The Christian Faith as a Belief in the World: The Theological Foundations of Rationality

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ABSTRACT

The present article will argue in favour of the option for the Logos made within the Christian tradition. Extending Ratzinger's and Milbank's theology, according to which Christian identity is defined from this option or this "primacy" of the Logos, we will claim that such an option or presupposition is needed in order to sustain the use of reason and to found the possibility of a dialogue between different traditions. According to such a perspective, Christian faith appears as a belief not only in God, but also in His creation, the world, the truth of which faith can be grasped by humankind and within which faith humankind can communicate with one another and can live in communion.

INTRODUCTION

"Reason seeks to cross the infinite sea"

G. K. CHESTERTON[1]

In the sixteenth century, at the height of the Renaissance, there was a balanced world in which rational knowledge, in all domains of science, was connected to theology in a harmonic coherence. In Raphael's well-known fresco, *The school of Athens*, presently housed in the *Stanza dellaSegnatura*at the Vatican, this deep connection is shown by the relation among all the frescoes in the room. Plato and Aristotle stand in front of Augustine and Aquinas, in the Eucharistic *disputatio*.

The incarnation of the Logos, which is confirmed by the real presence of Christ in Eucharist, was seen as a theological premise which allows the use of *natural reason*. The pagan philosophers, whom Christians admired and integrated into their own thought, believed that *reason* alone could achieve truth in all spheres of knowledge. This principle is intelligible under the assumption that all realities are found and *participate* in the *logos*. Precisely because of this, Raphael could put in the same *Stanza* theologians, philosophers, lawyers and poets: *truth*, *good*, and *beauty* were deeply connected, and so were science and faith.

This fresco of Raphael can help us to understand how it is possible that nowadays, after the Enlightenment in which human beings sought emancipation through reason, Christian theology and philosophy remain interested in the *truth*, in contrast to the contemporary post-modern mentality.

In this research, I will mainly focus on Joseph Ratzinger's theology, a renowned theologian, the former prefect of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith (formerly Congregation for the Universal Inquisition), and, later, Pope Benedict XVI. It is intriguing that it is he, who, in last century, and in his three roles, was at the defense of *natural reason* in the Western culture.

After the enlightenment era, in which religion and, in particular, Christianity was viewed as a superstitious, mythological and irrational institution that should be allowed to die, we have already entered in a new age, in which, according to the *radical orthodoxy* authors[2], Nietzsche's critique is assumed: the so called post-modern world, following the a priori principle of *will-to-power*, tends to affirm the individual will, even to the point of denying universal reason.

"Nietzsche interpreted Western philosophy or metaphysics – that is to say the attempt to give a 'total' classification of being, and to ground the temporal and shifting in 'truth', the permanent and unchanging (…) The critique of this Greek

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[1]G. K. CHESTERTON, *Orthodoxy*, Dodd, Mead & Company, New York 1959, 17.

[2] I am talking mainly about the work of John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock and Graham Ward (cf. J. MILBANK, G. WARD, C. PICKSTOCK, "Suspending the material: the turn of radical orthodoxy", in *Radical Orthodoxy*, Routledge, London 2002, 1-20).

logos – and that is to say of the entire Western philosophic, cultural, and scientific tradition – has been carried forwards by Martin Heidegger, and in his wake by Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze and Jean-François Lyotard among many others."[3]

The point that links John Milbank's analysis and Ratzinger's thought is precisely reflected in seeing and underlining a *discontinuity* between the present post-modern culture and the past: Nietzsche's discourse of emancipation is explicitly opposed to and in vehement rupture with the philosophic tradition in which Christianity and Rationality developed.

"Second movement, which was from the start more radical (…) everything created by reason and the will is contrary to nature, is a corruption and a contradiction of it (…) concept of nature is anti-metaphysical, directed toward the dream of a complete freedom unregulated by anything. Something similar again makes its appearance with opposition to the Apollonian, conjuring up primeval oppositions from history of religion: the ordering activity of reason that Apollo stands for spoils the free and untrammeled intoxication of nature."[4]

It seems to me that today the Church is also situated in this same culture, where the accent is rather put on particular devotion and religious sentiments of believers, instead of the old obsolete apologetics made from universal reason. The *pastoral work*, thus, can have the risk tofocus excessively on the creation of intense experiences in human individuals, in which they feel a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. It is a devotion that is not interested in being intelligible to universal reason, but that prefers to seek pleasant emotions and sensations.

"To a greater extent than in the past, faith is now being subjected to a series of questions arising from a changed mentality which, especially today, limits the field of rational certainties to that of scientific and technological discoveries. Nevertheless, the Church has never been afraid of demonstrating that there cannot be any conflict between faith and genuine science, because both, albeit via different routes, tend towards the truth."[5]

This quotation of Pope Benedict XVI was written in the context of an appeal to the Church regarding the necessity of transmitting the contents of the faith and not relying solely on pastoral and emotionally satisfying measures that lack an explanation of the reasonability and inherent coherence of the Christian doctrine. In such a post-modern context, in fact, it seems natural that a certain kind of *fideism*tends to return, in different forms, which puts the orthodoxy of faith at risk.

In this context, it seems worth noting how the International Theological Commission (ITC) affirms that every theology must be *rational*, and that the faith of the ancient fathers has something indelible connected to God's transcendence which makes it universally true, valid and ontologically operative for every human context.

"No longer are we told only that God infinitely transcends man but that the Christ, both God and man, infinitely transcends the whole human kind and all history. According to the Council's Fathers, the absolute and universal character of the Christian Faith resides in this second mode of transcendence, which is both eschatological and ontological."[6]

The ontological reality of God's nature, connected to the sphere of the world, implies that theology – a discourse on God and His relationship with the world – must necessarily be carried out rationally.

"A criterion of Catholic theology is that it should strive to give a scientifically and rationally argued presentation of the truths of the Christian faith. For this, it needs to make use of reason and it must acknowledge the strong relationship between faith and reason, first of all philosophical reason, so as to overcome both fideism and rationalism."[7]

Thus, when the ITC declares that theology must always offer a rational perspective on revelation, it means that *reason* is an indispensable element of the Christian faith. So, in explicit opposition to fideism – according to which *faith's truth* cannot be *intelligibly* connected *to natural reason* – the ITC affirms that *revelation* is *necessarily intelligible in rational categories*.

Thus, in this paper, it will be further demonstrated, using the theologies of both

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[3] J. Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford 2006,295.

[4] J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2004, 239-240.

[5] Benedikt XVI, «*PortaFidei*», 11 October 2011, 12.

[6] ITC, *Select Questions on Christology*, 1979, 5.

[7] ITC, *Theology Today: Perspectives, Principles and Criteria*, 2011, 75.

Ratzinger and John Milbank, how the Christian faith is inseparably connected to reason: first, because there is a fundamental orientation in the Christian tradition in favor of reason; and second, because the use of reason is theologically legitimized by the Christian faith. At the end, it will be show the theological implications of this reason-friendly orientation.

THE PRIMACY OF THE LOGOS

Christianity: Pro Logos, Anti Mythos

The affirmation of the International Theological Commission corresponds precisely to one of the main points of Ratzinger's theology: the original Christian choice in favor of the *logos*.

"It was in the wake of this whole series of events that early Christianity boldly and resolutely made its choice and carried out its purification by deciding *for* the God of the philosophers and *against* the gods of the various religions (…) The choice thus made meant opting for the *logos* against any kind of *myth*."[8]

Hence, right from the beginning, the Christian faith opted for philosophy as opposed to myth. The Hellenistic world, in which the Christian tradition emerged, was living with a cultural dualism of both *philosophy* and *myth*. So, while reason was used to ascertain the ontological essence of reality, it was entirely disconnected from the religious devotions and practices of the public-political sphere.

Precisely because of this, Christians were understood as *atheists*, since from the very first beginning they vehemently refused, and with the high price of *martyrium*, to engage in those "mythical" religious practices. This radical attitude can be understood only by a person who believes that his religion is *universal*; meaning, *true for everyone in ontological terms*.

"The universality of faith, which is a basic presupposition of the missionary task, is both meaningful and morally defensible only if this faith really is orientated beyond the symbolism of the religions toward an answer meant for all, an answer which also appeals to the common reason of mankind."[9]

In fact, this primacy of the *logos*, the 'original choice' of Christianity, *necessarily* gives rise to a rational faith. Affirming the one God of *logos* means affirming the relevance of reason in all dimensions of reality. It is a theological choice, and a philosophical assumption, that legitimizes using *natural reason*.

So, philosophy was reconciled with Christian theology because philosophy was searching for *truth* and the meaning of human life, in front of the fact of its death. The philosophical searching of the *logos*, which gives intelligibility to every real being, made it possible to link faith and philosophy in an intrinsic and irrevocable way.

"Philosophy, the search for meaning in the face of death, is now represented as the search for Christ (…) First, the philosopher's essential task is to search for God. Second, the attitude of the true philosopher is to live according to the logos and in its company."[10]

The Motives of Such a Choice

First of all, we need to understand the motives of this *choice*. As heirs of the biblical old testament texts, the first Christians tried to *articulate* the biblical image of God in an Hellenistic context. It is quite interesting to note the .similarity that Ratzinger shows on how both Jews and Christians distinguished their own God from the gods of other nations and cultures.

