truths were the data to be explicated, with the aim of elaborating on a theological doctrine<sup>7</sup>. The Polish dogmatist Jerzy Szymik notes that two approaches to theology may be distinguished: an objective one and a personalistic one. In the first approach, theology focuses on the revealed truths of faith and dogmas as their objects, whereas God, the mystery of Christ and the human are the primary concern in the second approach<sup>8</sup>. Thus, in the model of theology discussed here, the former approach would take precedence.

Elsewhere, Kamiński underlines that theology treated as a rationalisation of revelation employs philosophy in the first place, which is why theological knowledge involves the philosophical elaboration on an aspect of religious life. The author notes that, at times, little attention was paid to harmonising philosophy with the content of faith. Occasionally, one would utilise relativistic or irrationalist

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<sup>5</sup> Michał Heller, *Nowa fizyka i nowa teologia* (Kraków: Copernicus Center Press, 2014), 70, 89.

<sup>6</sup> Stanisław Kamiński, *Jak filozofować? Studia z metodologii filozofii klasycznej* (Lublin: Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski, 1989), 374–375.

<sup>7</sup> Bronk and Majdański, „Teologia,” 92–93. According to some religious scholars, theology in this version is a speculative justification of religion as a natural or socio-cultural phenomenon. See Sławomir Sztajer, „Naturalność religii a istnienie niewiary,” *Przegląd Religioznawczy* 1 (2011): 41.

<sup>8</sup> Szymik, „Teologia jako (roz)mowa o Bogu/człowieka,” 121.

philosophy, which he finds unacceptable. Kamiński stresses that while certain philosophies cannot be applied in theology, every philosophy may be inspiring. All the while, efforts were made to philosophise or scientify theology, and as a result the “God of revelation” was reduced to the “God of philosophers and scholars”. In addition, the object and the task of theology were defined partially, yet the object cannot be confined to only one element of religious reality, i.e. the content of revelation<sup>9</sup>. Theology was, therefore, circumscribed to comprehending the content of revelation by means of reason, while relying primarily on philosophy, the Aristotelian-Thomist variety in particular, and occasionally taking advantage of the findings supplied by the detailed sciences.

The model of theology which sees it as a rationalisation of the revealed truth is also opted for by the Polish logician Józef Bocheński, for whom theology is, first and foremost, a rational armoury of faith and reflection on its content<sup>10</sup>. Theology is a science which examines not only the truths of faith but also the truths relating to faith, i.e. those which were not revealed but possess a logical connection with the truths of faith. According to Bocheński, the principal task of theology is to study the sources of revelation, as well as determine and specify a set of the revealed propositions. In addition, theology should also strive for a logical elaboration of a system of knowledge based on the ascertained truths of faith, draw conclusions from the latter and formulate appropriate theories<sup>11</sup>.

Bocheński’s concept of theology is founded on his conviction that it is necessary to employ logic in religion<sup>12</sup>. Consequently, logic plays an important role in theology because it is pivotal for a cohesive discourse. It is crucial because discourse consists of sentences which communicate specific content by means of commonly used linguistic symbols. Hence, in formal terms, it is not fundamentally different from scientific discourse<sup>13</sup>. As a result, Bocheński sees theology as a certain system of axioms in which at least one proposition originating from the “creed” accepted by the believers of a particular religion is admitted alongside other axioms<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Stanisław Kamiński, *Metoda i język. Studia z semiotyki i metodologii nauk* (Lublin: Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski, 1994), 491–492; Stanisław Kamiński, *Światopogląd – religia – teologia. Zagadnienia filozoficzne i metodologiczne* (Lublin: Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski, 1998), 51–52, 147, 160–162.

<sup>10</sup> Józef M. Bocheński, „O racjonalizmie i irracjonalizmie katolickim,” in *Dzieła zebrane*. Vol. 6. *Religia*, ed. Józef Bocheński (Kraków: Philed, 1995), 247, 252.

<sup>11</sup> Józef M. Bocheński, „Wiara,” in *Dzieła zebrane*. Vol. 6. *Religia*, ed. Józef Bocheński (Kraków: Philed, 1995), 216.

<sup>12</sup> Józef M. Bocheński, *Między logiką a wiarą. Z Józefem M. Bocheńskim rozmawia Jan Parys* (Montricher: Noir sur Blanc, 1988), 169, 175.

<sup>13</sup> Józef M. Bocheński, *Logika religii*, trans. Sławomir Magala (Warszawa: PAX, 1990), 37–43, 65, 73–74.

<sup>14</sup> Bocheński, *Logika religii*, 17.

Bocheński believed that theology should make the propositions of objective faith self-evident. Apparently, this may be accomplished by putting them in order and inferring new propositions, which would make theology akin to physics. It would set out with sentences belonging to the objective faith, which are the equivalent of protocol sentences in physics. These would supply the ground for formulating various explanatory hypotheses, which would then be verified through references to the sentences of the fundamental faith<sup>15</sup>.

Bocheński also addressed the question of verifying the terms in religious discourse because verification is indispensable if meanings are to be assigned to particular propositions. Bocheński emphasises that there are various methods of verification, e.g. direct (sensory perception, supernatural experiences) and indirect (authority, inference). Furthermore, direct verification may be sensory and extra-sensory, whereby the latter may be natural and supernatural. However, he rejects indirect verification and advocates any form of direct modality<sup>16</sup>.

Bocheński also highlights the function of philosophy in theology. Philosophy has a critical function in theology, which is to eliminate superstition. It cannot be a rational preparation for the adoption of faith because it lacks intersubjective verifiability. Nor can philosophy provide theology with a general synthesis of knowledge since such a synthesis is impossible<sup>17</sup>. Furthermore, some scholars draw attention to the self-criticism of theology, which consists of being faithful to its sources (e.g. revelation)<sup>18</sup>.

The American philosopher Eleonore Stump underlines that, unlike philosophy, theology is often considered a field that is insufficiently open to reason. This is because theology derives some of its premises from religious authority and revealed texts and creeds, whereas philosophy relies solely on reason in that respect. Philosophy is, therefore, acceptable to the general public, whereas theology is acceptable only to those who recognise revelation and belong to a particular religious community. Philosophy is, therefore, universal and impartial, while theology is particularistic and biased. Stump notes that such an approach traces its descent to the Enlightenment. The author argues that all human knowledge must have its origin somewhere and adopt certain assumptions. As a rule, the latter stem from an

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<sup>15</sup> Stefan Norkowski, „Dwa modele metodologiczne teologii o. Józefa Marii Bocheńskiego OP,” in *Ojciec Józef Bocheński. Drogi życia i myślenia filozoficznego. W stulecie urodzin uczonego*, ed. Czesław Głombik (Katowice: Gnome, 2004), 19–20, 24–25.

<sup>16</sup> Bocheński, *Logika religii*, 75–82.

<sup>17</sup> Józef M. Bocheński, „Światopogląd a filozofia,” in *Sens życia i inne eseje*, ed. Józef M. Bocheński (Kraków: Philed, 1993), 186–188.

<sup>18</sup> Michał Heller and Józef Życiński, *Pasja wiedzy. Między nauką a filozofią* (Kraków: Petrus, 2010), 224.

authority, witnesses or a community<sup>19</sup>. Thus, the difference between theology and philosophy is nullified, as both disciplines invoke authority.

In this context, one cannot overlook the matter of scientificity and epistemic rationality of theology, which meets the requirements that particular disciplines have to satisfy to a minimal degree. One should also note that theology fails to meet certain criteria of scientificity (e.g. intersubjective verifiability) and some of its ultimate premises include propositions that record a particular kind of experience, namely religious experience. However, this does not alter the fact that a theologian can conduct research in a systematic, formally correct and methodologically disciplined manner<sup>20</sup>.

Consequently, the Polish theologian Henryk Seweryniak emphasises that, where theology is concerned, the criteria of scientificity should be slightly different and advances three solutions. First, there is methodical inquiry, i.e. having a method understood as an assortment and a configuration of actions which serve a specific purpose and may be employed in multiple instances, as well as a set of rules describing how to proceed with the matter at hand. Second, one should formulate a non-contradictory set of judgements which are expressed in the most unequivocal language and provided with the best justification possible. Third, one has to have a proper object which is described via truthful, unambiguous and intelligible judgements<sup>21</sup>.

Regarding the rationality of theology, the Polish theologian Tomasz Węclawski emphasises that it represents a borderline discipline of rationality because it admits a different source of knowledge than the other sciences. Its rationality is bound to a supernatural reality, symbolised by the word "God". Węclawski observes that the developed form of theology consists of a systematic reflection on the revelation and the doctrines derived from it. Theology, therefore, possesses a unique status because it is associated with the authority of revelation. However, it shares methods and procedures with the other sciences because it also involves social texts and structures<sup>22</sup>. The Polish logician and methodologist Ryszard Kleszcz draws our attention to the fact that the criteria of rationality must be moderated with respect to theology. He suggests confining oneself to three criteria: linguistic strictness (elimination of incoherent, vague and general wording), adherence to the requirements of logic (eradicating contradictions from the belief system and ensuring deductive capacity)

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<sup>19</sup> Eleonore Stump, "Theology and the Knowledge of Persons," *Roczniki Filozoficzne* 3 (2021): 9–10.

<sup>20</sup> Józef Dębowski, „Metodologiczny status teologii czyli o osobliwościach nauk teologicznych,” in *Misja teologii w uniwersytecie*, ed. Marek Jodkowski, Aleksandra Nalewaj and Maria Piechocka-Kłós (Olsztyn: Uniwersytet Warmińsko-Mazurski w Olsztynie, 2015), 53, 59–60.

<sup>21</sup> Henryk Seweryniak, „Miejsce teologii na uniwersytecie w odpowiedzi na zarzuty,” *Studia Nauk Teologicznych PAN* 3 (2008): 71–72.

<sup>22</sup> Węclawski, „Metodologia Teologii,” 101–109, 116–119.

as well as sufficient justification (relying on broad experience and justificatory inferences). Kleszcz is of the opinion that with regard to theology, the criteria of rationality should be met only to an extent which is indispensable. This is especially indicated since religion belongs to the domain of worldview, the adoption of which crucially depends on certain initial intuitions that lead to various interpretative possibilities<sup>23</sup>. Theology thus satisfies the general criteria of epistemic rationality, which is attained by different sciences to varying degrees. However, the strength of the arguments must be weaker in this case.

Minimal though they are, such criteria should be respected, especially considering that one of the most eminent theologians of the 20th century, namely Joseph Ratzinger. He demands that theology proclaim the Christian message and demonstrate its essence in a rational manner<sup>24</sup>. After all, Ratzinger finds that it is the Divine Logos which lies at the foundation of Christianity and, therefore, theology.

However, Bocheński – whose notions show affinity with the discussed model – calls for theology to be steered out of the rationalistic backstreet and insists on a renewed study into the ways to know God<sup>25</sup>. That questionable alley lies in the hubris of reason, which claims to apprehend the complete truth about God. As a result, one would be able to construct other models of theology in which value is attached to its other aspects.

## Theology as a Committed (Sapiential) Science

In view of the above, some scholars have stressed that theology cannot be reduced exclusively to a rational interpretation of the truths of faith since it also constitutes committed knowledge (wisdom). This commitment has four fundamental dimensions. First, it consists of the unique consent of the believer, particularly

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<sup>23</sup> Ryszard Kleszcz, „O racjonalności i jej granicach,” *Roczniki Filozoficzne* 1 (2003): 173–175, 181–184. It is worth bearing in mind that theology has its own technical language, but this differs from the language of the empirical sciences. The language of theology is not only imbued with the language of various philosophical orientations, but also contains terms taken from everyday language. In doing so, these expressions change their meaning while retaining their previous sound. Their use thus often leads to misunderstandings and simplistic, naive or ridiculous ways of understanding. See Heller and Życiński, *Pasja wiedzy*, 225.

<sup>24</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Prawda w Teologii*, trans. Magdalena Mijalska (Kraków: Wydawnictwo M, 2001), 5.

<sup>25</sup> Józef M. Bocheński, „W sprawie bożycy,” in *Sens życia i inne eseje*, ed. Józef M. Bocheński (Kraków: Philed, 1993), 162.

a theologian, not only because they acknowledge certain truths of faith but also commit personally to faith, having a sense of faith and acting in unison with the religious community. In order to attain any theological knowledge, one must therefore be a person of living faith, learning and wisdom<sup>26</sup>. However, it seems possible for a non-believer to competently perform purely scientific operations within theology, despite their lack of faith and personal commitment.

Second, the particular form of a theologian's commitment should involve the experience of mystery, and prayerful contemplation, especially since – as the Orthodox theologian Paul Evdokimov asserts – the sense of mystery has now been lost in theology. It has become an abstract science of God, having ceased to be a living thought immersed in God. It is the speculative theology and its superficial form which constitutes one of the sources of unbelief<sup>27</sup>. In this context, the American philosopher John E. Smith notes that a distinction must be made between formal reason and typically human reason. In the first case, reason employs pure formal logic, whereas in the second, humans seek intelligibility based on their own experience. It is, therefore, necessary, Smith argues, to depart from formal reason and return to the typically human reason, to abandon the formal tradition of Aristotle for the sake of the contemplative Platonic-Augustinian tradition<sup>28</sup>.

Evdokimov thus draws on the patristic definition of theology rooted in the Bible, understood as an experiential path to a union with God<sup>29</sup>. This paradigm places particular emphasis on the experience of prayer, contemplation and liturgy, through which a person can participate in the reality of the divine, experience inner transformation and take concrete action<sup>30</sup>. A theologian is, therefore, a practitioner of prayer, from which theology arises<sup>31</sup>. At the same time, according to the English historian of philosophy – Frederick C. Copleston, religious language is an expression of a religious action, such as prayer. Thus, in the first place, it is a language of speaking to God rather than about God<sup>32</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> William H. Austin, „Zaangażowanie religijne a logiczny status doktryn religijnych,” trans. Piotr Dziliński, in *Filozofia religii. Fragmenty filozofii analitycznej*, ed. Bohdan Chwedeńczuk (Warszawa: Fundacja Aletheia, 1997), 260; Bronk and Majdański, „Teologia,” 103–104.