This approach by both the Jews and the Christians contrasts with the contemporary mentality, which is suspicious of *reason*, especially within the realm of religion. However, our author does not hesitate to call this original choice "audacious" (*kühn*): it is the preference of a God who is connected with the ontological Being of reality. Hence, Christianity and Judaism were not interested in devotional sentiments and aesthetics that were disconnected from the domain of reality.[11]

First of all, this choice has a clear biblical foundation. On one hand, it conforms with the message of the *latter prophets*, specially Deutero-Isaiah, who shows clearly that the faith of Israel professes one single God, not adored only by one people, but rather by all creation; affirming that the other gods are 'nothing'. This 'nothing' is comprehensible in the ontological

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[8] J. RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1990, 94-95.
[9] J. RATZINGER, *The Nature and Mission of Theology: Approaches to Understanding its Role in the Light of Present Controversy*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1995, 24-25.

[10]*Ibid.*, 14.
[11] Cf. J. RATZINGER,*Introduction to Christianity*,105-113.

sphere, even though it is said in a biblical, non-Hellenistic context.[12]

"Ezechiel and especially Deutero-Isaiah could be described in so many words as the theologians of the name Yahweh; it was not least on this that they based their prophetic preaching. The Deutero-Isaiah, as we well known, at the end of the Babylonian exile (…) Thus one of the prophets' central ideas is to compare with the gods that pass away the God who *is*."[13]

On the other hand, regarding the New Testament, especially the John's Prologue, we see the corroboration of the old testament God whose nature is connected to the real world: 'the *Logos* was God'.[14]

In this way, we can understand the relationship between *faith* and *philosophy*, present from the very beginning of Christianity. In the context of the Hellenistic world, in which the Christian dogma was developed, God came to be identified as the '*Being as such*', that is, the ultimate foundation of all reality that the philosophers searched for. In other words, God is identified as the origin of all beings that exist.[15]

Thus, in a cultural universe in which the *logos* was divided from *mythos*—the devotion institutionalized by the *res pubblica* and lacking a "theology" that was rational—Christians affirmed that their God was the *logos*, because it was real: the one true God.

In this context, it is easy to understand the appreciation of Plato by the primitive Christian world: the Greek philosopher would have tried to destroy the classic myth of Homeric origin, in the cause of a new myth more adequate to the *logos*. The attempt of the first Christian thinkers to integrate and synthesize Plato makes, indeed, sense: the Greek philosopher would have wished to destroy the classic Homeric myths, in favor of a new myth more appropriate to the *logos*.[16]

This fundamental orientation in favor of the *logos* implies a spiritual consequence which is crucial for the life of the believer: it is not only a matter of speculative thought, but rather it involves a soteriological issue. In fact, with a *religio* of the *logos* there is no fracture between the God of faith and the God of the philosophers, as there was in ancient Greece.

"What is astonishing is that without hesitation he [Varro] indicates that Christianity's place is in the sphere of 'physical theology', in the sphere of philosophical enlightenment (...) Christianity is not based on mythical images and vague notions that are ultimately justified by their political usefulness; rather, it relates to that divine presence which can be perceived by the rational analysis of reality."[17]

A Choice against Fideism

The Roman Empire, as a Hellenistic culture, avoided a religion connected with ontological reality, and absolute ontic salvation of the human being. It was a public institution in which citizens participated without pretending to achieve an absolute and universal truth.

"Truth and religion, rational perception and cultic prescription, lie on two quite separate planes. Prescribed worship, the concrete world of religion, does not belong to the order of *res*,

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[12] In fact, in the Old Testament we find passages as: "For all the gods of the nations are false gods; but the Lord made the heavens" (Sl 96:5); and "Truly they are all nothing, their works are nothing and of no value: their metal images are of no more use than wind." (Is 41, 29). Really, it seems to have been founded the parallelism made by Ratzinger, between the Greek myths and the prophetic critique of Israel before Christ (cf. *Ibid.,* 82-85). As the Hebrews had affirmed that the unique reality of God sustains every single real being, the Christians, indeed, underlined in the same way the fact that the revealed God from Christ was the only true one. Because of that, idolatry was considered extreme grievous sin, not only in the Old Testament (as we see in the episode of the *gold lam* in Es 32), but also in the New one and in the successive apostolic tradition (as we see in the life of the first martyrs against the pagan cult (Roman Martirology, 8 February, 3)).

[13] Cf. J. RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 89.

[14] Jn 1, 1-13. In this context it is interesting to note Ratzinger's appreciation for John's Gospel. Not only in the *Introduction to Christianity*, but also after his [Pope election as pope], because in one of his the last works, *Jesus of Nazareth*, the German theologian tries to argue that the fourth gospel is important, in theological and historical terms (cf., J. RATZINGER, *Jesus of Nazareth vol. I*, Bloomsbury, Great Britain 2007, 218-238).

[15] Cf. J. RATZINGER, *Truth and Tolerance,* 160-171.

[16] Cf. J. RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity,* 95. In this sense, it may be said that Nietzsche understood well the main original Christian choice, because his critique against Christianity is also against platonic Philosophy in the primacy of *Logos* (cf. J. MILBANK, *op. cit.*, 281-282).

[17] J. RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity,* 169.

of 'things', of reality as such, but to that of 'mores' – of custom and behavior."[18]

This *theologiamythica* and *theologiacivilis* was refuted by Christianity, at the price of *martyrium*. Thus, this choice for *philosophical enlightenment*is part of the essence of Christianity, because it is intrinsically connected to the claim that Christ is the universal savior and the consequent rejection of any kind of religious devotion not connected to the logos, incarnated in Christ's person.

"Therefore, in their commitment to the truth, the Church Fathers deliberately distanced their theology from 'mythical' and 'political' theology, as the latter were understood at that time. Mythical theology told stories of the gods in a way that did not respect the transcendence of the divine; political theology was a purely sociological and utilitarian approach to religion which did not care about truth."[19]

So, on Ratzinger's argument, we must affirm that a Christian believer should not accept any kind of *fideism*, a tendency that has been present in some nominalist thought and in Lutheran theology.

In fact, if Karl Barth proposes aantithetical dialectic in which revelation is contradicting human reason, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in his Christological lessons, argues for an *anti-logos* divine which is completely different from human *logos* after sin. Both authors, with their protestant grounding, demand separation between the religious domain and the philosophical one.

"Against this continuity between philosophy's search for the ultimate causes and theology's appropriation of biblical faith, Barth sets a radical discontinuity. Faith (...) unmasks all of reason's images of God as idols. It does not draw its life from synthesis but from paradox. It receives the wholly other God, whom our thinking can neither produce nor call into question."[20]

In opposition to such a position, Ratzinger argues that Christianity does not accept in its essence and origin this kind of *separation*. Moreover, on Ratzinger's view, this *separation* is the cause of the fall of ancient religion: a

devotion to something that has no connection to reality itself, with Being as such, is not relevant for human salvation and for the human search for truth.[21]

"The paradox of ancient philosophy consists, from the point of view of religious history, in the fact that intellectually it destroyed myth but simultaneously tried to legitimize it afresh as religion; in other words, that from the religious point of view it was not revolutionary but, as the most, evolutionary, that it treated religion as a question of regulation of life, not as a question of truth."[22]

Whereas the Hellenistic world used to conceive the religious dimension beyond the sphere of the *truth*, as a question of the life ordained – *institutio vitae*–Christianity, on the other hand, as seen in the apostolic tradition of the Pauline letters[23], insisted from the very first beginning, even to the point of *martyrium* under the accusation of atheism, on refusing the dualistic separation between *Christian devotion* and *philosophical and universal truth*.

After the apostolic period, patristic theology confirmed this main option for the *God of the logos*, conscious of its biblical foundation. Although Tertullian, despite his pessimism regarding philosophy and reason used by human sinful nature, assumes that Christ presented himself as the *Truth* (*Wahrheit*), and not merely as a custom (*Gewohnheit*).

"The Christian position, as opposed to this situation, is put emphatically by Tertullian when he says with splendid boldness: «Christ called himself truth, not custom.» In my view, this is one of the really great assertions of patristic theology."[24]

By quoting Tertullian, Ratzinger is showing that Christian faith is necessarily at the ontological

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[18]*Ibid.*,166.

[19] ITC, *Theology today: Perspectives, Principles and Criteria*, 65.

[20] Cf. J. RATZINGER, *The Mission and Nature of Theology*, 19.

[21] Indeed, the main original option for the God of philosophers, the *God of the Being*, shows how important is ontology to Christian religion: it is not a matter only of the cult nor devotional – a *religio* of the sentiment, as Goethe said in his *Faust* –, but rather a *religio*of the Being, of the Logos (cf. J. RATZINGER, *Truth and Tolerance*, 231-232).

[22] J. RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 96.

[23]Cf. J. RATZINGER, *Truth and Tolerance*, 239. In fact, this dualism inside the Greek culture was necessary overcome in Paul's theology (Rom 1, 19-23), because the *mythos* was assumedly deprived of ontological consistence: in other words, it had no reference to the real sphere (cf. J. RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 96-97).

[24]*Ibid.*,97.

level, and is opposed to *fideism*, according to which faith is reduced to a private subjective experience. In fact, the main point of the primordial option for the *logos* is made against a religiousdevotion that does not presume to achieve ontic real salvation to humanity.

"The resulting situation of philosophy is such that for many the only reasonable course, even from the philosophical point of view, is to disavow, or at least to forgo, ontology. However, it is not possible to stop with the renunciation of ontology: in the long run, the concept of God itself follows in its wake."[25]

Furthermore, according to Ratzinger, this original option not only implies a connection between *religion* and *ontic reality* against any kind of *fideism*;it also implies the capacity of *natural reason* to achieve reality. In this sense, the German theologian refuses any alleged part of the Christian tradition that tends to fideism. In fact,

"Opposition to philosophy as the alleged corrupter of theology is very ancient. It can be found in Tertullian (…) Martin Luther inaugurated a new era of antagonism to philosophy for the sake of the unadulterated Word of God. His battle cry, *sola scriptura*, was a declaration of war (…) against Scholasticism, that is, the use of Aristotle and Plato in theology."[26]

This fideistic tendency is, according to Ratzinger, contrary to the main Christian tradition. We see early in Christian history, in Justin's apology, the principle of *logos spermatikos*: that means God's *logos* manifests itself in creation. Precisely because of this principle we can call certain pagans before Christ "saints", such as Socrates and Plato, since they achieved and followed truth using natural reason, and this truth really participatedin God's Logos.

"Christ, who was partially known even by Socrates (for He was and is the Word (λογός) who is in every man foretold the things that were to come to pass both through the prophets and in His own person when He was made of like passions, and taught these things), not only

philosophers and scholars believed, but also artisans and people entirely uneducated."[27]

The same principle was used by Augustine, Boethius, Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas, to defend the harmony and connection between philosophy and Christian theology.[28]

In summary, identifying God, who is the object of religion, with Truth, which is the object of philosophy, synthesizes the Christian critique of Hellenistic religion.

In the context of a tripartite notion of theology – as physical, political and mystic –the first Christians, in this point very close to the neo-platonics, chose the first one as their own type of theology – whose current name is *natural theology*.

"Between the mythical gods of the religions and the philosophical knowledge of God there had developed in the course of history a stronger tension, which is apparent in the criticism of the myths by the philosophers from Xenophanes to Plato, who even thought of trying to replace the classical Homeric mythology with a new mythology appropriate for the *logos* (…) there are quite amazing parallels in chronology and content between the philosophers' criticism of the myths in Greece and the prophets' criticism of the gods in Israel (…) For all differences between them, both movements coincide in their striving toward the *logos*."[29]

The reason for this choice concerns the fact that in the other types of theology religious devotion had no connection to the reality of the world and of the salvation of men. In other words, we can say that in the Hellenistic culture, the domain of *utility* for menwas disconnected from absolute and universal truth.[30]

According to Ratzinger, today this *original option* is being abandoned in favor of the same

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[25] J. RATZINGER, *Nature and Mission of Theology*, 20-21.
[26] *Ibid.*, 18.

[27] JUSTIN, «The Second Apology», X, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. I*, Eerdmans, Michigan 1977, 191.
[28] Cf. J. RATZINGER, *Nature and Mission of Theology*, 15-17.
[29] J. RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 147-148.
[30] Cf. J. RATZINGER, *Truth and Tolerance,* 168-172. In this point, it seems to me that Ratzinger is very close to the Walter Kasper's analysis, according to which, in Christianity, the *functional* aspect is not separated but rather intrinsically connected to the *ontological* one: *orthodoxy* corresponds to *orthopraxy* (cf. W. KASPER, *Jesus the Christ*, Continuum Books, New York 2011, 10-12).

old Hellenistic dualism. We are witnessing a strong *fideistic* tendency, in which faith tends to be reduced to the private sphere, and to a personal devotion and sentiment, which has no relationship with ontic reality, and which lacks ontological-philosophical grounding.

"Feeling was assigned to it as its own domain within human existence. Schleiermacher was the great theorist of this new concept of religion: «action is art, speculation is science, religion is the sense of and the taste for the infinite», was his definition. Faust's reply to Gretchen's question about religion has become proverbial: «Feeling is all.»"[31]

Although, we can forget the choice that Christianity made at its very beginning: the choice for the *truth of being*, that means, a choice which involves a certain degree of objective *realism*, under the subjective feelings of the humankind.[32]

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[31] J. RATZINGER, *Truth and Tolerance,* 142.

[32] Joseph Ratzinger affirms that the God of philosophers, although is very abstract, corresponds to the *God of Christianity*, because this God is the *real God* searched by philosophers who were concerned with the *logos*. This theological approach is in conformity with *Dei Verbum*, precisely at the point in which *Dei Filius* is quoted(cf. DV 6). However, Ratzinger is aware that the *biblical God* transcends the *God of the philosophers*: The God reveled by Jesus Christ is not reduced to the God of philosophers. Because of that, Joseph Ratzinger, indeed, talks about a *purification* of the God's image. Exactly, because it was almost a *purification* and *integration*, instead of *assimilation* or *absorption*, there were no Hellenization of faith: as Bernard Sesboüé says, a Hellenization of language and not of the contend (cf. B. SESBOÜÉ, *Il Diodella Salvezza: I-VIII secolo- Dio, la Trinità, il Cristo, l'Economiadella Salvezza*, in *Storia dei Dogmi, vol. I*, Piemme, Casale Monferrato 1996,226). In fact, as the philosophical reason, alone, achieves a God which is pure Being – that means an intelligible metaphysical entity –, Christianity proclaims God as Πατρὸς – which means a *person* who loves creatively: "power of creative love" (J. RATZINGER, *Introduction of Christianity*,100). Thus, God is understood, as in ancient philosophy, the fundament of all reality, but God is not only the font of Being: instead of a static, abstract, mathematic reality, he is a dynamic person who wants to save mankind. Though, God is also God of the *Being*, and this fact connects faith to ontology. The God of the philosophers – font of any kind of Being and existence –, is integrated and overcome in two main aspects: **(i)** first, the God of faith is a Being *in relation*, contrary to the God of the philosophers which is understood inside a strict. The essential doctrine on Trinity is precisely this: if God

This inner realism in the Christian religion implies necessarily the rejection of a radical separation between faith and reason, as fideism does, from which we tend to reduce religion to a devotional in the *feeling sphere* of humanity.

CHRISTIAN FAITH AS THE CONDITION OF POSSIBILITY OF NATURAL REASON

Presuppositions of a Reason that Achieves Truth

At this point, I have shown that Christian theology has affirmed *reason* as a legitimate way to arrive at conclusions regarding the truth about God and creation. Now I will show how important this *primordial choice* was to the enlightenment culture and scientific progress.

In this context, the studies of the historicist Thomas Woods are of crucial importance. This American scholar shows that science could not have arisen and grown without Christianity. This religion, in fact, created the context in which reason could be used in empirical science. The idea of *creation* by God through *logos* implies that beings in the empirical world have a nature that follows some kind of law that can be understood by human intellect. If a tree, or a rock, had a spirit and an arbitrary nature, as many ancient cultures used to think, it would make no sense to search for a universal law that predicts natural phenomena.[33]

Even if this theological principle of a created world is not exclusive to the Christian religion, the belief in God's Incarnation strengthens reason, especially in a non fideistic prospective, also in secular fields, as science.[34]

It was not an accident that science grew up in a Christian context. It was the Fathers of the Church, especially Augustine, who used the biblical claim that man was made in *God's image* (Gn 1, 26),as meaning that man is a

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does not have certain alterity in itself – an essential alterity –, so he cannot be *relation*, nor *love*, but rather a absolute reason, close in itself; **(ii)** second, for the faith, the logos is not only *rational thinking*, but almost *personal love*. This is fundamental for ontology, because, according to the Trinitarian doctrine, it means that at the beginning is *love*: so, *love* is good not only because it is beautiful or we want that attitude, but mostly because it is the foundation of every being, it is the essence of Being as such.

[33] Cf. T. WOODS, *Come la Chiesa Cattolica ha costruito la civiltà occidentale*, Cantagalli, Siena 2007, 83-85.

[34] Cf. *Ibid.*, 85-93.

rational being. Thus, very close to this main Christian choice for the *logos*, inside the apostolic tradition, is the posterior assumption that the human *intellect* [*mente*] is the main aspect of the *image of God*.

"Quaproptersingulusquisque homo, qui non secundumomnia quae ad naturam pertinent eius, sedsecundumsolammentem imago Dei dicitur, una persona est, et imago estTrinitatis in mente. Trinitasveroillacuius imago est, nihilaliudesttota quam Deus, nihilestaliudtota quam Trinitas. Necaliquidadnaturam Dei pertinet, quod ad illam non pertineatTrinitatem: et tres personae suntuniusessentiae, non sicutsingulusquisque homo una persona."[35]

Hence, seeing the image of God as primarily residing in the *mind* – understood as a complex of memory, intelligence and will – allows us to conceive of the human mind as being capable of truth. This Trinitarian theological point of view assumes that human intellect participates in God's intellect. So, human intellect can achieve the essence of the beings which were created by an intellect of which human mind is *image*.

This principle is implicitly present in the definition of person made by Boethius, indelibly present in Western philosophy and culture: both persons in the trinity and the individual human being are*persons*, meaning"naturaerationalisindividuasubstantia".[36]

Although he improved the definition of person, embedding the relational aspect – affirming that to be a person "in hominibus et angelis non significatrelationem, sedaliquidabsolutum"[37]–, Aquinas followed this theological-philosophical tradition according to which the human intellect is naturally inclined to and capable of truth.