<sup>27</sup> Paul Evdokimov, *Poznanie Boga w tradycji wschodniej. Patrystyka, liturgia, ikonografia*, trans. Alina Liduchowska (Kraków: Wydawnictwo M, 1996), 157.

<sup>28</sup> John E. Smith, *Doświadczenie i Bóg*, trans. Danuta Petsch (Warszawa: PAX, 1971), 118–125.

<sup>29</sup> Paul Evdokimov, *Wieki życia duchowego. Od Ojców pustyni do naszych czasów*, trans. Maria Tarnowska (Kraków: ZNAK, 1996), 152–153.

<sup>30</sup> Evdokimov, *Poznanie Boga*, 15–20.

<sup>31</sup> Hans Waldenfels, *Odkrywać Boga dzisiaj*, trans. Bernard Białecki (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Apostolstwa Modlitwy, 1997), 53.

<sup>32</sup> Frederick C. Copleston, *Religia i filozofia*, trans. Barbara Stanosz (Warszawa: PAX, 1978), 52–53.

Hence, the French theologian and spiritual writer André Manaranche underlines that theology is born out of religious experience, though simultaneously it evaluates and guides the latter. It is, therefore, necessary to immerse oneself in the experience in order to articulate it anew. Experience and mysticism are specific regulating factors of theology, which is why one must reject abstract speculations in favour of a union with God<sup>33</sup>. Pierre Miquel, a French researcher of spirituality, would further add that theology is a reflection on the spiritual experience, which it supplies with mental and linguistic schemata. It also gives an account of the spiritual experience described in religious writings<sup>34</sup>.

While not seeking to disparage conceptual knowledge in theology, the Italian theologian Cipriano Vagaggini argues that it should be combined with intuitive experience since it may enable one to gain a deeper knowledge of God. Thus, next to the objective, abstract and rational components in theology, one should recognise the value of the subjective, intuitive and experiential elements<sup>35</sup>, notably contemplative experience and prayerful engagement, which are some of the essential sources of theology. It would appear that theology as a form of committed knowledge derives from the nature of religion as such, which is a kind of dialogue demanding the existential engagement of autonomous, free partners who choose one another. Religion is a bond of choice that is made between humans and God. It originates in the event of an encounter, while dialogue and commitment to the relationship are the source, essence and meaning of religion<sup>36</sup>.

Third, the goal of theology is to lend meaning to human life and to engage in its realisation at the expense of its own claim to knowledge<sup>37</sup>. The Polish theologian Alfons Nossol is convinced that theology is true wisdom that aims, above all, to endow human life with meaning<sup>38</sup>. For this reason, some emphasise its practical and utilitarian character. The sapiential dimension of theology is also referred to by Kamiński, to whom wisdom consists of a committed effort to know the ultimate causes of things and to array them in line with the fundamental values.

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<sup>33</sup> André Manaranche, *Bóg żywy i rzeczywisty*, trans. Lucyna Rutowska (Warszawa: PAX, 1974), 26–28, 33, 36–37.

<sup>34</sup> Pierre Miquel, *L'expérience spirituelle dans la tradition chrétienne* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1999), XIII.

<sup>35</sup> Cipriano Vagaggini, *Teologia. Pluralizm teologiczny*, trans. Jacek Partyka (Kraków: Homini, 2005), 18–20, 27–28, 107–110, 114, 178–184.

<sup>36</sup> Witold P. Glinkowski, „Religia jako dialog człowieka z Bogiem,” in *Religie w dialogu kultur*. Vol. II, ed. Marek Szulakiewicz and Łukasz Dominiak (Toruń: Fundacja Societas et Ius, 2107), 352, 359.

<sup>37</sup> Andrzej Bronk, *Podstawy nauk o religii* (Lublin: Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski, 2009), 355–356.

<sup>38</sup> Alfons Nossol and Jerzy Szymik, *Być dla, czyli myśleć sercem* (Katowice: Księgarnia św. Jacka, 1999), 72, 94, 130.

Therefore, wisdom may originate from natural or supernatural sources, and it possesses a theoretical as well as a practical dimension. As a theory, it is a justified and comprehensive understanding of the order and meaning of the world. As a practice, on the other hand, it means the ability to apply such knowledge and adopt the right attitude in life. Thus, theology is committed knowledge through which a person attains specific knowledge by virtue of revelation and formulates their life attitudes accordingly<sup>39</sup>. It may, therefore, be stated that theology provides one with a certain orientation in the world and an existential attitude, or what is called life wisdom.

Hence, the methodologist Józef Dębowski defines theology as a sapiential type of science, which strives to explain the world as an entirety and its order from the standpoint of natural and supernatural knowledge. At the same time, it involves numerous practical elements, i.e. those which concern the right ways of guiding one's life<sup>40</sup>. An interesting remark is made by Stump, who highlights the differences between the philosophical and theological notions of wisdom. In philosophy, wisdom is an abstract concept, whereas it has a personal dimension in theology since wisdom is God. Thus, the philosopher seeks impersonal wisdom, while the theologian seeks personal wisdom. It follows that theology must value non-propositional knowledge, i.e. personal contact. It is called "knowledge of a person", in other words, second-person, intuitive, direct knowledge that cannot be adequately expressed in concepts and sentences. In her view, the knowledge of a person is irreducible to the knowledge of things. Stump notes that theology thus engages with the narratives concerning the knowledge of a person, which can have various interpretations. The knowledge of a person is important because it enriches the knowledge of the object<sup>41</sup>. Copleston takes a similar view, stating that God cannot be properly described by the language used to describe the finite, which is why knowledge through contact is required<sup>42</sup>. However, any interpersonal contact demands that two parties be involved. In religion, it leads to the discovery of wisdom, which is interpreted in theology using personalistic categories.

Fourth, theology as committed knowledge can also manifest itself in the social dimension of life. Theological reflection is then geared towards motivating persons to active efforts aimed at solving current world problems and liberating human beings from various forms of oppression in the light of revelation. Good examples of such an approach include the political theology of the German theologian Johann

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<sup>39</sup> Kamiński, *Jak filozofować?*, 25–27.

<sup>40</sup> Dębowski, „Metodologiczny status,” 65.

<sup>41</sup> Stump, “Theology and the Knowledge of Persons,” 11, 13–16, 21–25.

<sup>42</sup> Copleston, *Religia i filozofia*, 65, 87.

Baptist Metz, the theology of liberation practised, e.g. by Leonardo Boff and Gustavo Gutierrez, and the indigenous theology of Bartomeu Melia and Jose Seelwische.

Metz construes his political theology as a response to the socio-cultural problems of the world. Political theology is intended as a critical correction to the privatising tendencies in previous theology, which deprived it of its reference to the world. Instead, it should be oriented towards protecting human beings from reification, bringing the social dimension of charity to the fore and challenging the earthly order. Another task is to shape a new self-understanding of the Church and inform a change in its institutional functioning by promoting sensitivity to the various forms of suffering in the world. Thus, political theology demonstrates critical and liberatory qualities<sup>43</sup>. Elsewhere, Metz notes that political theology is a form of speaking about God when facing the world's suffering. For this reason, its essential category is *memoria passionis*, i.e. the memory of the suffering present in the world<sup>44</sup>.

Associated with the so-called “theology of liberation”, Gutierrez also believes that the socio-political dimension of life and involvement in the affairs of the world have, at times, been insufficiently taken into account in Christianity. Christianity is shaped by social practices that seek to liberate humanity. Furthermore, according to Gutierrez, the relationship with God and the relationship with other people are closely interconnected. This is because each encounter with God occurs through encounters with other people, particularly the poor and oppressed, and love for God is expressed and proven through love for others. As a result, a person may be liberated from various forms of oppression, and society may be transformed<sup>45</sup>.

Finally, the goal of indigenous theology is to engage in the discovery of the salvific presence of God across cultures. The new theology is envisioned to supplant classical theology, become a source of critique of the Church's actions and inspire Christians to change how they think. This particular theology emphasises the experience of people, especially aboriginal people, in expressing their faith in a specific cultural context<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> Johann B. Metz, *Teologia polityczna*, trans. Agnieszka Mosurek (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Apostolstwa Modlitwy, 2000), 15, 23–48, 60–64, 74–82, 118, 162–184, 266–275.

<sup>44</sup> Johann B. Metz, *Teologia wobec cierpienia*, trans. Juliusz Zychowicz (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Apostolstwa Modlitwy, 2008), 12, 37, 96–97, 185–194, 215–219.

<sup>45</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, *Teologia wyzwolenia. Historia, polityka i zbawienie*, trans. Jan Szewczyk (Warszawa: PAX, 1976), 9, 39–46, 58–60, 151–154, 201–215, 238–239, 266–269, 277–279.

<sup>46</sup> Ryszard Hajduk, *Teologia latynoamerykańska i jej praktyczne implikacje* (Olsztyn: Uniwersytet Warmińsko-Mazurski w Olsztynie, 2020), 26, 42–43, 45–48; Dariusz Piwowarczyk, „Indygenizm jako aspekt latynoamerykańskiej teologii wyzwolenia. Refleksja z perspektywy pracy misyjnej wśród Indian Paragwaju,” *Nurt SVD* 2 (2016): 225–234.

## Theology as Hermeneutics

The third major model of theology understands theology as hermeneutics or the art of interpretation. In theology, it will proceed from the standpoint of a particular religious revelation – Christian, for instance. Three fundamental issues may be subject to interpretation: the problems of human existence, historical events and revealed writings. Theology would primarily be a form of revealing the world. Aided by faith, human reason seeks to comprehend the problems of the world and humanity in the light of revelation. Here, the issues with which life confronts the theologian would constitute the data to be elucidated. In this case, the theologian would attempt to give reliable answers to the real questions that humans constantly struggle to resolve (e.g. evil, suffering, death)<sup>47</sup>. Hence, the primary concern of theology is to interpret human existential problems and, potentially, advance solutions in the light of religious revelation.

In so doing, theology becomes hermeneutics. Its task is to interpret or clarify the problems of the world and human existence in line with a particular religious message. The world and human life, thus, constitute a specific text to be interpreted. The theologian begins with a particular religious tradition that is believed to be true so as to juxtapose it subsequently to reality and reinterpret the latter in the light of that tradition<sup>48</sup>. Through this process, a Gadamerian fusion of horizons takes place.

The Belgian theologian Jacques Dupuis notes that in the hermeneutic model of theology, one sets out from an existing reality or a specific situation, which then undergoes interpretation by means of a religious message. Thus, according to Dupuis, three elements become correlated: the text (the data of faith and religious tradition), the historical context (a reality composed of cultural, economic, social, political and religious components) and the interpreter (the theologian and the community of believers). The interaction between these elements results in a kind of a “hermeneutic circle”<sup>49</sup>.

Likewise, for the Czech philosopher and theologian Tomáš Halík, theology means hermeneutics of the experience of faith in history. In this case, the primary task is to interpret historical events while perceiving them to manifest God’s pedagogy since it is God who is revealed in historical events. Consequently, theology

<sup>47</sup> Bronk and Majdański, „Teologia,” 92–93.

<sup>48</sup> Grzegorz Barth, „O specyfice i tożsamości metodologicznej teologii,” in *Misja teologii w uniwersytecie*, ed. Marek Jodkowski, Aleksandra Nalewaj and Maria Piechocka-Kłos (Olsztyn: Uniwersytet Warmińsko-Mazurski w Olsztynie, 2015), 96–99.

<sup>49</sup> Jacques Dupuis, *Chrześcijaństwo i religie. Od konfrontacji do dialogu*, trans. Stanisław Obirek (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Apostolstwa Modlitwy, 2003), 35–36.

should interpret them in the context of history, culture and faith. The Czech intellectual refers to his version of theology as *kairology* (from Greek *kairos*, meaning a time of visitation, attaining maturity, or a decision) because its hermeneutical mission is to yield a new reading and a deeper interpretation of the signs of the times. However, according to Halík, one must master the art of contemplating reality in its entirety in order for this mission to be accomplished<sup>50</sup>.

Consequently, the need for a spiritual reading of the world around is emphasised. Thanks to such an approach, it will be possible to discover the spiritual reality hidden beneath the realm of phenomena<sup>51</sup>. Therefore, using Kantian terminology, theology must inevitably shift from phenomena to noumena, i.e. from the material occurrences to the spiritual thing in itself. Moreover, Halík argues that theology has a diagnostic task in that by reading and interpreting the signs of the times, it pays attention to crisis periods and changes in cultural paradigms from a supernatural perspective<sup>52</sup>. Łukasz Sadłocha also believes that theology has a diagnostic function because it is capable of detecting civilisational change. Thanks to the immutable revealed truths, a scale reflecting such changes may be applied. Theology is primarily concerned with their axiological dimension, i.e. civilisational progress, and its task is not so much to diagnose the changes – the variations within a given timeframe – but to diagnose the progress, i.e. the axiological dimension of those variations<sup>53</sup>. Consequently, theology would identify civilisational progress as opposed to mere change. Moreover, in addition to its diagnostic role, it would possess a valuational function.

Furthermore, Halík maintains that theology as hermeneutics should serve to reinterpret the Good News so that its meaning is not distorted when a particular social and cultural context changes. There is no escaping the fact that new hermeneutics is needed, i.e. a new modality of reading, interpreting and understanding the Scripture and the Tradition in different contexts of human life<sup>54</sup>. Vagaggini recognises an urgent need to rethink and reinterpret the substance of the Scripture and the Tradition since, in many instances, the wording comprises either variable and circumstance-dependent elements or elements which are constant and independent

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<sup>50</sup> Tomáš Halík, *Popołudnie chrześcijaństwa. Odwaga do zmiany*, trans. Tomasz Maćkowiak (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Apostolstwa Modlitwy, 2022), 37–45, 92, 107, 219, 310.

<sup>51</sup> Marko Ivan Rupnik and Tomáš Špidlík, *Teologia pastoralna. Duszpasterstwo na nowe czasy*, trans. Krzysztof Stopa (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Salwator, 2010), 17–19, 24–26.

<sup>52</sup> Halík, *Popołudnie chrześcijaństwa*, 283.