"In the case of the operation of reason, we have seen (…) that Aquinas's continued Augustinian and neoplatonic construal of truth as inner *illuminatio*can nonetheless incorporate (as it could already in Augustine, Proclus, and Dionysius, if not Plotinus) an essential Aristotelian detour through the truth embodied

in finite creatures (…) Here, also, for faith as for reason, the passive intellect marries the infallible witness of intellectual light to the infallible intuition of the senses (…)"[38]

Thus, in the Christian Western tradition – from the primordial choice for the *logos and* against *mythos* to Augustine and Aquinas – *realism* is accepted as a theological assumption. In fact, the skeptic critique of Hume and the even more radical critique of Nietzsche shows that, without such a presupposition, the belief that rational thought and empirical knowledge can achieve truth is endangered.[39]

"From this invention of a new moral regime (…) arose the whole supportive edifice of metaphysics: a discourse that 'theoretically' secures a self-identical, transcendent reality undergirding 'propositions concerning an objective 'truth'. The critique of this Greek *logos*– and that is to say of the entire Western philosophic, cultural and scientific tradition – has been carried forward by Martin Heidegger, and in his wake by Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze and Jean-François Lyotard among many others."[40]

In summary, the option for the *primacy of logos* by Christianity has a consequence whose importance is enormous: because God is the *logos*-creator of every single being, the whole universe is *intelligible* to the eyes of *human reason*, which is made in the image of God and participates in the same *logos*. Hence, these theological assumptions justify using reason in all human spheres, since they affirm the capacity of reason to achieve the *essence* of reality itself: the same theological principle that justifies science also justifies the use of reason in other fields such as ethics and aesthetics.

[35]AUGUSTINUS, *De Trinitate,* XV, 7, 11, in «PatrologiaeLatinae, tomus XLII – S. Aurelius Augustinus», Migne Editorem, Lutetiae 1886, 1065.

[36]BOETIUS, *Liber de Persona et DuabusNaturis*, III, in «PatrologiaeLatinae, tomus LXIV – ManliusSeverinusBoetius», Apud Garnier Fratres, Lutetiae 1891, 1343.

[37]AQUINATIS, *Summa Theologicae*, I, q. 29, a. 4, 4, Marietti, Taurini 1928, 208.

[38] J. MILBANK - C. PICKSTOCK, *Truth in Aquinas*, Routledge, London 2001, 23.

[39] Nietzsche argues that empirical knowledge, and rational thought, is not legit, because there is no guarantee of any kind of correspondence to a reality outside human mind (cf. F. COPLESTON, *From the Post-Kantian Idealists to Mark, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche*, *A History of Philosophy, vol. VII*, Doubleday, London 1994, 408-410) This skepticism also against science, not only against religion, started before mostly with David Hume (cf., F. COPLESTON, *The British Philosophers from Hobbes to Hume*, *A History of Philosophy vol. V*, Doubleday, London 1994, 311-317).

[40] J. MILBANK, *Theology and Social Theory*, 295.

"The truth of God, accepted in faith, encounters human reason. Created in the image and likeness of God (Gn 1, 26-27), the human person is capable, by the light of reason, of penetrating beyond appearances to the deep-down truth of things, and opens up thereby to universal reality. The common reference to truth, which is objective and universal, makes authentic dialogue possible between human persons. The human spirit is both intuitive and rational. It is intuitive in that it spontaneously grasps the first principles of reality and of thought. It is rational in that, beginning from those first principles, it progressively discovers truths previously unknown using rigorous procedures of analysis and investigation, and it organizes them in a coherent fashion. 'Science' is the highest form that rational consciousness takes. It designates a form of knowledge capable of explaining how and why things are as they are. Human reason, itself part of created reality, does not simply project on to reality in its richness and complexity a framework of intelligibility; it adapts itself to the intrinsic intelligibility of reality."[41]

The Possibility of Analogia entis

'Analogiaentis'as a Consequence of the Primordial Christian Choice

Allowing the use of natural reason based on the theological principle that God has impressed all reality with an intelligible logos, implies that reason is relevant not only for the empirical sciences, but also in the moral domain, the esthetic field and even in religion.[42]

Assuming that God's *logos* is present in every reality, Christian theologians could incorporate the *analogiaentis*, already present in Greek philosophy, into acataphatic theology, according to which all beings that constitute the universe are related to each other on a hierarchy of being. In this sense, if Platonism and Neo-Platonism saw a progressive gradualism between the inferior beings and the Supreme Good, the Church Fathers tend to make such movement all the way up to God Himself. Because of this, from the apologetic period on, we saw authors

such as Eusebius of Caesarea, and later Clement of Alexandria, receiving the works of Greek philosophers such as Plato as a*praeparatioevangelica*.[43]

"Great Eastern theologians used the encounter between Christianity and Greek philosophy as a providential opportunity to reflect on the truth of revelation, i.e. the truth of the logos. In order to defend and illumine the mysteries of faith (the consubstantiality of the persons of the Trinity, the hypostatic union, etc.), they readily but critically adopted philosophical notions and put them in service to an understanding of faith."[44]

On the one hand, following a descendent dynamics, from God to creation, Christians interpreted the process of creation with an indelibly *ontological* connection between God's logos and the intrinsic rationality of creaturely beings. On the other hand, at an epistemological level, it is possible to follow an ascendant dynamics from nature to the knowledge of the Creator's attributes.[45]

This ontological connection allowed Christian theology to accept and assume the doctrine, from the Hellenistic culture, of *natural law* – the human intellect participates in the same logos, which is the principle of the creation of the universe; so, human beings can achieve the same reasonable ideas and conclusions by means of natural reason, understanding the essence of the universe and reality as such. This means that the Revelation to the people of Jerusalem is not against – but rather incorporates – the rational culture of Athens.

"Ratzinger therefore does not follow the trend of thinking of Athens and Jerusalem as short-hand terms for two fundamentally different ways of approaching religious matters: one fideistic and one philosophical (…) Ratzinger observes that, for all the differences between them, both movements coincide in their striving towards the *logos*."[46]

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[41] ITC, *Theology Today: Perspectives, Principles and Criteria*, 62.

[42] This is also implied in the History of the Dogma, in which philosophy encounters theology in the way of expressing, with the concepts and rigors, the contents of faith in rational intelligible forms (cf. J. RATZINGER, *The Mission and Nature of Theology*, 13-14).

[43] Cf. F. COPLESTON, *From Augustine to Duns Scotus*, A History of Philosophy v. II, Doubleday, New York 1993, 29-30.

[44] ITC, *Theology Today: Perspectives, Principles and Criteria*, 66.

[45] Cf. AUGUSTINUS, *De Trinitate*, XIV, 11, 14, *op. cit.*, 1047-1048. Also in this sense, the Christian tradition saw human being as an *enscapax Dei*, in the sense of loving and knowing God.

[46] T. ROWLAND, *Ratzinger's Faith: the theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2008, 62.

The 'Fideistic' Tradition

This theological position regarding reason is not unanimously accepted within the Christian religion. In fact, from Tertullian on, there is a movement with a fideistic tendency, which sees the biblical *logos* as entirely different from the philosophical *logos*.

In Bonhoeffer's Christology, for instance, this "theological approach" is very clear, because this German theologian refers to the *logos* of the incarnated Word of God as *anti-logos* for human mind and life. In his Christological lecture series, Bonhoeffer argues that in order to do real theology one must leave one's own logos, or in other words, one's reasoning, behind.

"This reaction of the Logos under the attack of the Anti-Logos is no narrow-minded repudiation of the other Logos, as in the Enlightenment, but the great insight into its power of self-negation (…) If the Anti-Logos no longer appears in history as an idea, but as the Word incarnate, there is no longer any possibility of incorporating him into the order of man's own Logos."[47]

The distinction, and even separation, between the logos of the world and the divine logos makes it impossible to arrive at a knowledge of God's nature from the intrinsic intelligibility of his creation.

Probably the strongest argument for this theological position is given by another protestant, who was influenced by Bonhoeffer in his critique of liberal theology: his name is Karl Barth. For this Calvinist theologian *analogiaentis* is absolutely impossible for Christianity.

"I can see no third alternative between that exploitation of the *analogiaentis* which is legitimate only on the basis of Roman Catholicism (…) and a Protestant theology which draws from its own source, which stands on its own feet, and which is finally liberated from this secular misery. I regard the *analogiaentis* as the invention of antichrist, and I believe that because of it, it is impossible ever to become a Roman Catholic, all other reasons for not doing so to my mind short-sighted and trivial."[48]

This strict dualism – at least at an epistemological level – between God and the world is a necessary conclusion of the proposition that the contents of Christian faith belong exclusively to the sphere of *revelatio*. To show that the truths of Christianity were not produced by human minds, it is indeed necessary to emphasize the divinity of the logos in such a way that there is an *infinite qualitative difference* between time and eternity, between God and the world, as Kierkegaard says. Only with this theological approach is it possible to show that revelation is absolutely different than philosophy, and to make a theology based on faith alone, whose domain is exclusively God's transcendent revelation.

"It would obviously confirm our question, and we should really be speaking of another logos than the Logos of God, if we thought that in face of this question we could and should prove that we have not deceived ourselves, that we have really been speaking of the Logos of God."[49]

This antithetical dialectic between reasonable nature and God's essence implies a disconnection between theology and philosophy.