<sup>53</sup> Łukasz Sadłocha, „Diagnostyczna rola teologii,” in *Misja teologii w uniwersytecie*, ed. Marek Jodkowski, Aleksandra Nalewaj and Maria Piechocka-Kłos (Olsztyn: Uniwersytet Warmińsko-Mazurski w Olsztynie, 2015), 114–116.

<sup>54</sup> Halík, *Popołudnie chrześcijaństwa*, 92, 107, 310.

of the conditions<sup>55</sup>. The need to reinterpret the content of faith given the development of science, the natural sciences in particular, is also noted by Heller. In his opinion, such a process may help to cleanse the faith of anthropomorphism and protect it from being reduced to the irrational sphere<sup>56</sup>. It would, therefore, be necessary to reinterpret the content of faith by retaining its universal elements while lending them a new expression. Also, their order would be rearranged considering their relevance for the modern human and the achievements of modern science.

According to Copleston, another reason which makes reinterpretation crucial is that the particular theological formulations are assertions about the God of faith, not metaphysical conclusions. They convey a certain vision of reality and show the direction that human life should follow. They both interpret the words of God and elucidate specific human experiences. It is through them that one arrives at a religious interpretation of reality<sup>57</sup>. Nonetheless, such an interpretation may vary because it not only arises from the unchanging contents of revelation but also derives from the changing human experience and the categories employed to express them. The invariable substance must, therefore, be confronted with the manifold experiences of the human and formulated with the use of updated terminology, one which corresponds better with the mutable human mentality. Religious content, thus, demands to be permanently reinterpreted in the context of the new socio-historical circumstances, mental shifts and language transformations.

## Conclusion

The purpose of these deliberations was to reflect critically on the predominant 20th-century model of theology – which conceived it as a rationalisation of the revealed truth – as well as discuss other models in which theology is practised as the committed (sapiential) knowledge and as hermeneutics. The first of these models proves inadequate because it is governed by the rationalist concept of theology. Its adherents seek to reflect critically on the revealed truths, expound the content of revelation using philosophical categories and construct an axiomatic system of knowledge. This engenders emphasis on the doctrinal dimension of religion, but considering its potential ideologisation, the existential and experiential aspects

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<sup>55</sup> Vagaggini, *Teologia*, 73–74, 86–89, 115–120, 145.

<sup>56</sup> Heller, *Nowa fizyka*, 88.

<sup>57</sup> Copleston, *Religia i filozofia*, 53–54.

should be given more prominence. It would seem, therefore, that the committed (sapiential) knowledge and hermeneutics are promising paradigms, offering alternative understanding and the practice of theology. After all, theology is a type of knowledge engaged in the matters of faith, whose aim is to discover the wisdom of life, find the meaning of human existence and guide human life. Here, theology should stem from the religious experience that results in one's commitment to transforming the world, thus demonstrating both theoretical and practical dimensions. By virtue of theology, it would be possible to combine knowledge and spiritual experience in a more profound and conscious manner. Theology may also be a form of hermeneutics, i.e. the art of interpreting the problems of human life and historical events in the light of a particular religious message and tradition. Moreover, a reinterpretation is called for with respect to the texts of the revelation themselves which should be read in the new socio-cultural circumstances and involve a new language.

This would respond to the demand to develop a novel version of theology – a theology that should be mystagogic (relying on spiritual experience and introducing the experience of mystery), symbolic (avoiding treatises while giving preference to myths, parables and symbols), narrative (drawing on the stories of concrete persons and their experience of God) and pastoral (deriving from and leading to practice)<sup>58</sup>. Following Bocheński's demand, it would be worthwhile to lead theology out of the "rationalist backstreet". In order to do so, one has to relinquish abstract speculation, excessive rationalism and dogmatism, while recognising the value of the problems of human existence, spiritual experience and the challenges of social life. These can be an important source ("*locus theologicus*") and a propitious point of departure for theological reflection. Naturally, one cannot diminish the role of reason when practising theology – its Christian variety in particular – in which God is understood first and foremost as the Logos. Furthermore, the claim of theology to be a science means that it must meet the criteria of rationality and scientificity, at least to a minimal degree. With the acknowledgement that the roots of theology lie in human spiritual life, existential experience and historical events interpreted in the light of revelation, theology ceases to be speculation detached from life and begins to be regarded as a form of profound reading and interpretation of reality, a path of discovering the wisdom and meaning of human existence, and an axiological foundation and point of reference in the process of transforming the world.

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<sup>58</sup> Viktor Codina, *Kościół wykluczonych. Teologia z perspektywy Nazaretu*, trans. Kasper Kaproń (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Apostolstwa Modlitwy, 2018), 265–280; Rupnik and Špidlík, *Teologia pastoralna*, 292–307, 341, 345–347.

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Rev. Karol Jasiński

## La théologie comme rationalisation de la foi religieuse et ses différents modèles

### Résumé

L'objectif de cet article est de mener une réflexion critique sur le modèle de la théologie en tant que rationalisation de la foi religieuse (la vérité révélée) et sur différents modèles de théologie en tant que connaissance engagée (sapientielle) et herméneutique. Le premier de ces modèles est insuffisant car il est dominé par une conception rationaliste de la théologie au détriment de sa nature plus existentielle et expérientielle. L'article se compose de trois parties. La première partie présente un modèle de théologie en tant que rationalisation de la vérité révélée (la critique philosophique de la révélation, l'investigation historico-doctrinale des vérités de la foi, l'explication et la systématisation du contenu de la révélation par des catégories philosophiques, et le système a priori de la connaissance). La deuxième partie se concentre sur le modèle de la théologie en tant que connaissance engagée et sagesse (un engagement dans la reconnaissance de vérités spécifiques de la foi et d'un mode de vie religieux, un engagement dans l'expérience du mystère et la contemplation dans la prière, un engagement dans la réalisation du sens de la vie et la transformation du monde). La troisième partie présente un modèle de théologie en tant qu'herméneutique, c'est-à-dire l'art de lire et d'interpréter divers éléments de la réalité (problèmes de l'existence humaine, événements historiques et textes religieux).

M o t s - c l é s : théologie, rationalité, expérience, sagesse, herméneutique

Rev. Karol Jasiński

## La teologia come razionalizzazione della fede religiosa e i suoi diversi modelli

### Sommario

Lo scopo di questo articolo è quello di riflettere criticamente sul modello di teologia come razionalizzazione della fede religiosa (la verità rivelata) e sui diversi modelli di teologia come conoscenza impegnata (sapienziale) ed ermeneutica. Il primo di questi modelli è insufficiente perché dominato da un concetto razionalistico di teologia a scapito della sua natura più esistenziale ed esperienziale. Il documento è composto da tre parti. La prima parte presenta un modello di teologia come razionalizzazione della verità rivelata (la critica filosofica della rivelazione, l'indagine storico-dottrinale delle verità di fede, la spiegazione e la sistematizzazione del contenuto della rivelazione mediante categorie filosofiche e il sistema a priori della conoscenza). La seconda parte si concentra sul modello di teologia come impegno e conoscenza sapienziale (un impegno nel riconoscimento di specifiche verità di fede e di uno stile di vita religioso, un impegno nell'esperienza del mistero e nella contemplazione orante, un impegno nella realizzazione del significato della vita e nella trasformazione del mondo). La terza parte presenta un modello di teologia come ermeneutica, cioè l'arte di leggere e interpretare i vari componenti della realtà (problemi dell'esistenza umana, eventi storici e testi religiosi).

**Parole chiave:** teologia, razionalità, esperienza, saggezza, ermeneutica



**Radovan Šoltés**

University of Presov, Slovakia

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0497-2152>

# The Metaphysical Aspect of Christian Philosophy in *Fides et Ratio*

**Abstract:** The encyclical *Fides et Ratio* is a continually inspiring document in which John Paul II sought to answer the question of the relationship between faith and reason, and thus between theology and philosophy. It follows the tradition of the Church, but at the same time reflects the post-Conciliar view of the autonomy of the empirical sciences and the humanities. The present study deals with philosophy which John Paul II calls “Christian philosophy.” The concept of metaphysics, which has influenced Christian philosophy, is crucial here. Despite a lot of criticism concerning metaphysics since the modern period, John Paul II defends the metaphysical position as an integral part of the Christian philosopher’s thinking. His understanding of metaphysics will be discussed in the following study.

**Keywords:** John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, Christian philosophy, metaphysics, mysticism

## Introduction

John Paul II, already as Karol Wojtyła, was a member of the personalist-oriented Thomistic-phenomenological school of thought. He drew on Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy and was inspired by thinkers, such as Martin Buber, Gabriel Marcel and especially Max Scheler. Their influence led to his deeper focus on the personal dimension of humanity. He realized that the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition represents the best treatment of only one of the two main experiences of the man, which is the external experience. However, it fails to appreciate the internal experience that points to the personal dimension of the man.

The concept of “a person” becomes the key element of his philosophical thought because it points to the essence of the man. This does not show itself immediately but can be discovered in the human acts of love, freedom and knowledge that make

the man a being open towards the world and himself. Thus, in Wojtyła's work, questions connected with the analysis of acts of consciousness, the man's moral activity, his nature and inner experience, personal perfection, profound experience, but also human freedom, love and responsibility, finally resulted in a metaphysical concept of the person.<sup>1</sup>

Wojtyła asserts that "philosophical anthropology and theological anthropology constitute, in fact, irreducible fields of knowledge about the human being, which complement each other."<sup>2</sup> Philosophical anthropology is not the last word on the man, but demands the completion of Revelation, which represents the last truths about the man. Later, as the Pope, he emphasized this in *Fides et Ratio*. With the light of reason, human beings can know which path to take, but they can follow that path to its end, quickly and unhindered, only if accompanied by a rightly tuned spirit they search for within the horizon of faith.<sup>3</sup> The key to understanding the man is Christ. "The truth communicated in Christ's Revelation [...] is offered to every man and woman who would welcome it as the word which is the absolutely valid source of meaning for human life. [...] Through this Revelation, men and women are offered the ultimate truth about their own life and about the goal of history. [...] Seen in any other terms, the mystery of personal existence remains an insoluble riddle."<sup>4</sup>

In this context, it is needed to understand the philosophy of Wojtyła and later John Paul II. Therefore, we can say that it is also appropriate to use the term "Christian philosophy," which is embedded in the metaphysical dimension of human life to which he also refers in the encyclical *Fides et Ratio*. This problem will be addressed in detail in the present study, following the analytical method combined with the comparative method and synthesis.

## Christian Philosophy in *Fides et Ratio*

The very term "Christian philosophy" can provoke various opinions and controversies, especially in the field of philosophy, but also among thinkers claiming

<sup>1</sup> Zlatica Plašienková, „Súčasná katolícka etika,“ in: *Súčasná etické teórie*, ed. Vasil Gluchman and Miloš Dokulil (Prešov: LIM, 2000), 211.

<sup>2</sup> Milan Fula, *Antropológia ženy a náuka Jána Pavla II* (Bratislava: Don Bosco, 2004), 128.

<sup>3</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 16, accessed Jun 13, 2023, [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>4</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 12.

the Christian tradition. So, what do we mean by “Christian philosophy” and is the term even legitimate? The origin of the term “Christian philosophy” dates back to the middle of the 2nd century, when the term “Christian philosophy” referred to versions of Neo-Platonic philosophy that corresponded with the Christian doctrine of creation and the man. The first of the philosophers who claimed to be a Christian without ceasing to be a philosopher was Justin. He considered himself a Platonist, although Stoic themes were prevalent in his work.<sup>5</sup> Christian philosophy was largely influenced by Neo-Platonism and Stoicism. It also influenced the formation of Christian theology itself. This was evident in St. Augustine’s writings.

Alongside the use of Greek philosophy in the formation and argumentation of Christian theology, personalities and currents emerged that rejected the conflation of the Christian tradition with philosophy. Well-known figures included Hypolytus of Rome or Tertullian, who proclaimed that incomprehensible and misleading philosophical procedures could not be used in the interpretation of faith. Although Tertullian partially collaborates with the philosophical tradition, he nevertheless refers to philosophers as “patriarchs of heresy.” In his opposition to philosophy, Tertullian unreflectively uses many terms that are originally philosophical concepts and practices, and have passed into common parlance in this form.<sup>6</sup> These attitudes largely influenced and partially devastated the contemporary Western theology, which was gradually reformed, largely due to Augustine’s efforts.

Later, the scholasticism of the High Middle Ages was responsible for the replacement of Platonic inspiration by Aristotelianism.<sup>7</sup> Modified Aristotelianism would thus be considered Christian philosophy in the metaphysical tradition until the 20th century. In the 1930s, however, the problem of Christian philosophy began to be intensely debated. Thinkers dealing with the subject included Emile Bréhier, Léon Brunschvicg, Maurice Blondel, Jacques Maritain, Etienne Gilson, Fernand van Steenberg, and many others.<sup>8</sup> Thinkers such as Maurice Blondel and Jacques Maritain held that there was a distinctive Christian philosophy. Others rejected it.

For example, Christian thinkers such as Józef Tischner or Stefan Swieżawski reject the term “Christian philosophy.” For Swieżawski, philosophy is neither

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<sup>5</sup> Zdeněk Kratochvíl, *Prohlínání světů. Středoplatónská filosofie v náboženských proudech antiky* (Praha: Herrmann a synové, 1991), 98–99.

<sup>6</sup> Jozef Špirko, *Patrológia* (Prešov: Spolok P. P. Gojdiča, 1995), 78–79. Zdeněk Kratochvíl, *Prohlínání světů. Středoplatónská filosofie v náboženských proudech antiky* (Praha: Herrmann a synové, 1991), 104.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel Porubec, „Katolícka cirkev a stredoveká univerzita,“ in *Disputationes quodlibetales XXIV. & XXV. Konzum a kríza v súčasných okolnostiach & Quo vaditis, cives academici?*, eds Pavol Dancák, Radovan Šoltés and Daniel Porubec (Prešov: GTF PU, 2022), 151.

<sup>8</sup> Claude Tresmontant, *Teodicea* (Košice: Knižná dielňa Timotej, 1997), 29.