"There never has actually been a *philosophiachristiana*, forif it was *philosophia* it was not *christiana*, and if it was *christiana* it was not *philosophia*."[50]

This is precisely the opposite theological tradition defended by Joseph Ratzinger, according to which Christianity appeared as a proposal of the *true philosophy* that could integrate the true elements of the ancient philosophies – stoicism, Plato's school, and later Aristotle. This was "(…) the idea of the early Fathers that Christianity itself is true philosophy."[51]

Contrary to this, Karl Barth sees revelation as an antithesis to natural reason. Indeed, revelation confronts reason in a dialectical way by negating the natural intuition of reason, at least in its first moment. This separation of the Word of God from natural reason is a necessary conclusion of a theology which sees revelation as a *unique event*, without universal principles.

"Because the Word of God, unlike created realities, is not universally present and

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[47] D. BONHOEFFER, *Christology*, Collins, London 1960, 29-30.
[48] K. BARTH, *Church Dogmatic*, I. 1, T & T Clark, Edinburgh 1975, I. 1, p. xiii.

[49] *Ibid.*, I. 1 §5, 4, p. 163.
[50] *Ibid.*, I. 1, p. 6.
[51] J. RATZINGER, *The Mission and Nature of Theology*, 27.

ascertainable, and cannot possibly be universally present and ascertainable (...)"[52]

Hence, if revelation is absolutely supernatural like a miracle that as no universal principle perceivable by human reason, then the relationship between reason – which finds universal principles in immanence – and revelation – which regards a dimension without such principles – must necessarily be antithetical.

"The fact that the statement «God reveals Himself» is the confession of a miracle that has happened certainly does not imply a blind credence in all miracles stories related in the Bible (…) What it means is to confess revelation as a miracle that has happened."[53]

Karl Barth does not deny the value of natural reason by adopting a radical fideism. In fact, if we want to be fair, we must say that Barth's theology regarding the relationship between reason and revelation defends the view *revelation* is not attainable by *reason* alone.

"(…) therefore, dogmatics is a struggle between this reason of man and the revelation believed in the Church. This struggle, however, takes place in the Church itself, so that it is not oriented to the contradiction of reason, but to the declaration of revelation. Its interest is not in the exhibition of a point of contact for the divine message to man but wholly and utterly in the divine message itself as it has gone out and been received."[54]

His problem, rather, is that, in order to prove the necessity of a supernatural order in revelation, Barth creates an excessive distance between divine's nature and world domain. For him, God's being and world's nature do not fit together: they are profoundly different. In this approach, which is explicitly protestant[55], God – and even the incarnated Jesus – is the absolute alterity – a *Wholly God*; that is, absolute alterity.

"(…) but this must not leave us even for a moment under any illusion as to the fact that the qualitative and not just quantitative distinction between God and man is not abrogated even or especially in revelation, but that it is rather established in revelation, this distinction being the presupposition of fellowship between God and man. The Holy Spirit, in distinction from all created spirits, is the Spirit who is and remains and always becomes anew transcendent over man even when immanent in him (…)"[56]

The Connection between God and the World

Against this 'fideistic' tradition, Ratzinger argues that the intimate connection between the *biblical logos* and the *Hellenistic* one—a connection which is founded in the Bible, in the Christian tradition and the *analogiaentis*—does not contradict an approach that starts from revelation's domain. The German theologian and former Pope connects this tendency against reason in theology to the Lutheran doctrine of *sola scriptura*.

"His [Luther's] battle cry, 'sola scriptura', was a declaration of war not merely against the classical interpretation of Scripture advanced by tradition and the Magisterium of the Church but also against Scholasticism, that is, the use of Aristotle and Plato in theology (…) The antithesis between righteousness based on works and righteousness through grace, which according to Luther represents the line of demarcation between Christ and the Antichrist, thus becomes in his eyes identical to the antithesis between philosophy and a reflection inspired by the biblical word (…). Karl Barth sharpened this protest against the presence of philosophy in theology with his contestation of the *analogiaens*(…)"[57]

Ratzinger's argument against Barth focuses on the way of posing the question: the main point is not whether revelation is, in a strict transcendent domain, outside the world and the realm of naturally attainable knowledge. The main point, rather, is to receive and accept the content of Christian revelation as it comes, even if it is accessible to human reason.

Ironically, Barth falls into the trap of letting natural reason determine what revelation is, which is the very thing he was trying to argue against. In other words, Barth's idea, according to which we must show that revelation contacts natural reason in a *dialectical dynamics of antithesis* to prove that revelation belongs to the transcending's sphere, drives from natural reason and not from revelation itself. Thus, this is intrinsically contradictory, because the German Calvinist theologian wants to prove that

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[52] K. BARTH, *Church Dogmatic*, I. 1 §5, 3, p. 159.

[53] *Ibid.*, I. 2, I §14, 2, p. 65.

[54] *Ibid.*, I. 1, §2 I, p. 29.

[55] "Here our way diverges from that of Roman Catholic dogmatics (…)" (*Ibid.*, I. 1, §I 2, p. 15).

[56] *Ibid.*, I. 1, II 1 §12, 4, p. 88.

[57] J. RATZINGER, *The Nature and Mission of Theology*, 18-19.

revelation comes from a different sphere of Reason, and he proves it with a principle created by reason alone. So, Barth's starting point is natural reason, instead of revelation, as he had wanted.

Joseph Ratzinger, on the other hand, finds a harmonious and complimentary relationship between the Revealed Word of God and natural human reason. Such harmonic relationship is almost 'evident', because, even in a world corrupted by sin, Scripture reveals the natural capacity of pagans to achieve the *divine law*.

"(…) the concept of nature in Romans 2, which was inspired by Stoic teaching transformed by the theology of creation: the pagans know the law 'from nature' and are thus a law for themselves (Rm 2, 14)."[58]

Hence, the way to defend the *analogiaentis* requires, as a starting point, to show the harmonious relationship between Biblical and Greek philosophy – contrary to Barth's *antithetical dialectics*. The point consists on affirming that the God of Israel is connecting to the *Being as such*, search by natural philosophy, because He is conceived as the establishment of every reality and human salvation. In other words, God transcends the world and every being, but his nature corresponds to the Being as such, naturally searched by all philosophers in every single human culture:

"To the extent that the prophets see in the God of Israel the primordial creative ground of reality, it is quite clear that what is taking place is a religious critique for the sake of a correct understanding of this reality itself."[59]

It is also necessary to show that biblical revelation reveals *reason* as something able to achieve truth about the world and even about God. In fact, it could be accept the principle of a connection between God and the philosophical Being, because God is its creator, without accepting that a knowledge of such a Being through a philosophical method – that means, by natural reason – would be able to achieve *truth*.

Starting at the level of the revelation, however, Ratzinger shows that the radical dichotomy made by Bonhoeffer between the biblical logos and the philosophical one is not warranted. First, because, already before Christ, the Hebrew prophets had accomplished a synthesis of the

Hellas' culture and the Torah – a synthesis that would make possible the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, in the so-called *Septuaginta*. This edition of the Hebrew Bible in Greek was not only a translation, but an integration of the Greek philosophical concepts into the content of revelation.[60]

Second, the first Christians such as Paul and John, who lived at a time when revelation was still being transmitted in a written way, always quoted the *Scriptures* according to the *Septuaginta*version. This shows that Christian tradition implies a strict connection between the domain of revelation and of philosophy.

Precisely because of this, Ratzinger shows that, in the Gospel of John, the term λογός cannot be reduced to a Word that is completely unrelated to the intelligible logos in the universal principles of the cosmos. The same can be said of the Johannine term αλεθηία, which cannot be simply identified with *fidelity* or *trustworthiness*.

"It was this critique which, in the very heart of Israel itself, prepared that synthesis of Hellas and the Bible which the Fathers labored to achieve. For this reason, it is incorrect to reduce the concepts *logos* and *aletheia*, upon John's Gospel centers the Christian message, to a strictly Hebraic interpretation, as if *logos* meant 'word' merely in the sense of God's speech in history (…)"[61]

Hence, there is a distinction, but not a radical separation, between the biblical *logos* and the philosophical one. Even if the logos of the Hellenistic philosophers is not absolutely identical to the biblical one, it is also not an *anti-logos*,as it is conceived in Bonhoeffer's theology.

The fact that Christian revelation is expressed in an intelligible human language, and within a deep interaction between the prophetical movement and the authentic philosophical

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[58] J. RATZINGER, *Truth and Tolerance*,239.

[59] J. RATZINGER,*The Nature and Mission of Theology,* 24.

[60] Cf. J. BROWN, *Hellas and Israel*, De Gruyter, Berlin 1995, 62-64. Also Ratzinger refers to this synthesis between Israel and a pagan culture: "It was the critique which, in the very heart of Israel itself, prepared that synthesis of Hellas and the Bible which the Fathers labored to achieve. For this reason, it is incorrect to reduce the concepts of *logos* and *aletheia*, upon which John's Gospel centers the Christian message, to a strictly Hebraic interpretation (…)" (J. Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology*, 24).

[61]*Ibid.*,24.

search for truth, implies a connection between the content of revelation and the answers discovered by natural philosophy.

On Ratzinger's argument, revelation's content affirms a logos in the world that is connected to the divine logos by the act of creation – because the word λογός in the Bible arrives in a Hellenistic context within the ancient prophets, and later the Christian apostles integrated Greek concepts and philosophical ideas during the inspired writing of the Scriptures.

In this sense, we can understand the Church Father's esteem of Plato's and Aristotle's philosophies in their arriving at the necessity of the *Supreme Good* or the *Unmoved Mover*. This was a natural way, by *analogy*, of knowing the necessity of monotheism and also of some of God's attributes.[62]

This natural capacity of reason was explicitly affirmed by the Magisterium in the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius* of the first Vatican Council in 1870.