Christian nor pagan, but simply philosophy.<sup>9</sup> To limit philosophy to Christianity can become very problematic in a contemporary, historical context. The Christian religion itself is always bound to the content of its faith, which is a priori given by Revelation. Theology will, therefore, always be bound by the content of Revelation, and its role is also to ensure that this content is not arbitrarily altered or misinterpreted. It is an extremely difficult task, and one that is subject to many temptations to definitively enclose Revelation within the framework of our ideas and principles. Philosophy would then literally become the handmaiden of theology, whose role would consist solely in finding expedient arguments for what will already be accepted and defined in advance.

The essence of philosophy is that it cannot uncritically bind itself to preconceived premises because by that very act it would cease to be philosophy in the true sense of the word. Philosophical argumentation itself must critically justify its claims if they are to stand up to a philosophical audience. Philosophical systems that have failed to justify their claims and premises, and yet have held fast to them, unwaveringly are termed ideology.

Philosophy, therefore, requires autonomy like any other science, and only in this freedom can it be of benefit to humanity. “He is neither a believer nor an unbeliever, neither a Christian nor a Muslim – he is only a man who philosophizes,” Swieżawski claims.<sup>10</sup> Many ideas have not yet been thought out, and there are just as many topics that will not be fully exhausted during the whole history of thought. Stimuli come from different kinds of impulses, whether from a religious source or from natural sciences. In a hundred years, as Swieżawski writes, an impulse may suddenly appear that we would not even think of today.<sup>11</sup>

However, if we speak of Christian philosophy from a theological perspective, we must emphasize the fact that Christian theology is not merely a theology of myth or Revelation, but in its historical form developed inseparably from a philosophical approach to the world that interpreted the experientially lived world in relation to the absolute Being.<sup>12</sup> Out of this concept developed specific metaphysics that has undeniably influenced the thought of the Western man. It is this aspect that Claude Tresmontant emphasizes. According to him, we can speak of Christian philosophy precisely because Christian thought, following on from Hebrew thought, contains certain metaphysics which presupposes a certain concept of being, of the relationship between the uncreated and created beings, of the one and the many, a certain

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<sup>9</sup> Stefan Swieżawski, *Nový výklad sv. Tomáše* (Brno: Cesta, 1998), 28.

<sup>10</sup> Swieżawski, *Nový výklad sv. Tomáše*, 55.

<sup>11</sup> Swieżawski, *Nový výklad sv. Tomáše*, 27.

<sup>12</sup> Pavol Dancák, “The Fundamental Issue in Education and the Problem of Responsibility,” *Journal of Critical Realism* 4 (2021): 381–395.

understanding of the visible world, of time, of agency, of the man, of the soul and the body, and of the human sense of life, in contrast to other metaphysics (Greece, India, China).<sup>13</sup> Thus, according to Tresmontant, Christian philosophy exists because “there is an organon of true metaphysical science inherent in Christianity and Judaism which human reason can discover, verify, and define by means of its methods.”<sup>14</sup>

This aspect becomes crucial for Tresmontant. For if the existence of Christian philosophy was based solely on the books of Holy Scripture, it could be argued that it is exclusively revealed theology and metaphysics. But in Christian philosophy the rational justification of Revelation plays an indispensable role, which is also understood in theology itself as a historical-progressive process, and thus also requires rational interpretation. A rational approach is essential if we are not to fall into ossified fundamentalism. Christian philosophy is, therefore, according to Tresmontant, the true philosophy that Christianity embraces because it is a way of thinking that is compatible with Christianity. Inherent in Christian philosophy is an inductive and rational procedure in which one starts from experience rather than from Revelation, and in which one merely works towards what Revelation teaches. It is precisely because Christian theology is compatible only with this mode of philosophy, and not with philosophies based on myth, such as Plato’s myth of the pre-existence of souls, or Hegel’s myth of the tragic birth of the Absolute, or Nietzsche’s myth of the eternal return, that we can speak of Christian philosophy.<sup>15</sup>

This is precisely the aspect that John Paul II has in mind in *Fides et Ratio*. If a philosopher is a Christian, he cannot ignore his faith in philosophy. His faith will logically form part of the presuppositions that influence philosophizing itself. This, however, can take various forms. In this sense, he speaks of the legitimacy of the term “Christian philosophy” and emphasizes that it is not meant to refer to a kind of official philosophy of the Church: “The term Christian philosophy includes those important developments of philosophical thinking which would not have happened without the direct or indirect contribution of Christian faith.”<sup>16</sup>

In this context he speaks of the “subjective aspect” of Christian philosophy, which consists in daring to ask the most radical questions of a metaphysical type the Christian thinker finds difficult to grasp without the knowledge received from Revelation and the “objective aspect” of Christian philosophy which entitles the thinker to examine the rationality of certain truths of Scripture.<sup>17</sup> So, it is not a question of artificially tying philosophy to religion and, therefore, we cannot

<sup>13</sup> Tresmontant, *Teodicea*, 60–61.

<sup>14</sup> Tresmontant, *Teodicea*, 62.

<sup>15</sup> Tresmontant, *Teodicea*, 64–65.

<sup>16</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 76.

<sup>17</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 76.

speak of Christian philosophy in some exclusive sense from the position of which only one philosophy, one philosophical system, one method would be Christian and the others would not. We can, however, speak of Christian philosophy as a philosophy inspired by Christianity, specifically oriented towards metaphysical ways of inquiring and seeking answers.

## Christian Philosophy and Metaphysics

It cannot be denied that metaphysics has played a major role in the history of theology and philosophy. Philosophical-theological thought up to the phase of the modern period was predominantly based on metaphysical, Aristotelian-Thomistic thought which was considered (and still has many advocates today) as the best alternative for linking philosophy and theology. The modern turn in philosophy, however, opened up serious questions for which the classical speculative scholastic way of thinking was insufficient. Even the non-scholastic renewal, directly supported by Rome in the modernist conflict, kept up the pressure for pluralism and the necessity to rethink the school metaphysics.

However, Neo-Thomism and Neo-Scholasticism themselves could not remain enclosed within the paradigm of medieval philosophy and theology, although they were also prioritized for quite a long time because of the ecclesiastical sanctions to which different alternative proposals for theology or any questioning of scholasticism were often subjected. In addition to the revival of the Thomistic tradition and the rethinking of many themes, there was necessarily a need to think through the problems with the use of the methods and schools of thought of other philosophical and theological approaches. Until the turn of the century, a rather defensive apologetic stance had prevailed, which had defended itself against the errors of the age and had insisted on the “ownership” of truth. Since the 1920s and 1930s, an open-minded approach has been promoted that takes into account the insights and problems of modern philosophy from the perspective of Christian thought.

In the field of theology, one of the pioneers was the Jesuit Rousselot, who became convinced through his own study that modernism pointed to real problems and therefore began to seek a satisfactory answer at the heart of scholastic theology itself, namely, a completely new interpretation of Thomas Aquinas’s writings, especially his interpretation of the concept of faith. Similarly, the theologian M.-D. Chenu emphasizes Thomas’s understanding of faith as directed towards God as salvation. It is a knowledge in which the will plays a decisive role – always forcing thought into

a never-fulfilled and never-ending attempt to penetrate the transcending mystery. This mystery touches upon the problem of the immutability of the revealed truths and the dogmatic development and evolution of historically contingent knowledge.

Even scholasticism understood the analogy between dogmatic development and the progress of human knowledge. Chenu, however, understood that this progression is not merely an analogy, but the proper principle and psychological basis of dogmatic development. As the old scholastic principle has it, – the *knower adapts the knowable in the knower to the possibilities of his knowledge*. Thus God can only speak to us in human language, in human words, which have become ever richer and more fitting with the development of knowledge. Chenu realized that if Thomas applied this only to the development of Revelation, it applies equally to the development of the treasure of faith entrusted to the Church.<sup>18</sup>

Other notable figures included Erich Przywara, who dealt with Kant, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche and Romano Guardini, who tried to perceive the uniqueness of the person in a new way. Joseph Maréchal attempted to interpret metaphysics using Kant's transcendental method which, with Kant's critique of knowledge, had been until then considered in Christian thought as a justification for complete subjectivism and relativism. We can also mention other thinkers such as Etienne Gilson, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, Johan B. Lotz, Emerich Coreth or the theologian Karl Rahner. Many were also inspired by existentialism or the philosophy of Martin Heidegger.<sup>19</sup>

After the Second Vatican Council, Thomism could no longer be considered the only alternative for the Christian-minded philosopher or theologian. The Polish thinker Stefan Swieżawski, who attended the Council as a lay auditor and actively participated in the drafting of the constitution *Gaudium et Spes* and, in part, the decree on the apostolate of the laity, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, also perceived this shift in the same way. In his philosophical career, Swieżawski was actively engaged in Thomas Aquinas's writings, yet he pointed out the negative aspects of their purposive use. He draws attention to the distinction between the work of Thomas, the Thomism that emerged from it, and the ideologized Thomism. According to Swieżawski, it was the Second Vatican Council that brought to an end two epochs in the life of the Church, namely the Constantinopolitan and the Thomistic stages. Yet he himself regards the work of Thomas as a great contribution which still has much to say. Nevertheless, he points out that philosophy cannot be limited

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<sup>18</sup> Ted Schoof, *Aggiornamento na prahu 3. tisíciletí? – Vývoj moderní katolické teologie* (Praha: Vyšehrad, 2004), 148.

<sup>19</sup> Emerich Coreth, Peter Ehlen and Josef Schmidt, *Filosofie 20. století* (Olomouc: Nakladatelství Olomouc, 2006), 96–97.

to one way of thinking. It cannot be commanded but must be the fruit of freedom. Philosophy and theology, according to Swieżawski, must be pluralistic because there are myriad of ways to interpret Revelation. It was precisely according to Swieżawski that the Council put an end to the practice of imposing one philosophical-theological ideology identified with Thomism.<sup>20</sup>

It may be surprising, then, to see a kind of appeal for a return to metaphysics in *Fides et Ratio*, where John Paul II gives as an example the concept and approach of St. Thomas Aquinas and emphasizes as certain foundation the metaphysical position of the Christian thinker. In relation to the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas and the Thomistic tradition, he speaks of still valid heritage that has influenced both philosophy and theology and has made it possible to establish in an appropriate way the relationship between reason and faith.<sup>21</sup>

On the other hand, he points to the enrichment of theology by other philosophical movements: “Yet the Thomistic and neo-Thomistic revival was not the only sign of a resurgence of philosophical thought in culture of Christian inspiration. Earlier still, and parallel to Pope Leo’s call, there had emerged a number of Catholic philosophers who, adopting more recent currents of thought and according to a specific method, produced philosophical works of great influence and lasting value.”<sup>22</sup> Thomas is thus singled out in *Fides et Ratio* not to suggest the exclusive position of Thomism as one of the key types of philosophy, but one that is now part of a legitimate philosophical plurality that can equally enrich Christian theology.<sup>23</sup>

Nevertheless, John Paul II sees an important dimension of philosophy in the relationship between faith and reason in the metaphysical orientation. He points out that a metaphysical approach is indispensable for the relationship between faith and reason: “Therefore, a philosophy which shuns metaphysics would be radically unsuited to the task of mediation in the understanding of Revelation.”<sup>24</sup> Only from this metaphysical conception can a profound unity between faith and reason be born.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, in connection with the interpretation of Revelation is “the need for a philosophy of *genuinely metaphysical* range, capable, that is, of transcending empirical data in order to attain something absolute, ultimate and foundational in its search for truth.”<sup>26</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Swieżawski, *Nový výklad sv. Tomáše*, 7–8.

<sup>21</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 76, 57.

<sup>22</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 59.

<sup>23</sup> Harold E. Ernst, “New Horizons in Catholic Philosophical Theology: *Fides et Ratio* and the Changed Status of Thomism,” *The Heythrop Journal* 1 (2006): 34.

<sup>24</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 83.

<sup>25</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 48.

<sup>26</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 83.

However, when one speaks of “ultimate” and “foundational,” he refers to meta-physics. Inquiry into principles will be a perennial mode of truth-seeking for the Christian thinker, whether he be a theologian or a philosopher. This is the reason why John Paul II speaks of the necessity of metaphysical questioning. The question is raised, however, whether there is only one type of metaphysics, as it was dominantly presented in the Christian milieu even in the first half of the twentieth century.

## The Mystical Aspect of Metaphysics

Christian theology and philosophy are aware that reason, because of its finitude and limitations, will never be able to know truth as it is fully expressed in Revelation. The metaphysics of which John Paul II speaks is, therefore, not merely speculative reasoning, but a way of experiencing the truth of Being that is not graspable categorically because Being is Being without forms, and in this sense cannot be grasped by the discursive type of thinking to which a certain form of metaphysics has fallen victim. Blondel aptly puts it when he points out that an overly abstract mode of thought appeals only to reason, whereas faith requires the effort of the whole person: “The speculative proof of God’s existence does not touch the heart and shake the will to action.”<sup>27</sup>

“Faith alone makes it possible to penetrate the mystery in a way that allows us to understand it coherently.”<sup>28</sup> Only in the plane of faith does the metaphysical approach allow us to transcend our horizons to the last total horizon of being. Therefore, God is neither fully comprehensible nor aptly nameable.<sup>29</sup>

In the philosophical reflection on religion, therefore, we cannot do without a form of mysticism. In this sense, the appeal to metaphysics is legitimate if we see it as the possibility of going “beyond” physics and “beyond” a discursive type of thinking that opens up deeper planes of experience with God. The metaphysician is thus, in a sense, a theologian.<sup>30</sup> Finally, John Paul II emphasizes this fact when he speaks of a philosophy of authentically metaphysical outreach, which is “a philosophy of *genuinely metaphysical* range, capable, that is, of transcending empirical data

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<sup>27</sup> Karel Říha, *Filozofie konání – k 100. výročí Blondelovy „L’Action“* (Olomouc: Matice cyrilometodějská, 1993), 78.

<sup>28</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 13.

<sup>29</sup> Mikuláš Kuzánsky, *O učenej nevedomosti* (Bratislava: Pravda, 1979), 39.

<sup>30</sup> Swieżawski, *Nový výklad sv. Tomáše*, 54.

in order to attain something absolute, ultimate and foundational in its search for truth.”<sup>31</sup> This is the reason why another remark of John Paul II is important: “Here I do not mean to speak of metaphysics in the sense of a specific school or a particular historical current of thought. I want only to state that reality and truth do transcend the factual and the empirical, and to vindicate the human being’s capacity to know this transcendent and metaphysical dimension in a way that is true and certain, albeit imperfect and analogical.”<sup>32</sup> That he does not refer to one type of metaphysical reasoning is evidenced in paragraph 72 of the encyclical, where he speaks of other great metaphysical systems, especially in the milieu of India, which is characterized by great spiritual fervor. It is the task of Christians in that culture to be able to select from this rich treasure the elements compatible with their faith so that the enrichment of Christian thought results.

John Paul II does not, therefore, defend the position of speculative philosophy that wants to describe structures, definitions, and indeed everything clearly in a way that subjects the whole to pre-given schemes regarded as definitively valid. This type of thinking has unfortunately been dominant in Western culture and has been very successful in empirical science, but it has become sterile to the problem of being and the existence of the man.

A metaphysical approach that is open to questioning and searching for the whole is legitimate and cannot fail to be meta-physical. Finally, it is also inherent in the belief in God, who is the principle of the existence of a holistic reality. In knowing truth, then, it is not a discursive type of thinking that wants to lay a hand on being, but rather an experience with the truth of being. This is done only through experience, which we can label as mystical. Unfortunately, our Western culture has been too enchanted by analytical thinking, which is excellent in science but which does not touch at all upon the essential questions of human existence. That is why John Paul II incorporates the relationship between faith and reason into anthropology which is metaphysical in character and attempts to define the ultimate foundation and meaning of human life.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 83.

<sup>32</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 83.

<sup>33</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 81.

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## Conclusion

It is a question for further reflection how this metaphysical approach can be mediated in today's Western world, which has become too accustomed to a one-sided type of discursive and quantitative thinking. The mental structures created in this way are characterized by a one-sided focus and thus tend to be fixed, which in turn gives them strength. Descartes's famous sentence: "I think, therefore I am," essentially aptly characterizes the problem of our time, which has relied too much on thinking and from which it began to derive its being. As we have already said, this way of thinking is excellent for science, but it cannot be applied to society as a whole and certainly not to human life. Metaphysical thinking in a whole-oriented dimension can be a certain counterbalance if it does not itself remain closed in a dualistic mind. This seems to be what is significant in John Paul II's writings in which he also pointed out other possible metaphysical traditions.

Thus, it is not meant to be exclusive adherence to Thomistic or neo-Thomistic philosophy. The latter is only one of several philosophical approaches enriching metaphysically oriented Christian thought. John Paul II was also inspired by thinkers from the ranks of philosophy of dialogue or phenomenology. Finally, in the encyclical he also speaks of culturally distinct major metaphysical systems (for example in India) that may also contain elements that enrich Christian thought. Metaphysics, then, is not a finished project, but receives new forms of expression that are more experience-centered. This is also how, for example, the French Dominican Jean-Pierre Torrell interprets the work of Thomas Aquinas.

The deepest experiences across religions cannot be explained by speculative rationality alone because they must be experienced. However, even those who experience them can never present them in words and concepts in ways that someone who has not had such experiences can understand. This idea is presented by the Jesuit and missionary Enomiya-Lassalle, a sympathizer of non-dual thinking.<sup>34</sup> Metaphysics can therefore be an attempt to go "beyond thought," but not in the subject-object sense, but in an attempt to perceive reality as a whole, which is a framework for individual parts. Only from the position of the whole is it then possible to understand our everyday situation and discover what is the basis of our nature and, therefore, our goal.

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<sup>34</sup> Hugo M. Enomiya-Lassalle, *Kam se ubírá člověk* (Brno: Cesta, 1998), 40.

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Radovan Šoltés

## L'aspect métaphysique de la philosophie chrétienne dans *Fides et Ratio*

### Résumé

L'encyclique *Fides et ratio* est un document qui continue d'inspirer, dans lequel Jean-Paul II a cherché à répondre à la question du rapport entre la foi et la raison, et donc entre la théologie et la philosophie. Elle s'inscrit dans la tradition de l'Église, mais reflète en même temps la vision postconciliaire de l'autonomie des sciences empiriques et des sciences humaines. La présente étude traite de la philosophie que Jean-Paul II appelle « philosophie chrétienne ». Le concept de métaphysique, qui a influencé la philosophie chrétienne, est ici crucial. Malgré les nombreuses critiques dont la métaphysique a fait l'objet depuis l'époque moderne, Jean-Paul II défend la position métaphysique comme partie intégrante de la pensée du philosophe chrétien. Sa conception de la métaphysique sera examinée dans l'étude qui suit.

Mots-clés: Jean-Paul II, *Fides et ratio*, philosophie chrétienne, métaphysique, mysticisme

Radovan Šoltés

## L'aspetto metafisico della filosofia cristiana nella *Fides et Ratio*

### Sommario


L'enciclica *Fides et ratio* è un documento fonte di continua ispirazione in cui Giovanni Paolo II ha cercato di rispondere alla domanda sul rapporto tra fede e ragione, e quindi tra teologia e filosofia. Essa segue la tradizione della Chiesa, ma allo stesso tempo riflette la visione post-conciliare dell'autonomia delle scienze empiriche e delle discipline umanistiche. Il presente studio tratta della filosofia che Giovanni Paolo II definisce "filosofia cristiana." Il concetto di metafisica, che ha influenzato la filosofia cristiana, è fondamentale in questo contesto. Nonostante le numerose critiche mosse alla metafisica a partire dall'età moderna, Giovanni Paolo II difende la posizione metafisica come parte integrante del pensiero del filosofo cristiano. La sua concezione della metafisica sarà discussa nel seguente studio.

Parole chiave: Giovanni Paolo II, *Fides et ratio*, filosofia cristiana, metafisica, misticismo




## **Gabriel Paľa**

University of Presov, Slovakia

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3544-8713>

## **Michaela Šandalová**

University of Presov, Slovakia

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-7571-038X>

# Benedict XVI's Messages to the Mass Media

**Abstract:** Exploring the ethical implications of new modes of communication in the context of the theology of Benedict XVI and the official documents of the Catholic Church, this article offers insightful reflections on how digital technologies and modern media affect human dignity, authentic communication, and the dissemination of truth. During his pontificate, Benedict XVI paid particular attention to this theme, which is evident in his official documents and speeches. Benedict XVI brought a theological dimension to the debate on new media, emphasizing the connection between truth, love and authentic communication. His theology and the official documents of the Catholic Church remind us that technologies and new forms of communication are moral tools that must be used responsibly, with respect for human dignity and with the aim of spreading the truth and building a more just society.

**Keywords:** ethics, communication, media, theology, Benedict XVI

# Introduction

*Progress is only possible in a society where moral values and strong convictions exist.*

Pope Benedict XVI

When the young Professor *Ratzinger* lectured to students at the University of Tübingen on Christianity, he had one basic intention. He wanted to be understood even by people who were not used to the language of the Church and who found that language disturbing. He perceived that to these people Christianity, thus packaged, was inaccessible. He chose the *Apostles' Creed*, also known as the "I Believe in God prayer," as the schema to follow. The incredible thoroughness and depth with which this wise man touched on the fundamental issues of Christianity is breathtaking. He showed in an admirable way how Christian truths are very closely connected to human life in its depths, which unfortunately the world deals with so little.<sup>1</sup>

Joseph Ratzinger, Benedict XVI, was not only an outstanding theologian, but also an astute observer, diagnostician and prognosticator of his times. His thinking was far ahead of the curve, prophetically looking to the future and foreseeing the devastating consequences of human actions that are coming to fruition today, such as the rapidly increasing secularization and the related decline of youth in the Church. Both as a moderate modernist and as a convinced conservative, he foresaw the impending collapse or self-destruction of humanity living without God. The world, in his view, was on the brink. Therefore, in his countless speeches and writings, he repeatedly urged people to take care of the environment so that the earth, which the man received from the Creator, could be passed on to future generations.

On several occasions in his pastoral and academic work, he pointed out that both the world and the Church today are in deep crisis. Wars, disasters, famines, scandals, people focusing on themselves and an increasingly self-centred lifestyle, as if God did not exist, are leading the world to self-destruction.<sup>2</sup> With Pope Benedict XVI, an era came to an end. His years as Pope were like a great spiritual exercise for the Church, helping us to look uncompromisingly inwards and then to strengthen ourselves internally and externally. This humble and tireless champion of truth,

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Úvod do kresťanstva* (Trnava: Dobrá kniha, 2020), 45.

<sup>2</sup> Martyna Zaremba, „Welt auf der Kippe – Widerspiegelungen der Brüche des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts in Peter Seewalds Biografie Benedikt XVI. Ein Leben“, *Teologia w Polsce* 18 (2024): 141–154.

who often astonished the world with his attitudes and decisions, perceived his position as a responsibility. He was one of the most brilliant personalities of the Catholic Church.<sup>3</sup>

## Benedict XVI as a Communicator

Pope Benedict XVI was not only a brilliant theologian during his lifetime, but also a skilled communicator who used courage and creativity to engage the challenges of social media. He continued to communicate effectively in retirement through silence and prayer. Benedict XVI was also the first Pope to send text messages (to young people at the WYD in Sydney), hold a dialogue with astronauts on the International Space Station, answer questions on television on Good Friday (in 2011) and write an editorial in the *Financial Times* at Christmas 2012, focusing on the engagement of Christians in today's world.

Above all, Benedict XVI was the first Pope to face the invasion of the social media scene, which profoundly reshaped the global communication context in the years of his pontificate. Benedict also understood that the false distinction between the virtual and the real must be overcome because what is shared and interacted with on new platforms has clear consequences for people's daily lives. Benedict XVI encouraged Christians to be digital witnesses rather than influencers. He did it not just with words. On December 12, 2012, he became the first pope to send a tweet via the *@Pontifex* account opened a few days earlier. His decision was sometimes compared to the establishment of *Vatican Radio* by Pius XI.

Not everyone agreed with his action because people feared that the Pope would be exposed to criticism and insults, but Benedict XVI was convinced of his decision to move towards the New Evangelization. Once again, the Pope knew how to harness the potential of technological innovation to reach people who would otherwise remain excluded from the proclamation of the Gospel. Thus, in almost eight years of his pontificate, Benedict XVI communicated with creativity and courage, using the most diverse means of communication.

During his era, the rise of blogs as means of communication was well underway and went mainstream shortly before his election as a pope, and it was at this time that Catholic blogs began to take off in a big way. In addition, Facebook began expanding to universities a few months after Pope Benedict's election, and

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Seewald, *Benedict XVI. Posledné rozhovory* (Trnava: SSV, 2017).

the following year it was opened up to all. At the same time, Twitter took off into the world. These developments in the Internet use affected the lives of millions of people. Twitter made it possible for news and information to spread even faster, especially to journalists, bloggers and celebrities. Facebook found its way into the homes and lives of millions of people.<sup>4</sup>

## The Main Characteristics of Benedict XVI as a Communicator

1. Theological depth and precision
  - Benedict XVI had a talent for translating complex theological concepts into understandable language, which enabled him to reach not only theologians but also the wider public;
  - His writings and speeches were always rigorously elaborated and rooted in biblical and patristic traditions;
  - Despite his profound erudition, he was often perceived as a pope who emphasized the substance of faith and the simple truth of the Gospel;
2. Sense of truth in communication
  - Benedict XVI stressed that communication should serve the truth and be based on respect for every person;
  - In his messages, he often spoke of the need for truthfulness and authenticity, especially in the digital age where there is a risk of manipulation of information;
3. Digital and modern communication
  - As a pope, he was aware of the importance of new media and technologies, seeing them not only as tools but also as a cultural space where the Church could be present;
  - By joining Twitter, he showed openness to modern forms of communication;
4. Clarity and a calm tone
  - His speeches and encyclicals were known for their calm tones and clear structures, allowing him to reach out to believers and non-believers alike;
  - Although he was less charismatic than his predecessor John Paul II, his oratorical skills were based on intellectual authority and spiritual depth;

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<sup>4</sup> Timothy Finigan, "New Movements and New Media," *New Blackfriars* 94 (2013): 224.

## 5. Dialogue with culture

- Benedict XVI promoted the dialogue between faith and reason, which was made clear in his speeches, such as his famous address in Regensburg in 2006;
- Although the speech caused controversy, its aim was to highlight the importance of rationality and dialogue between religions and cultures;

## 6. Focus on content

- Benedict emphasized the content and meaning of communication more than its form. For him, communication was a tool for spreading the Gospel and the profound truths of our faith;

As the Pope wrote once, the means or tools of communication not only serve to exchange information, ideas and understanding between different groups in the society, but are also tainted by ambiguity. This danger, he said, was that the media tended to breed a monoculture that obscured creative genius, suppressed the subtlety of complex thought, and underestimated the specificity of cultural practices and the distinctiveness of religious beliefs. In his view, the media should be a resource that builds the *civilization of love* that all people desire. He went on to say that it could only be built if the media communicates only truth, information, ideas and facts openly in the light of proclaiming the truth. Thus, there would be no ambiguity between the statement and the fact, but it would be possible for the true word to form relationships filled with love, that is with God Himself, and the man would live in the midst of the Trinity.<sup>5</sup>

# Benedict XVI's Theology Concerning Media and Communication

In his official documents and against the background of the theology of communication, Benedict XVI explored the ethical implications of new modes of communication. According to Benedict, the role that the media acquired in the society had to be understood as an essential part of the anthropological question that emerges as the key challenge of the third millennium. Throughout his academic career as a theologian, as well as during his papacy, Benedict XVI showed an interest in truth that was central to his thinking.

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<sup>5</sup> Michal řterák, „Povolání médií v poselstvích Benedikta XVI. ke Světovému dni sdělovacích prostředků,” *Studia theologica* 1 (2023): 161.

With regard to communication, the Pope believed that the media should not become the voice of either economic materialism or ethical relativism. In this respect, he felt that the relationship between the journalistic search for truth and the pressures of power was a hot topic in contemporary journalism. Benedict XVI believed that the ultimate meaning of the media must be sought in an anthropological perspective. This means that the communication industry can produce a civilizing effect not only thanks to technological progress, but above all when it serves the truth and promotes the dignity of individuals and peoples, justice, fraternity, charity, literacy, socialization, democracy, dialogue, solidarity and the common good.