"Eadem sancta mater Ecclesia tenet e docet, Deum, rerumomnium principium et finem, naturalihumanaerationislumine e rebus creates certocognosci posse; «invisibiliaenimipsius, a creatura mundi, per ea quae factasunt, intellect, conspiciuntur.» [Rm 1, 20]"[63]

Thus, if the divine logos is present in all created beings, and the human intellect can access its intelligibility by natural reason, then this *intelligibility*, achieved by the human intellect, *participates* in the creative divine logos. The term *participation* is important, because it allows real *analogies* to be made, while avoiding either conflating the logos of the world with the divine logos, or falling prey to fideistic dualism, whose equivocal ontology implies a total separation between the two *logoi*, as Bonhoeffer and Barth assume.[64]

In other words, the natural law – already sought by Stoic philosophers – was imprinted into nature by God, not in an arbitrary way (as nominalism assumes), but as an expression of God's own logos. Therefore, nature is connected to the divine logos: all created reality participates in the one and the same logos. There is only one logos – the divine one – which created the world with a rational intelligibility that is accessible to human reason. This knowledge is also a knowledge of God's nature, albeit imperfect and incomplete, because it participates in the same divine logos.

"True, faith does not remove the essential limitation of man in his relation to the truth: it does not, in other words, eliminate the law of analogy. Nevertheless, analogy is not the same as metaphor. Analogy can always be broadened and deepened, but, within the boundaries of man's possibilities, it declares the very truth. In this sense, rationality belongs to the essence of Christianity (…)"[65]

The Critique of Nominalism

The loss of this harmonious connection between God and His creation, this scholastic theological synthesis in which all the sciences were integrated, can be traced to the late medieval period, and more specifically, to the nominalism of Scotus and Ockham in the *Franciscan school*.

"(…) the nominalists maintained that they owed their certainty not to any philosophical arguments which could be adduced in their favour but to the fact that they were truths of faith, taught by Christian theology. This position

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[62] Cf. F. COPLESTON, *From Augustine to Duns Scotus*, 15-23. So, the Church Fathers assume the possibility to do *analogiaentis* in order to achieve a knowledge about God's nature, even if the difference was infinitely biggest as the similitude, as the IV Lateran Council dogmatic affirmed in 1215: "(…) quia inter creatorem et creaturam non potesttantasimilitudonotari, quin inter eosmaior sit dissimilitudonotanda" (DZ 806).
[63] DZ 3004.
[64] Precisely because of this, Ratzinger says that the Greek concepts were integrated and transformed by the theology of revelation. By doing so, he avoids both the fideism and the deism, in which God and

Nature are identified. Ratzinger, indeed, affirms a *purification* of the God of the philosophers, and its own logos. While the God of the philosopher's, the philosophical logos, is "essentially self-centered" and "pure thought", the Christian God is a Father; a person who loves (cf. J. RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 99-104). This harmonic relationship between faith and reason is balanced: it reconciles a cataphatic theology with a apophatic one, by arguing that we achieve God's nature by reason, but always in an incomplete way, because God remains always a mystery to natural reason: "Theology rightly intends to speak truly of the Mystery of God, but at the same time it knows that its knowledge though true is inadequate in relation to the reality of God, whom it can never 'comprehend'" (ITC, *Theology Today: Prospectives, Principles and Criteria*, 97). Also in the quoted Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius* it says that reason itself is not able to achieve the entire God's nature (cf. DZ 3016).
[65] J. RATZINGER, *The Mission and Nature of Theology* , 56.

naturally tended to introduce a sharp distinction between philosophy and theology."[66]

Copleston shows that nominalism is the ontological basis of fideism, which I critiqued above. An ontology that denies the existence of *universals* implies that it is not possible to access the essence of Being – i.e. God (on the Christian view) – by means of particular beings, because, in metaphysical terms, there is no *participation*.

In these sense, the British Jesuit philosopher thinks that the destruction of *Metaphysics* in Western philosophy started before Kant with the nominalist movement.

"(…) the technical logical studies of the nominalists and of those influenced by the nominalist movement were frequently associated (…) with a destructive attack on the traditional metaphysics, or rather on the proofs offered in the traditional metaphysics."[67]

Since it is not possible to discover a clear and certain correspondence with the reality itself, truth tends to be reduced to mere logical validity, in a kind of circular coerenticism. The ontological foundations of arguments tend to disappear, and the rational and empirical sphere become radically independent of theology.

"In this sense, intuitive cognition is only 'nominal', as it only occurs within the formalism of logical terms and functional definitions. As Woznicki says, 'Ockham's metaphysics became a pure logic'."[68]

This approach makes a separation, a radical distinction, between God and nature, and also between *reason* and *faith*. Rationality can be used for empirical knowledge, and to see the logical validity of arguments: but it is irrelevant to the propositions of faith, which can thus contradict natural reason, and even the principle of non-contradiction, as allegedly happens in the Trinitarian doctrine.[69]

Ratzinger's theology is strongly opposed to nominalism; this is one of the points on which

his thought and the so-called Radical Orthodoxy movement agree.

"Paul Richardson, the assistant Anglican Bishop of Newcastle, recently observed that the theology of Benedict XVI has much in common with the school of Radical Orthodoxy."[70]

In fact, Ratzinger shares the same vision of reason as Milbank, Cunningham, Pickstock and Ward: there is no such thing as "*natural reason*," contrary to the assumption of the nominalist system. Reason is not merely *natural*, because it is not absolutely autonomous. This is true, first, because all forms of Reason participate in the divine logos; and second, because it reason is never absolutely *pure*, but always historical and contingent.

"For Ratzinger 'pure reason' (…) does not exist (…) Many Neo-Scholastics influenced by these projects may find this statement shocking but it is none the less true that Ratzinger and Friedrich Nietzsche, the father of post-modernism, are united in their opposition to the Kantian belief in 'pure reason'."[71]

In this sense, it seems to me better to use the term *immanent reason* than *natural* or *pure reason*. For reason, used by human beings in a particular historical context, participates in divine logos, which allows achieving universal *Truth* in analogical terms. Although the truth attained by the human intellect is always contingent, and thus not the full truth, it does nevertheless access something of the essence of creatures themselves, and the Being as such, because its *logos* is present in everything, in the entire universe and throughout history.

This is precisely the point denied by the nominalist assumption against the primordial Christian option for the *logos*. Scotus and Ockham, in order to defend the omnipotence and absolute freedom of God, conceive the act of creation as one of the infinite possibilities of God's will.[72] God could have created a world with a different *logos* – that is, with a different rationality and intelligibility. On this view, the intrinsic intelligibility of the world and history,

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[66] F. COPLESTON, *The late medieval and renaissance philosophy*, *A History of Philosophy, vol. III*, Doubleday, London 1993,126.
[67]*Ibid.*, 123.
[68] C. CUNNINGHAM, *Genealogy of Nihilism: Philosophies of nothing and the difference of theology*, Routledge, London 2005, 54-55.
[69] Cf. F. COPLESTON, *The late medieval and renaissance philosophy*, 127-128.

[70] T. ROWLAND, *Ratzinger's Faith*, 28.
[71]*Ibid.*, 4-5.
[72] Cf. SCOTUS, *De DivisioneNaturae*, I, 3, in «PatrologiaeLatinae, tomus CXXII – Joannes Scotus Erigena. Adrianus Papa II», MigneEditorem, Lutetiae 1853, 443.

grasped by the human intellect, does not participate in the intelligibility of God: there is an insuperable chasm between the divine logos and the logos in creation.

The consequence of this nominalist approach is the separation of *human reason* from the *truth of Being*: the world is as it is, not because of the necessity of rational principles derived from the divine nature, but because of God's arbitrary will. Ratzinger shows the danger of this position, in which it is the *will* that creates however it wants to, rather than in accord with intelligible principles.

"In all honesty, one must observe that in the late Middle Ages we find trends in theology which would sunder this synthesis between the Greek spirit and the Christian spirit. In contrast with the so-called intellectualism of Augustine and Thomas, there arose with Duns Scotus a voluntarism which, in its later developments, led to the claim that we can only know God's *voluntasordinata*. Beyond this is the realm of God's freedom, in virtue of which he could have done the opposite of everything he has actually done. This gives rise to positions which clearly approach those of IbnHazm and might even lead to the image of a capricious God, who is not even bound to truth and goodness. God's transcendence and otherness are so exalted that our reason, our sense of the true and good, are no longer an authentic mirror of God, whose deepest possibilities remain eternally unattainable and hidden behind his actual decisions."[73]

Hence, Ratzinger's main critique of fideism is that it does not preserve the primordial Christian choice in favor of the *logos*. This choice, which sees the presence of God's nature in the intelligibility of the world, is present in the Thomistic synthesis: being precedes doing ("*agere sequitur esse*"); God's nature determines God's will, because God is good and He made a good world (Gn 1, 31). So, the good world is good because it has something similar to the nature of Good—that is, the nature of God. So, in ontological terms, the nature of the world manifests God's nature, because it is made from God's logos and participates in it. The logos, as the primordial creative ground of all reality, must be ontically present in the world's nature and intelligibility. This is the principle that allowed Christians to integrate and accept the stoic doctrine of *natural law*.