Digital networks are creating a new social and communication structure. In this respect, in the commitment to justice and charity in today's world, the phenomenon of mass media has rapidly reduced the distance between very different people and cultures, so that the needs of humanity are now much more immediately known. From the Pope's point of view, it was an advantage to help our neighbors in need. In this context, Benedict XVI noted that the media was a network that facilitated communication, communion and collaboration.

From the perspective of the theology of communication and as a consequence of God's self-communication and the man's capacity for communication, Benedict XVI stressed that new information technologies could become powerful instruments of unity and peace or, on the contrary, of destruction and division. This is because the media can facilitate the dissemination of true and false news, information and disinformation, formation and distortion, as well as humanization and dehumanization.

In his messages for World Communications Day, Benedict XVI insisted on the importance of dialogue so that the Internet could be used properly and communication could take on value and meaning, as well as the connection between silence and the word. Two aspects of communication that must be balanced, alternated and kept integrated with each other if authentic dialogue and deep closeness between people are to be achieved. In this sense, he talked about how silence brings listening, knowing, understanding, deepening, balance, gestures, bodily expression, and questions about the meaning of life. For this reason, Benedict XVI argued that it was necessary to create an appropriate environment, a kind of ecosystem that would maintain a fair balance between silence, words, images and sounds.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Jesús Sánchez-Camacho, "Pope Benedict XVI's Approach to Media and Digital Culture in Catholic Social Thought," *Church, Communication and Culture* 2 (2022): 391.

## Benedict XVI's Writings on the Media and the New Evangelization

At least five of his eight messages for World Communications Days are dedicated to this unprecedented digital Areopagus. Together they form a kind of overview by the *Teaching Office of the Church* of this new reality that has changed not only the way we communicate, but also the way we treat others. Benedict XVI immediately grasped the significance of the revolution in social media, which is not so much a means to use as an environment to inhabit. He, therefore, coined the term “digital continent” for social media and said that, like the geographic, the digital continent requires the commitment of the faithful — especially the laity, in accordance with *Inter Mirifica*, to evangelize this new mission territory.

During his pontificate, Pope Benedict delivered eight messages for World Communications Day. His texts reflect the digital transformation that the world came to know more and more rapidly in the previous two decades.<sup>7</sup>

### Official messages for World Social Communications Day:

- Message for the 40th World CAP Day (2006) — Media — a network of communication, community and cooperation;
- Message for the 41st World CAP Day (2007) — Children and the means of communication: a challenge for education;
- Message for the 42nd World CAP Day (2008) — Means of social communication: at the crossroads between self-promotion and service. Seeking the truth with the intention of sharing it; (This one invites us to reflect on the role played by the media, and in particular on the increasing risk that they would become commonplace and no longer be instruments in the service of truth — something to be sought and shared);

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<sup>7</sup> Michal Štverák, „Povolání médií v poselstvích Benedikta XVI. ke Světovému dni sdělovacích prostředků,” *Studia theologica* 1 (2023): 165.

- Message for the 43rd World CAP Day (2009) — New technologies, new relationships. Promoting a culture of respect, dialogue, and friendship; (This message speaks of the power of technology to bring people together and is particularly relevant for young people because it touches upon the effects of new technology and defines new technologies as a true gift to humanity. The message also highlights the values that distinguish such environments, first and foremost the values of friendship and the networks of relationships that new technologies have not made possible);<sup>8</sup>
- Message for the 44th World CAP Day (2010) — The priest and the pastoral ministry of the digital world: new media at the service of the word;
- Message for the 45th World CAP Day (2011) — Truth, proclamation and authenticity of life in the digital age;
- Message for the 46th World Day of the CAP (2012) — “Silence and the Word: the way of evangelization”;
- Message for the 47th World Day of Social Media (2013) — Social networks: doors of truth and faith; new spaces for evangelization; (The Pope recognized the growing importance of social networks in people’s lives and the way they can create new relationships and communities. He noted that when used in a balanced way, social media can strengthen the bonds of unity between individuals and effectively promote the harmony of the human family. The Holy Father exhorted people to use social media in an inclusive and thoughtful way and try to avoid being overwhelmed by the loudest or most popular arguments on any topic. Pope Benedict saw social media as portals of truth and faith, and as new spaces for evangelization);<sup>9</sup>

## Apostolic Exhortations:

- Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation “VERBUM” of the Holy Father Benedict XVI to the bishops, clergy, consecrated and lay faithful to the Word of God in the life and mission of the Church (30 September 2010);

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<sup>8</sup> Matthew Harrison, “Technology and Relationships Key to Pope’s Message for World Communications Day.” *Salt + Light Media*, accessed July 13, 2024, <https://slmedia.org/blog/technology-and-relationships-key-to-popes-message-for-world-communications-day>.

<sup>9</sup> Benedict XVI, “Social Networks: Portals of Truth and Faith; New Spaces for Evangelization.” *Messages World Communications Days*, accessed Jun 19, 2014, [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/communications/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20130124\\_47th-world-communications-day.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/communications/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20130124_47th-world-communications-day.html).

## Apostolic Letters:

- The Apostolic Letter “MOTU PROPRIO FIDES PER DOCTRINAM” is issued, *modifying* the Apostolic Constitution “PASTOR BONUS” and transferring the competence of catechesis from the Congregation for Clerics to the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization;<sup>10</sup>

## The Ethical Challenges of New Media in the Light of Benedict's Theology

The term “communicate” occurs 43 times in the messages of Benedict XVI. In the messages analysed, Benedict XVI refers in particular to social media, whose main characteristic is the interpersonal communication of its users. This is why the themes discussed by the Pope implicitly include the transmission of faith understood as interpersonal communication mediated in culture. In his 2007 message on the influence of the media in shaping the cultural environment, Pope Benedict XVI wrote: “The complex challenges facing education today are often related to the growing influence of the media in our world. As one aspect of the phenomenon of globalization and a product of the rapid development of technology, they are shaping the cultural environment. Some have even argued that the formative influence of the media on education rivals that of the school, the Church, and perhaps even the family. For many people, reality is what the media deem to be real.”

Here the Pope referred to the content of the Apostolic Letter “Rapid Development,” in which John Paul II stresses the fact that from the very fact of the existence and influence of the media, a new culture is born. In the letter, John Paul II also recalled the text of his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, where he referred to the media not only as instruments of evangelization, but also stressed the phenomenon of the new culture created by the world of media world in which the Gospel should be included.

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<sup>10</sup> Benedict XVI, “Social Networks: Portals of Truth and Faith; New Spaces for Evangelization.”

This idea, taken from the teachings of John Paul II, Benedict XVI recalled the idea of cultural changes under the influence of media and the formation of a new media culture. In his 2011 message, he compared the socio-cultural changes that took place under the influence of the Industrial Revolution and the current broad cultural transformation under the influence of new communication technologies, saying that, “it is an increasingly widespread conviction that just as the Industrial Revolution, by introducing innovations into the production cycle and into the lives of workers, brought about profound changes in society, so too are the changes under way today in the field of communication, which are giving direction to major cultural and social changes.”<sup>11</sup>

## Hope in New Media and Their Positive Potential

According to Benedict XVI, the progress of the technological era brought many good things, which are also recognized by the Church. For example, the Internet — the rapid transmission of images and sound — opened up possibilities by which people, even at a great distance, can remain in almost daily contact, in a global connection. The Pope explained the popularity of the new technologies mainly because of their ability to satiate a basic human desire, which is to make contact. He said that when we feel the need to get closer to others, to know them better and to be known by them, we are responding to God’s call, a call that is part of our nature because we were created in the image and likeness of God, the God of communication and communion.

He recalled that the concept of friendship was revived in the vocabulary of digital social networks that emerged in the past. That is why a true friendship has always been considered one of the greatest riches a human being can possess. For this reason, he reminded that care must be taken not to devalue the concept and experience of friendship. It would be sad if our desire to forge and develop online friendships was to come at the cost of not having time for family, our fellow human beings and those we encounter in the everyday realities. Indeed, when the desire for

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<sup>11</sup> Mirosław Chmielewski, “*Media Culture as a Challenge in Communicating the Faith as Presented in Benedict XVI’s Messages for the World Communications Days*,” *Biuletyn Edukacji Medialnej* 1 (2016): 156–178.

virtual relationships becomes an obsession, the result is that people become isolated and cut off from real social contact. This also ends up disrupting the patterns of rest, peace and reflection that are essential for healthy human development.

The task of reshaping the digital era is a challenge and a mission especially for the young. The Pope invited them to evangelize the digital continent to share the good news of God who became man, suffered, died and rose again to save humanity. Pope Benedict XVI called us to be proclaimers of the Truth. He argued that even those who work in the field of information production, media owners, publishers and journalists must feel obliged to have respect for human dignity and the value of a person, that is to offer words, images and information in a way that does not tarnish beauty, does not diminish respect for every person, does not denigrate and does not relativize the values of Truth and Love.<sup>12</sup>

## Conclusion

The time of Benedict XVI was marked by the use of new media by the Catholic Church. It started with Catholic websites and moved on to blogging and tweeting. This is how the Church had to start communicating with younger people until newer digital systems replaced them. Most blogs were dominated by a conservative version of Catholicism, but this may have been what appealed to the young people who are still drawn to the Church. During his time as a theologian and as Archbishop of Munich and Freising, Benedict certainly could not avoid media interaction. The relationship between Benedict XVI and the media could be called tense and intense. The one who was the Logos Pope, known as the Pope of Reason and Word because of the depth and eloquence of his speeches and homilies, chose silence at the end of his life as the best way to underline everything he said.

Like Guardini, the German Pope believed that truth did not need special adornments to be felt. Truth speaks with its beauty. It is clear that Benedict XVI reached the hearts of his listeners on many occasions, for example, while still a cardinal, when he denounced the “filth” in the Church during the *Via Crucis*, a few days before the death of John Paul II, at the funeral of his predecessor and at the beginning of his own pontificate. He addressed a number of hot topics. They ranged from liturgy to liberation theology, from the very concept of the Church to the existence

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<sup>12</sup> Tadeusz Zasepa, and Jarosław Wozniak, „Nové technológie a nové vzťahy v Digital Nation – podpora kultúry, úcty, dialógu a priateľstva,“ *Biuletyn Edukacji Medialnej* 1 (2009): 42–43.

of the devil. He also dealt with ecumenism and the Church's relations with other religions, as well as the centrality of the Eucharist and the role of bishops' conferences.

In order to better understand Benedict XVI's reflections on the media and social networks and on the necessary relationship between reason, word, silence and truth, we also draw on the reflections of the German Pope himself, not only in relation to news and social media, but also with regard to his own relationship between reason and word, silence and truth. In short, Benedict always defended the persuasive value of reason, the beauty of truth, and the need to alternate between words and silence. Benedict XVI's communication style had more in common with the rational than the emotional, with the word more than the gesture, with silence more than loud polemic.<sup>13</sup>

Pope Benedict XVI often explained what true being in the Church was — not the invention of an ideal Church, but the readiness to live and work in the very Church that is plagued by the powers of evil. The Holy Father developed this idea and expressed how, from his point of view, the Church changed along with the world and vice versa. This teaching corresponds to the experience that Benedict XVI left to the world because the union of the divine reality with human weakness has been a characteristic of the Catholic Church for centuries.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Pablo Blanco, "Words and Silence: the Relationship Between Benedict XVI and the Media," *Church, Communication and Culture* 3 (2018): 87.

<sup>14</sup> Paweł Kasperowicz, „Benedykta XVI — wymyślanie Kościoła idealnego w kontekście synodalności Papieża Franciszka,” *Symposium* 2 (2022): 146.

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Gabriel Paľa, Michaela Šandalová

## Messages de Benoît XVI aux moyens de communication sociale

### Résumé

Explorant les implications éthiques des nouveaux modes de communication dans le contexte de la théologie de Benoît XVI et des documents officiels de l'Église catholique, cet article propose des réflexions pertinentes sur la manière dont les technologies numériques et les médias modernes affectent la dignité humaine, la communication authentique et la diffusion de la vérité. Au cours de son pontificat, Benoît XVI a accordé une attention particulière à ce thème, comme en témoignent ses documents officiels et ses discours. Benoît XVI a apporté une dimension théologique au débat sur les nouveaux médias, en soulignant le lien entre vérité, amour et communication authentique. Sa théologie et les documents officiels de l'Église catholique nous rappellent que les technologies et les nouvelles formes de communication sont des outils moraux qui doivent être utilisés de manière responsable, dans le respect de la dignité humaine et dans le but de diffuser la vérité et de construire une société plus juste.

Mots-clés : éthique, communication, médias, théologie, Benoît XVI

Gabriel Pala, Michaela Šandalová

## Messaggi di Benedetto XVI ai mezzi di comunicazione sociale

### Sommario

Esplorando le implicazioni etiche delle nuove modalità di comunicazione nel contesto della teologia di Benedetto XVI e dei documenti ufficiali della Chiesa cattolica, questo articolo offre riflessioni approfondite su come le tecnologie digitali e i media moderni influenzano la dignità umana, la comunicazione autentica e la diffusione della verità. Durante il suo pontificato, Benedetto XVI ha prestato particolare attenzione a questo tema, come dimostrano i suoi documenti ufficiali e i suoi discorsi. Benedetto XVI ha apportato una dimensione teologica al dibattito sui nuovi media, sottolineando il legame tra verità, amore e comunicazione autentica. La sua teologia e i documenti ufficiali della Chiesa cattolica ci ricordano che le tecnologie e le nuove forme di comunicazione sono strumenti morali che devono essere utilizzati in modo responsabile, nel rispetto della dignità umana e con l'obiettivo di diffondere la verità e costruire una società più giusta.