"Christian theologians thereby aligned themselves with a philosophical and juridical movement that began to take shape in the second century B.C. In the first half of that century, the social natural law developed by the Stoic philosophers came into contact with leading teachers of Roman Law."[74]

In fact, in the Christian revelation contained in Scripture, we see the affirmation that God's knowledge is accessible in a natural way, by those to whom the Scripture and the Law were not given:[75]

"Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made" (Rom 1:19-20).

God's act of creating a world that participates in His nature – which the theory of natural law assumes – does not limit the liberty of God's actions and decisions, contrary to what nominalism presumes. Rather, the thomistic principle that God is *pure act* (meaning that all His essence is actualized) implies that there is no distinction between the intelligibility of God's nature and of God's will. This means that God's infinite freedom is expressed in the act of creation, because the perfection of all attributes in God is achieving the fullness of the nature actualizing it entirely.[76]

The Thomistic approach allows, so, a peaceful relationship between God and the world, in which liberty means the possibility of achieving the *nature's fullness*, instead of conceiving liberty as the possibility to contradict *real nature* arbitrarily. As Connor Cunningham, a scholar of the Radical Orthodoxy movement, noted, nominalism created a tension between God's law and the world's nature. For if the world's nature is separated from God's essence,

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[73]BENEDICT XVI, *Faith, Reason and the University: Memories and Reflections*, Aula Magna of the University of Regensburg, Tuesday, 12 September 2006. In this matter, of systematic theology, Ratzinger's thought did not change significantly, only regarding ecclesiological and liturgy shifts there were some important shifts (cf. T. ROWLAND, *Ratzinger's Faith*, 123-143).

[74]BENEDICT XVI, *The Listening Heart: Reflections on the Foundations of Law*, Reichstag Building, Berlin, Thursday, 22 September 2011.
[75] Cf. ITC, *In Search of a Universal Ethic: A New Look at the Natural Law*, 2009, 25.
[76] Cf. AQUINATIS, *ST*, I, q. 4, a. 1, *op. cit.*, 25-26; q.5, a. 1, *op. cit.*, 28-29.

then the obedience that created things owe to God's divine law does violence to them, because God's law is not in accord with their natural perfection, but is rather an absolutely 'heteronomous' commandment.

At an ontological level, the value of both divine and world's nature is *univocal*, because the world is created without ontological relationship to divine's nature, but only from the God's will. So, world and God exist with different natures and in the same sense. Both Beings – the one of God and the one of the world – became *univocal*, in the sense that both exist in the same sense: there is no participation of one in the another's Being and, so, no graduation of beings, but only univocal beings, although if they have different essences.

In this ontological approach, the beings have the same value of existence – they exist in the same sense –, but, in their essences, beings are *equivocal*: that is what John Milbank calls '*radical difference*'.[77] That is an existence which essence and full realization contradicts the essence and existences of the other beings. On this view, it is may seem reasonable to want to liberate the man and the world from God, for the sake of achieving autonomy, as the Nietzschean *übermensch* does.

"With regard to Scotus, can we not, then, read his univocity as another concept of participation? A conception taken up and developed by nihilism, one which is otherwise than nihilistic, according to Nietzsche's intention? It certainly seems to be true that there is a significant but mostly indiscernible intercourse between each – theologian and nihilist – as they cross by and move on."[78]

TOWARDS A CULTURE OF DIALOGUE

Until now I have been showing the intrinsic connection in Christian faith between God and the world, between Christian revelation and immanent reason. In this present section of my work, following Ratzinger's thought closely, I will show how the Western values of democracy, liberty and tolerance, within a pluralistic society, presuppose this pro-*logos* stance of Christianity.

The Western values upon which the modern enlightenment and the attempt to emancipate man were built, were conceived inside a cultural tradition that believed in the capacity of human

reason to achieve truth. This tradition, even if it had already started before Christ in the ancient Hellenistic age, was preserved and developed by Christian theology.

The pro-*logos* orientation of Western culture was not simply a philosophical position that was adopted to explain theology presumptions; it was also a theological assumption which authorized the use of reason. Out of this theological principle, Western culture developed its approach to the sciences, and produced a society in which rational human beings can dialogue and choose their common principles democratically.

"For Ratzinger, faith and reason, theology and philosophy, are symbiotically, and not extrinsically, related. Faith without reason ends in fideism, but reason without faith ends in nihilism."[79]

Christianity as a Guarantee of Democracy

"Participation in community life is not only one of the greatest aspirations of the citizen, called to exercise freely and responsibly his civic role with and for others, but is also one of the pillars of all democratic orders and one of the major guarantees of the permanence of the democratic system."[80]

The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church explicitly defends the democratic system, following the Second Vatican Council.[81] In the quote above, we see the affirmation that the Christian *principle of participation* is the guarantee of democracy. This principle rejects any kind of totalitarism, and it implicitly posits a nature common to all human beings, based on which a dialogue and a communion his possible.

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[77] J. MILBANK, *Theology and Social Theory*, 344.

[78] C. CUNNINGHAM, *The Genealogy of Nihilism*, 248.

[79] T. ROWLAND, *Ratzinger's Faith*, 5.

[80] CSDC 190.

[81] "Therefore, this sacred synod, proclaiming the noble destiny of man and championing the Godlike seed which has been sown in him, offers to mankind the honest assistance of the Church in fostering that brotherhood of all men which corresponds to this destiny of theirs." (*GS* 3). "Men expect from the various religions answers to the unsolved riddles of the human condition (…)" (*NA* 1). "The Church, therefore, exhorts her sons, that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life, they recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men." (*NA* 3).

This stands in stark contrast to the view that one will inevitably does violence to the will of others by imposing itself on them: the ontology present in Christian faith of nature's participation in God's *logos* implies the accomplish of every seeing being without contradicting the accomplishment of other's beings.

The same reasoning is very present in Ratzinger's theology. This German theologian is not a conservative of the ancient regime, but rather a man who wants to defend the foundational principles that make a plural and democratic society possible. Thus, *reason, coupled with* a belief in the human capacity of *universal Truth*, is the *condition of possibility* of democracy, of religious freedom, and even of an *intercultural dialog*.

Ratzinger argues that, where there is no common understanding of *nature* among human beings, it is not possible to discover a common *truth*, nor build a shared project based on a common desire, nor reach an agreement on *universal human rights*, because there is no common ground.[82] Christianity's belief in *natural law* allows it to respect other cultures, and even to integrate into its own system some philosophies and principles that came from outside the *revelatio*sphere: one culture can contribute to another as long as each human

being can, by reason, grasp a common truth; and that is possible only if natural law theory is true.

"His [Ratzinger's] genealogy of modernity does not follow the school of thinking which reads modernity as an entirely new culture, completely severed from all Christian roots. He believes that it is entangled with the Christian heritage however much secular liberal political elites may want to deny this."[83]

In fact, Ratzinger argues that dialogue requires the *analogical ontology*. That means, if particular beings are equivocal in nature and univocal in ontological value, the relationship between different beings, or different persons, will be violent. A communion is not possible between beings that have a completely different nature, intelligibility and will. Democracy requires a common nature between men, which is assured in the Christian doctrine of the participation of the logos of the world in the divine logos.

"One final element of the natural law that claimed (at least in the modern period) that it was ultimately a rational law has remained, namely, *human rights*. These are incomprehensible without the presupposition that man *qua*, thanks simply to his membership in the species "man", is the subject of rights and that his being bears within itself values and norms that must be discovered – but not invented."[84]

The guarantee of democracy, and the assurance that a totalitarism of someone's arbitrary will arise, is to be found in the presupposition that human beings share a common nature. This presupposition, implied in Christian theology, sees human men as able to achieve truth and communion, because they are images of the Trinitarian God, who is a community of persons and the logos that created the whole universe.

This means that democracy implies the absolute respect of the dignity of human beings. True participation, which is necessary for democracy, requires this respect for other people: participation in a community is important only on the assumption that human beings can achieve some shared truth regarding a shared nature in the common place.

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[82] Thus, the problem of nominalism is that assumes an equivocal ontology – this means, the presumption that each human being is absolutely unique and that there is no common nature among neither human beings nor all other things that do exist. This prospective, according to Ratzinger, would pose the risk that democracy would become, not the place where human beings discuss and freely build according to their opinions, but rather a society fragmented in different groups that fight against each other, instead of communicating their ideas and life experiences. It is also interesting to notice that Ratzinger criticizes *nominalism* in this sense, because it allows for an arbitrariety that could permit terrorism and religious fundamentalism (cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Faith, Reason and the University: Memories and Reflections*, Lecture of the Holy Father, Aula Magna of the University of Regensburg, Tuesday, 12 September 2006). In fact, politics is at the service of justice if we presume the Common Good in a society, which fundament resides on natural law. So, in this sense, Ratzinger says that to preserve *natural law* it is also important to have an *analogical ontology* in which all the truths are in reference of a universal and absolute Truth, which human beings cannot reach completely (cf. *Ibid.*).

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[83] T. ROWLAND, *Ratzinger's Faith*,107.

[84] J. RATZINGER - J. HABERMAS, *The Dialectics of Secularization: on Reason and Religion*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2006, 70.

Hence, in order to preserve this respect for the absolute dignity of humankind, it is necessary to have a reasonable universal criteria, that prevents the arbitrariness of individual willing from violating the rights of individuals.