**Parole chiave:** etica, comunicazione, media, teologia, Benedetto XVI

Part Two

# Reviews



Sister Prudence Allen, R.S.M.  
*The Concept of Woman:  
a Synthesis in One Volume*  
[Koncepcja kobiety:  
synteza w jednym tomie].  
Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans  
Publishing Company, 2024, 451 pages

Sister Prudence Allen, R.S.M., retired professor of philosophy at St John Vianney Theological Seminary in Denver, has spent years doing research on philosophical approaches to gender issues. She has published some very important articles on Jacques and Raissa Maritain as well as Pope John Paul II's concept of the complementarity of men and women. In the foreword to *The Concept of Woman: a Synthesis in One Volume*, John Cavadini states that the reviewed book was written to serve as a guide to the author's legacy, and yet it also stands by itself as a coherent and complete exposition of the long and complex development of the concept of woman. A one-volume synthesis is a remarkable achievement, taking into consideration the fact that Professor Allen published countless articles and addresses on this topic and her research culminates in a collection of three extraordinary volumes concerning the history of the philosophical questions that pertain to the concept of woman. The three volumes are published by William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company based in Grand Rapids (Michigan, USA). The collection consists of three

volumes: *The Concept of Woman: the Aristotelian Revolution, 750 BC–AD 1250* (1997), *The Concept of Woman: the Early Humanist Reformation, 1250–1500* (2002) and *The Search for Communion of Persons, 1500–2015* (2016). This one-volume synthesis consists of “a concise summary of the conclusions reached in the previously published three volumes.”<sup>1</sup>

Professor Allen adheres to a philosophical methodology that appeals to sensory observation and experience, using logic and reason to support her arguments concerning the “integral gender complementarity” – the central concept and theme of her work. The four principles of “integral gender complementarity” are (i) the equal dignity of all human beings; (ii) the significant difference between male and female human beings; (iii) the synergic relation between men and women; (iv) the principle of intergenerational fruition. These four principles are in fact part of divine revelation found in the *Book of Genesis*. The philosophical impetus of Sister Allen’s work derives from her fundamental question – “can the theory of the integral gender complementarity of woman and man be proved?” Through a thorough study of philosophical sources, from the pre-Socratic to twentieth century philosophers, Allen discovers and explains an intricate set of arguments and further distinctions tracing back to the set of original ideas found in Aristotle and Augustine. Aristotle, of course, defined the soul as the “first grade of actuality in a body which is organized,” i.e. having life potentially within it. His hylomorphic understanding of the human being as a substantial composite opened the path away from the stultifying abstract uniformity of dualism carried through Platonism and from the reductionism of the naturalist philosophers.<sup>2</sup> The second key original idea comes from Augustine, as found in *The City of God* (22.17).<sup>3</sup> Augustine argued that “the female sex is not a defect but a natural state.”<sup>4</sup> Although Augustine subscribed to the theory of male superiority, he opened the way to a serious consideration of the equal dignity of men and women, a position defensible by both faith and reason.

A distinctive strength of Sister Allen’s work is that she brings into play important female voices on the topic of the status of women and the relation of men and women. She goes through such ancient/medieval thinkers as Aspasia, Hypatia, Catherine of Alexandria, and Hildegard of Bingen. She also draws readers attention to the women of the early humanist period, such as Gertrude and Saint Bridget, Catherine of Sienna, as well as Julian of Norwich, Christine de Pizan and Laura Cereta. These voices, added to the myriad of male philosophers, theologians and literati,

<sup>1</sup> The book under scrutiny.

<sup>2</sup> The book under scrutiny.

<sup>3</sup> Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. Henry Bettenson (New York: Penguin Press, 1972/84), 1022–1068.

<sup>4</sup> Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, 1057.

lead Professor Allen to propose that the long history of the debates concerning the status of the woman and the relation between men and women approach analogically John Henry Newman's proof for the development of doctrine, culminating in the theory of integral gender complementarity.<sup>5</sup>

The one-volume synthesis is organised into three major sections, which are presented in a historical schematic – “Gender in Ancient Greek and Medieval Philosophy”, “Gender in Renaissance, Modern and Nineteenth-century Philosophy, and “Gender Complementarity in Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries.” In each of these three sections, she summarizes the massive historical research provided in her three published books and gives the reader a look at the wealth of information, as well as the richness and diversity of sources that have characterized the long-lasting discussion and debate concerning the issues.

A turning point in the debate occurred with the rise of the new sciences and the Cartesian philosophy. The new sciences provided a more empirical and exact understanding of the woman's contribution to the generation of new life. Allen shows that “anatomy overturns the Aristotelian theory of the lack of female seed.” The efforts of the Cartesian philosophy and its circles strengthened the notion of equality of the sexes and sought opportunities to further women's education and their suffrage, especially through the work of François Poullain de la Barre (1647–1723), Mary Astell (1688–1731), and the Marquis de Condorcet (1743–94). Yet, its metaphysical dualism shattered the unity of human nature. The argument that the nonextended, sexless mind was entirely distinct from the extended material body, and that a human being was supposed to be identified more with the mind alone (the *I am a thinking thing*) than with the body or with the union of mind and body, led to the equality of uniformity and lost sight of the distinctiveness of men and women. At best, the post Cartesian thinkers struggled with a form of “fractional identity” theories wherein each gender adds in its partial or fractional way something to a greater notion of the human. If male and female human beings are significantly different, each one provides only a fraction of one whole person. The woman was thought to provide half of the mind's operations (i.e. intuition, sensation, or particular judgments) and the man was responsible for the other half (i.e. reason or universal judgments). These two fractional epistemological operations, if added together, produced only one mind. The wholeness of a person is missing and these fractional relations often contain stereotypes of hidden traditional polarity, with the male superior to the female. Examples of fractional complementarity with hidden polarity can be found in the philosophies of Jean Jacques

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<sup>5</sup> The book under scrutiny.

Rousseau (1712–78), Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), Frederick Hegel (1770–1831), and even *Søren Kierkegaard* (1813–55).

The true foundation for an integral gender complementarity was rejected further by atheistic post-Enlightenment philosophers, such as Karl Marx (1818–83) who fostered a unisex approach to man-woman relations and Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) who promoted a traditional polarity approach. The philosophies of Jean Paul Sartre (1905–80) and Simone de Beauvoir (1908–85) drew from both of these sources to defend atheistic existentialism that, following sex polarity, de-valued the woman in relation to the man. Anti-religious secular humanism gravitated instead toward a unisex approach. Finally, postmodern radical feminism vacillated between reverse gender polarity that exalted woman's over man's nature and a deconstruction of gender differentiation altogether. Interestingly, it was two students of Edmund Husserl, the founder of the phenomenological movement, who laid new foundations for ontological and experiential complementarity of the man and the woman, appealing in great part to the "lived experience" of men and women in their relationship to each other. These were Dietrich von Hildebrand (1889–1977) and St. Edith Stein (1891–1942). In 1921, Von Hildebrand broke new ground with his book on marriage (*Die Ehe*) with the bold proclamation that "the difference between man and woman is a metaphysical one. . . [and] for the human species this difference represents two manifestations of the person."<sup>6</sup> Thus, the stage is set for the full discovery and validation of the complementarity of the male and female in the twentieth century, especially by a range of Catholic thinkers. In addition to the works of Dietrich von Hildebrand and Edith Stein, Professor Allen considers the important works written by Gertude LaFort, Gabriel Marcel, Emmanuel Mounier, Bernard Lonergan, and Jacques and Raissa Maritain. (265–285) Finally, the author discusses the work of Karol Wojtyła, whom she calls "the philosopher of integral gender complementarity" (347–364), and later Pope John Paul II, whom she designates "the apostle of integral gender complementarity." (366–403)

In this brief synthesis Professor Allen considers the many works of Karol Wojtyła that deepen and develop new roots for man-woman integral complementarity. His first major work on ethics in marriage, *Love and Responsibility*, explains how marriage has a "distinctive interpersonal structure" with laws "derived from the principles of the personalistic norm, for only in this way can the genuinely personal character of a union of two persons be ensured."<sup>7</sup> In 1969, Wojtyła provided a metaphysical foundation for integration in *The Acting Person* by

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<sup>6</sup> Quoted in the book under scrutiny, 268–269.

<sup>7</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, trans. H. T. Willets (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1981), 348–352.

retrieving the hylomorphism of Thomas Aquinas. Allen explores the ways in which he achieved a rethinking of the dynamic aspect of the human person through an analysis of self determination, transcendence and, most of all, the dynamic notion of integration. The “person-action whole person” established a personalist structure for understanding human relations.<sup>8</sup> Then, she notes that between 1974–75 Wojtyła presented a theological framework for a genuine communion of persons in two lectures: “The Family as a Community of Persons” and “Parenthood as a Communion of Persons.” (362–365) In the chapter on Pope John Paul II, Professor Allen analyzes the theology of the body (366–380). He defended the first principle of integral complementarity in equal dignity of men and women and the second principle claiming that the man and the woman are two significantly different ways of existence in the world. He uses *Mulieris dignitatem* (377–379) and “The Letter to Women” (380–383) to explain his notion of mutual submission and mutual service. The author shows that he builds upon Stein’s approach to develop a theory of women’s genius and to propose a new form of ‘feminism.’ In his “Letter to Women,” John Paul II argues that true feminism must reject traditional polarity, fractional complementarity, and unisex positions. He argued that significant differences between men and women are ontological, rooted in their very being as human persons: “womanhood and manhood are complementary not only from the physical and psycho-logical points of view, but also from the ontological.” (384)<sup>9</sup>

The study of John Paul II concludes with an interesting look at *Vita consecrata* (1996) and we can we fully understand the communion of persons and complementarity as a deep aspect of the Church as a communion: lay life, ordained ministry and consecrated life are each a “paradigmatic vocation” to serve as a living sign of the spiritual marriage of God and the church (*Vita consecrate* §31). (384–385) Thus, after her long journey into studying the status of women and the relationship between men and women, Sister Allen ends with this statement: “Only in eternity will the search for communion of persons be ultimately fulfilled in the lives of each and every woman and man. There we hope to see face-to-face many other women and men who have completed their pilgrimage and reached their goal. There we hope to know as we have been known and love as we have been loved.” (385)

Clearly, Sister Prudence Allen has bequeathed to us a tremendous resource for studying and living the truth of our embodied human existence as male and female human persons. The three-volume work and this one-volume synthesis should be within the reach of every person exploring the truth of the mystery of human life and love.

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<sup>8</sup> Quoted in the book under scrutiny, 353.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in the book under scrutiny, 377–379; 380–383; 384.

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*John Hittinger*

University of St. Thomas, Houston, Texas, USA

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0660-9653>



Janusz Mariański,  
*Godność ludzka, praca, bezrobocie  
i braterstwo w nauczaniu społeczno-moralnym  
papieża Franciszka*  
[Human Dignity, Work, Unemployment,  
and Fraternity in the Socio-Moral  
Teaching of Pope Francis].  
Lublin: Akademia Nauk Społecznych  
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Janusz Mariański, the renowned Polish sociologist and expert on the social teaching of the Church, addresses in his monograph the key elements of Pope Francis's socio-ethical thought in the areas of human dignity, work, unemployment, and fraternal solidarity. The work is grounded in the Church's social doctrine, while also drawing on insights from modern sociology of work, economics, and anthropology. Its relevance lies in the examination of the fundamental ethical pillars of social life in times when globalization, technological changes, and the ecological crisis are impacting human dignity and social justice. This publication is set within the context of a rapidly changing world exposed to global crises, economic insecurities, the climate change, and growing social inequality. Mariański approaches

the subject in a systematic and interdisciplinary manner, relying on the analysis of official documents by Pope Francis (particularly the encyclicals *Fratelli tutti*, *Laudato si'*, *Evangelii gaudium*, among others), as well as sociological and philosophical sources. The publication is divided into several chapters that explore four main thematic areas: human dignity, work, unemployment, and universal fraternity.

Discussing the issue of human dignity, Mariański draws on Pope Francis's anthropological concept and the fundamental principle of the Church's social teaching, according to which the human being is created in the image of God and possesses inalienable dignity. In the first chapter, the author criticizes the dehumanizing mechanisms of globalized market economies and emphasizes that dignity is not merely a formal legal construct, but requires concrete social, economic, and cultural conditions that allow every person to live, develop, and act with dignity.

In line with Pope Francis's teaching – particularly the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* and the encyclicals *Laudato si'* and *Fratelli tutti* – he states that dignity is inalienable, universal, and must not be subordinated to any ideological or market-based criteria. Mariański warns against certain economic tendencies that reduce the human being to a mere producer and consumer. Such approaches, he argues, lead to the marginalization of the poor and elderly, migrants, and those working in precarious conditions. These groups are excluded from social participation, which leads to a loss of personal subjectivity and dignity. The author conceptually builds upon the social teaching of John Paul II, particularly the encyclical *Centesimus annus*, and develops it further in the context of current global and technological challenges. Human dignity also includes the ability to make decisions about one's life and to have access to work, housing, education, and healthcare. Mariański notes that these dimensions are most frequently threatened by the logic that prioritizes profit over people – something also strongly criticized by Pope Francis. Human dignity must be the foundation of every economic and political system, not its casualty. The author also points to the ecological dimension of dignity. In the spirit of *Laudato si'*, Mariański emphasizes that the environmental destruction, the degradation of ecosystems, and the climate change most severely affect the most vulnerable. Therefore, the issue of dignity is also connected with fair access to natural resources and the balance between human needs and care for creation. Today, the appeal to build a culture of encounter is particularly relevant – the culture in which in which a person is not reduced to a tool of the system but is seen as a partner in a social dialogue. In this sense, dignity has both a profound spiritual and political dimension, posing a challenge to individuals, communities, and global institutions alike.

The second chapter discusses the relationship between human dignity and work, which according to Pope Francis is not merely a means of securing material needs,

but a fundamental dimension of human dignity and a key instrument of full integration into society. Mariański emphasizes that Francis builds on the tradition of the Church's social teaching (especially the encyclicals *Quadragesimo anno*, *Laborem exercens*, and *Centesimus annus*), while at the same time updating it in the light of current circumstances. In *Laudato si'* and *Fratelli tutti*, the Pope repeatedly reminds us that work is the foundation of the social pact and that its neglect leads to the disintegration of community. Work is understood as an act of creativity and cooperation, transcending its purely economic dimension and touching upon the human identity as a creator, a co-participant in God's work, and a subject of social relations. The Pope sharply criticizes all forms of labor exploitation and speculative, unstable forms of employment that rob people of perspective, dignity, and security. He also calls for the recognition and support of informal and care work, such as caring for family members, the elderly, or the environment – the forms of labor that are often marginalized by economic models. According to Mariański, by advocating for the right to work for all, Francis stands in opposition to the absolutization of the market logic, which conditions labor profitability. The Pope anchors work in the logic of gifting, solidarity, and the common good. Work should be a source of integration, self-realization, and social esteem – not merely a commodity subject to ruthless competition. In this light, work also becomes a place of spiritual growth and an expression of human co-responsibility for the world.

In the third chapter, Mariański turns his attention to the absence of work. According to Pope Francis, unemployment is more than just an economic phenomenon – it is also a moral and anthropological issue that reveals a deep failure in the social order. Mariański points out that the long-term unemployment has a destructive impact on a personal identity, leading to a loss of meaning, weakening of family and community ties, and ultimately the rise of social pathologies. In multiple documents, Francis highlights that staying jobless equals being deprived of dignity, perspective, and often a voice in the public sphere. Mariański develops this line of thought and identifies structural causes of unemployment, such as technological displacement, automation, outsourcing, and economies driven by financial speculation. He warns that these are not merely technical challenges as they carry moral decisions about who is valued and who is deemed “superfluous.” In the spirit of Francis's vision of an inclusive society, Mariański calls for transformations of economic models to ensure the integration of all, especially the vulnerable and marginalized. Francis sees unemployment as a symptom of a broader cultural illness – a culture of exclusion in which unproductive individuals become “invisible.” Therefore, Mariański proposes that the reaction to unemployment should not be limited to the creation of new jobs, but should also include the creation of a society in which everyone has a place, even if they do not provide immediate economic


benefits. Key to this effort are investments in education, participatory forms of economy (e.g. social enterprises), and the strengthening of community solidarity.

The concept of fraternity represents one of the most fundamental ideological lines in Pope Francis's social teaching and forms the core of his encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, which Janusz Mariański consistently draws on in his work. Fraternity is understood here not merely as an abstract ideal or a moral recommendation, but as a political, social, and spiritual vision to be concretely realized in interpersonal relations, economic systems, and international policies. In the spirit of Francis's call for "universal fraternity," it serves as a crucial alternative to the world fragmented by rivalry, exclusion, and individualism. Mariański points out that the Pope does not view fraternity solely in a canonical-ecclesial sense, but as a fundamental anthropological and social bond that unites us all as children of one Father. It is an anthropological paradigm that overcomes the dualism of "us" and "them," and calls for an integral humanism rooted in respect for the other, regardless of religion, nationality, class, or culture. In this sense, fraternity creates the conditions for inclusion, reconciliation, and solidarity at all levels of society. One of the key points Mariański reflects on is Francis's sharp critique of nationalism, economic fundamentalism, and formal democracies which, despite proclaiming equality, generate in practice deep social divisions and exclusion. Fraternity, as both a political and moral demand, entails overcoming the "culture of walls" and building a "culture of encounter," where the other is not seen as a threat but as a gift. Mariański emphasizes that this challenge has concrete implications for areas, such as migration, care for the marginalized, development of inclusive labor markets, and promotion of participatory democracy. According to Francis, fraternity is not limited to emotional compassion but requires institutional change and a new political imagination. It thus stands in opposition to neoliberalism, which reduces the human being to an individualistic market actor, and to populism, which sows fear and polarization. An important element that Mariański highlights is the connection between fraternity and interreligious dialogue. In *Fratelli tutti*, Francis draws on the *Document on Human Fraternity* signed together with Grand Imam Ahmad al-Tayyeb of Al-Azhar in Abu Dhabi in 2019. This historic moment frames fraternity as a foundation for building peace among religions and cultures, overcoming exclusive or confessional interpretations of the common good. In the conclusion of this chapter, Mariański argues that the ideal of fraternity has basic significance in our current time of ecological, economic, and anthropological crisis. He notes that without fraternal responsibility for others, it will not be possible to confront climate threats, migration, or the breakdown of traditional forms of solidarity. Fraternity thus ceases to be a merely idealistic slogan and becomes a moral imperative for a new understanding of globalization as a shared human project.

Janusz Mariański's book *Godność ludzka, praca, bezrobocie i braterstwo w nauczaniu społeczno-moralnym Papieża Franciszka* [*Human Dignity, Work, Unemployment, and Fraternity in the Socio-Moral Teaching of Pope Francis*] represents a remarkable contribution to the understanding of deep connections between the Catholic social teaching and the challenges of the contemporary world. The author shows that Pope Francis's teaching is not merely a collection of moral recommendations but an integral vision of humanity and society that responds to a global civilizational crisis. Mariański does not settle for a descriptive summary of the Pope's encyclicals, but strives for a philosophical-sociological interpretation. He employs qualitative research methods, document analyses, and comparative approaches. One of the author's strengths is his ability to connect theological reflections with concrete social problems, such as unemployment, ecological degradation, the dissolution of social bonds, or the crisis of labor. In this respect, Mariański aligns himself with other prominent figures in the contemporary Catholic social thought, such as Stefano Zamagni who emphasizes the ethics of gifting and the common good in economics. The book is a valuable source for those engaged in social ethics, the Catholic social teaching, sociology of religion or philosophy of work. It can also serve as an excellent pedagogical material in theology, ethics, social philosophy, and political science, offering a critical and constructive perspective on the impact of Pope Francis's social teaching on shaping a responsible and solidaristic society in the context of the post-industrial world.

*Rev. Pavol Dancák*

University of Presov, Slovakia

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8067-5651>



Krzysztof Wielecki,  
*Kultura versus kultura masowa*  
[Culture versus Mass Culture].  
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The term “culture” is one of the most basic and at the same time problematic terms in the humanities and social sciences. Its meaning has changed and developed throughout history, depending on philosophical, anthropological, sociological and historical contexts. In a basic sense, culture refers to everything that a man creates as an expression of his creativity, value system, spiritual dimension and social life. It is a system of meanings, symbols, practices and forms of behaviour that is handed down from generation to generation and shapes our identity, way of thinking and existence. Mass culture, on the other hand, is a modern phenomenon closely linked to the development of technology, mass media, globalisation and consumerism. It emerged during the Industrial Revolution and developed especially in the 20th century with the advent of radio, television, film and, later, digital technologies. Unlike traditional culture, which is a vehicle for spiritual richness, depth and reflection, mass culture focuses on the production of entertainment, sensation and consumable content for the widest possible audience. Its goal is not primarily the cultivation of the spirit, but the satisfaction of the emotions and desires of as many people as possible.

The book *Kultura versus kultura masowa* [Culture versus Mass Culture] by the Polish sociologist and philosopher Krzysztof Wielecki, published in 2024 by the National Centre for Culture, is a comprehensive and profound analysis of the current state of culture in confrontation with the phenomenon of mass culture. On more than 660 pages, the author offers a multidisciplinary perspective that combines sociological, philosophical, psychological and pedagogical approaches, creating a comprehensive picture of the dynamics of cultural processes in contemporary society. The author's achievement represents his long-standing effort to create a coherent theory based on ontological, epistemological and axiological foundations.

Wielecki's work deals with the question of whether mass culture, often perceived as a democratizing element of cultural life, actually contributes to the development of society or, on the contrary, leads to its degradation. The author argues that mass culture replaces authentic cultural experiences with superficial and standardized products, thus weakening the ability of individuals to think critically and to have deeper emotional and intellectual experiences. This attitude is symbolically expressed on the cover of the book, where the word "culture" is crossed out in the phrase "kultura masowa", indicating the author's critical attitude towards this phenomenon. The book is divided into two main parts with several logically following chapters that gradually develop the author's argument. Wielecki examines the historical development of the concept of culture and its connection with civilizational processes.

The introductory chapter of the first part of the book bears the provocative title of "Wieża Babel koncept kultury—wybrane stanowiska filozoficzne (do czasów współczesnych)" [The Tower of Babel Concept of Culture – Selected Philosophical Attitudes (up to the Present)], which perfectly names the analyzed issue—the plurality, but also the ambiguity of philosophical approaches to culture. In this section, the author presents the most important philosophical views on culture and points out that the diversity of approaches poses a significant challenge to contemporary cultural discourse. The chapter is structured historically and philosophically, and reflects on culture in close connection with the ideas of virtue and education as shaping a good and harmonious life. Wielecki puts the philosophical emphasis on transcendence but also its materialist justifications. In the second chapter, Wielecki pays special attention to selected psychological conceptions of culture. The author claims that culture has not only a socio-historical and philosophical dimension, but is also closely connected to the dynamics of the human psyche. Therefore, he is devoted to the reflection of culture from the point of view of psychological schools, which sought to grasp culture as part of the psychological organization of the individual. It refers to the work of Carl Gustav Jung, who emphasized the archetypal

dimension of cultural expressions. In Jung's conception, culture is not merely the product of historical circumstances, but is deeply rooted in the collective unconscious of humanity. The symbols, myths and rituals preserved and transmitted by culture shape the psychic balance of the individual and society. Mass culture, by reducing, trivializing or commercializing symbols, undermines the integrity of the individual psyche because it ceases to provide meaningful "maps" for orienting oneself in the world. According to Fromm, true culture cultivates the ability "to be"—that is the ability to be oneself, to contemplate, to love, and to create. Mass culture, on the other hand, fosters the orientation of "to have"—that is to consume and possess. This shift has serious implications for a person's mental health because it promotes alienation, anxiety, and the inability to establish deep interpersonal relationships. Another interesting point is Wielecki's reference to behavioural psychology which often reduces culture to a set of learned responses and behavioural patterns. While these approaches have their value, the author warns of their risk of reductionism, that is of grasping culture only as a functional tool of social adaptation and, as a result, losing its spiritual and transcendent dimension. In the first part of the book, Wielecki also analyses culture from the perspective of selected sociological theories, noting that culture is perceived not only as a set of values, norms and symbols, but as a dynamic process of identity formation of individuals and societies. The review begins with Vic and ends with Parsons's functionalism, where culture has a stabilizing function and promotes social cohesion. It is seen as a mechanism that integrates individuals into society by communicating shared values and norms. Wielecki's analysis aptly shows that although sociological theories of culture provide different lenses of perspective, they can nevertheless be used to critically reflect on the state of contemporary culture, especially its mass aspect. The author deftly weaves together insights from these theories to create a picture of mass culture as a phenomenon that, while formally fulfilling the requirements of pluralism and accessibility, in reality undermines the authenticity, spiritual depth, and cultural literacy of the modern man.

The second part of Krzysztof Wielecki's book represents the culmination of the author's critical analysis concerning the crisis of modern culture in the context of post-industrial society. It consists of a set of four interconnected chapters that develop a theoretical interpretation of civilizational changes, revealing their impact on the understanding of culture, subjectivity and human suffering. Wielecki emerges here as a sociologist and philosopher who seeks to link the macro level of social structure with the micro level of individual experience, employing elements of critical realism, of which the British sociologist Margaret Archer is a prominent exponent. Wielecki, like Archer, develops his own theoretical position through critiques of both canonical and other authors. Archer's morphogenetic approach and her

emphasis on the analytical duality between structure and agency find fruitful application in Wielecki's work because they explain the dynamics between social conditions and personal decision-making in the contemporary cultural situation. Culture is not a deterministic framework, but an active field of tension in which the subject (agent) can reflexively react and transform given conditions. While individuals are shaped by dominant cultural models, they also carry within them the potential for reflection, defiance and rebirth. Finally, mass culture is not only a closed system of manipulation, but also a challenge to the development of critical consciousness and deeper cultural renewal. Wielecki exploits Archer's emphasis on the importance of reflection on the ontological basis of the person, his/her personal continuity, his/her capacity for self-reflection and his/her moral discernment, which are often distorted in conditions of the post-industrial chaos. It is precisely the ability to sustain reflexive agency, as Archer describes it, that is key to the rediscovery of culture as a site of spiritual formation in Wielecki's study. In this way, we can say that critical realism connects with personalist anthropology, creating a desirable bridge between social theory and philosophical anthropology. The philosophical basis allows Wielecki to penetrate beneath the surface of cultural phenomena and to point to the deeper anthropological and spiritual dimension of the crisis that the modern man is experiencing.

In the context of the aforementioned view of subjectivity, the author examines how the image of a man is changing under the conditions of post-industrial capitalism: a person is gradually becoming a functional individual primarily responsible for his own performance and success. Wielecki's position is critical of an anthropology that narrows the human being to a consumer and a bearer of competence. In opposition to this, he favours a conception of the man as a relational being, that is a person who is formed through interpersonal relationships, value anchoring and the spiritual dimension of existence. The loss of these elements leads to "psychological emptiness", anxiety, and a sense of meaninglessness. Wielecki argues that mass culture, while formative, leads to the uniformity of cultural expressions and undermines individual creativity and the capacity for reflection. According to the writer, mass culture "hypnotizes" its consumers like a snake hypnotizing a rabbit, depriving them of the ability to think critically and to have authentic cultural experiences. The author also points out that mass culture often replaces real life with superficial substitutes that, while providing instant gratification, lead to emotional and intellectual emptiness in the long run. He encounters the paradigm of the "civilizational turn", according to which humanity now finds itself at a crossroads: it will take the path of spiritual rebirth or it will continue the destructive dominance of technocratic rationalism. The crisis, according to Wielecki, is not only economic or ecological, but is above all anthropological because it is about a loss of meaning, identity

and relationships. Particular attention must be paid to the dehumanizing aspects of mass culture, which—instead of shaping the person—lead to his atomization, passivity and loss of autonomy.

*Kultura versus kultura masowa* [Culture versus Mass Culture] is an important contribution to the debate on the current state of culture and its development in the context of globalisation and technological progress. The critical analysis of mass culture presented here provides valuable food for thought concerning the direction our culture is taking and what consequences this may have for individuals and society. Wielecki's writing style is both erudite and accessible. The author uses rich language and frequently refers to various philosophical, sociological and psychological theories, which adds depth and complexity to his argument. At the same time, however, he emphasizes clarity and lucidity, allowing the reader to follow his train of thought effectively. The book is enriched with numerous examples that help to flesh out the author's arguments. The book is intended not only for social scientists but also for a wider audience interested in cultural processes and their impact on everyday life.

*Rev. Pavol Dancák*

University of Presov, Slovakia

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8067-5651>

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