"It is not the law of the stronger, but the strength of the law that must hold sway. Power as structured by law, and at the service of law, is the antithesis of violence, which is a lawless power that opposes the law (…) in this way that arbitrariness can be excluded and freedom can be experienced as a freedom shared in common with others."[85]

In this sense, Ratzinger introduced the concept of a *dictatorship of relativism* as a new kind of totalitarism, which threatens Western democratic values in contemporary societies.

"We are building a dictatorship of relativism that does not recognize anything as definitive and whose ultimate goal consists solely of one's own ego and desires."[86]

The only way to avoid the arbitrary will of the strongest is establishing a law that is intelligible and reasonable to all human beings and, using a theological presupposition, is ontologically connected to the truth of human nature.

This is the context in Ratzinger's work of his critique, not against the scientific theory of evolution, but specifically against "social Darwinism". This ethical application of a biological theory means the imposition of arbitrariness in human societies: the law of the strongest. The only way to reverse this tendency is, accepting Christian theology, to assume that besides reality there are the principles of love and reason operating, instead of the chaos of arbitraries will and process.

"Contrary to the ethos of social Darwinism, Ratzinger holds that the ethos of Christianity must consist in love and reason converging with one another as the essential foundation pillars of reality."[87]

Ontology of Peace versus Ontology of Violence

When Emancipation Means Nominalist Violence

If there is no common nature among individuals, the only way a person has to achieve his own will is imposing it on others, who do not share it and for whom it is unintelligible. Therefore, the belief in a common nature among men allows intelligibility for a society within which human beings could be in *communio*. Only if there is a common human nature is it possible to share ideas, communicate principles, achieve agreements and establish political consensus.

On the nominalist view, according to which there are no *universals* (i.e. no common essence among individuals of the same species), coexistence in the same public square will necessary give rise to violence. This means that the ontology needed for a peaceful democracy is not the *ontology of difference* that is implicit in every nominalist approach.[88]

Criticizing nominalism in order to ensure peace in pluralistic societies, Ratzinger seems quite close to the Radical Orthodoxy movement.

"[The] Radical Orthodoxy project and the theology of Benedict XVI share a common core, and a very similar reading of the cultures of modernity and post-modernity (…)"[89]

In fact, just as Ratzinger shows the contradictions of contemporary relativism as a false pluralism, so also some authors of Radical Orthodoxy such as John Milbank and Conor Cunningham, present post-modern nietzscheanism – the radical libertarianism – as a narrative in which only violence is intelligible. Both Ratzinger and proponents of Radical Orthodoxy see in Augustine's ontology and vision an alternative approach.

Using Milbank's terminology, social Darwinism's law of the strongest opposes an *ontology of peace* with an *ontology of violence*. The way to respond to this position consists in showing that every narrative contains, necessarily and implicitly, an *ontology*: this is, a way of conceiving reality, and of explaining how reality is produced and functions. Interestingly, post-modern nietzscheans want to liberate philosophy and culture from *ontology*.

"For the secular postmodernists, Nietzsche became the only true master of suspicion: the thinker of a 'baseless suspicion' which rests, unlike the suspicion of Marx, Freud and

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[85]*Ibid.*, 58.

[86]BENEDICT XVI, *Homily of the Mass «Pro elegendo Romano Pontifice»*, Vatican Basilica, Monday 18 April 2005.

[87] T. ROWLAND, *Ratzinger's Faith*, 63.

[88] Cf. C. CUNNINGHAM, *The Genealogy of Nihilism*, 30-32.

[89] T. ROWLAND, *Ratzinger's Faith*, 28.

sociology, on no fundationalist presuppositions."[90]

In the post-modern approach, the category that determines moral criteria is *emancipation*: human beings must be liberated from any doctrine that limits their possibilities in life. The will and the desires of each person exist to be realized in the world. There are no philosophical grounds to deduce moral principles that constrain life to precede its natural intuition. There is no ontology of abstract and universal essences that individuals must adapt to.

"Yet all the recent French neo-Nietzscheans, if not Nietzsche and Heidegger, are loath to renounce the emancipatory claim (…). For it is *this* subject which remains the only possible subject of a discourse of emancipation."[91]

In this post-modern approach, as articulated by contemporary neo-Nietzscheans, Milbank detects this *ontology of difference*: every single human being is absolutely *equivocal* from the others in essence and *univocal* in ontological value. *Emancipation* is conceived of as the possibility to realize the primordial instincts, personal desires, and arbitrary will inside human beings, in the face of hostile restrictions imposed by the world, society, and other people. This is the notion of *Übermensch* that Nietzsche proposes as ideal of the future noble humans.

"No universals are ascribed to human society save one: that it is always a field of warfare. And yet this universal history of military manoeuvres is also to be regarded as in some sense liberating, as assisting the emergence of an *übermensch*, or a post-humanist human creature."[92]

This conception of *liberty* and *emancipation* assumes a violent attack from which a person is emancipated. In other words, a person must achieve the realization of his or her desires by overcoming the limits of contingency within human beings live. The *desire*, the individual *will*, is not evaluated in terms of being good or bad; rather is the criterion for acting. The only meaning this gives to human life is that of achieving one's immanent desires: no matter where are they from and why they exist; they are the point of reference for understanding *emancipation*; they must be performed in order to permit human life to achieve its only possible

purpose; they are the only criterion that gives intelligibility to human lives.

This post-modern neo-Nietzscheanism suggests, in practical terms, a Social Darwinism. Every human being is unique in his own will. His desires are arbitrary and determine his way of life and choices. Some will succeed in realizing them, by imposing their will on the world and others; the rest, the *weak people* [using Nietzschean terminology], will not satisfy their aspirations, and will remain in a meaningless life. It is clear how the arbitrary *law of the strongest* is implicit in all of this.

"The protection of an equality of freedom therefore collapses into the promotion of the inequality of power. And it is here that a problem arises. If freedom effaces itself in favour of arbitrary power, then how can one ever talk of there being more or less freedom in one society rather than another?"[93]

As Milbank noted, this kind of approach implies that *violence* is the metaphysical principle according to which reality is performed and understood. The *will-to-power* becomes the only metaphysical category that determines anthropology and morality.

This kind of ontology leads to the establishment of a totalitarism of some particular will, while destroying the intelligibility of a public square within which men live peacefully for the *common Good*.

"In consequence, every new disguised, or semiovert version of a Kantian practical reason put forward by Foucault, Deleuze or Lyotard always succumbs to reapplication of the Nietzschean reduction of liberty to power. The neo-Nietzscheans cannot, in consequence, wriggle out of the implication that, while nihilism may be 'the Truth', it is at the same time the truth whose practical expression must be 'fascism'."[94]

This is precisely the argument Ratzinger makes against the *dictatorship of relativism*: without a universal truth, held in common by all human beings, the arbitrariness of the strongest particular will tend to be imposed on others in the public square.

"(…) we have the development of human possibilities, of the power to make and destroy, that poses the question of legal and ethical

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[90] J. MILBANK, *Theology and Social Theory*, 278.
[91] *Ibid.*, 279.
[92] *Ibid.*, 282.

[93] *Ibid.*, 279.
[94] *Ibid.*, 279.

controls on power in a way that goes far beyond anything to which we have yet been accustomed. This lends great urgency to the question of how cultures that encounters one another can find ethical basis to guide their relationship along the right path, thus permitting them to build up a common structure that tames power and imposes a legally responsible order on the exercise of power."[95]

Ontology of Peace and of an Integrated Love

This 'common structure', intelligible in the ontology of *participation* of beings in divine's essence, allows *communio* instead of *violence*. In this sense, not only a healthy democracy is possible, but also, from an individualistic point of view, theelement of human desire which desires to possess—called "*eros*"—need not be realized violently.

"Yet *eros*and *agape*—ascending love and descending love—can never be completely separated. The more the two, in their different aspects, find a proper unity in the one reality of love, the more the true nature of love in general is realized. Even if*eros* is at first mainly covetous and ascending, a fascination for the great promise of happiness, in drawing near to the other, it is less and less concerned with itself, increasingly seeks the happiness of the other, is concerned more and more with the beloved, bestows itself and wants to "be there for" the other."[96]

In an *analogical ontology*, where human beings *participate* in the same original Being, the satisfaction of multiple persons' desires in the public sphere becomes possible. In a communion there is a polarity of *eros* and *agape*, of giving and receiving, of possessing and being possessed, yet without violence or imposition, but in a real freedom in which the fullness of human nature is achieved. In this polarity the conceptual and ontological complementariness of *eros* and *agape* becomes apparent.

A libertarian approach to man's chaotic desires does not allow the achievement of this polarity which constitutes the only chance of a plural society composed of diverse persons in harmony and peace.

"Applying this theology one concludes that for Benedict XVI the sexual revolution of the 1960s

should be opposed (…) because the underlying vision of the dignity and meaning of human sexuality offered by 1960s Freudians, Nietzscheans, and New Age sex therapists is really not truly erotic. It is not only destructive of human dignity and integrity but it takes the paths out of the whole experience."[97]

This polarity between *eros*and *agape* is present in all dimensions of human life, not only sexuality: it is also present in the communion of a dialogue between different subjects that, freely, can in harmony build a public space to live together. In other words, *eros*and *agape* are elements that are present in democracy not only because they constitute an indelible part of human nature, but also because they create a dynamic that leads to the *union of different individuals*.

This integrity of both elements as intrinsic parts of love is what powers Christian social action, in favor of a society that respects human dignity, where men and women can achieve their fullness. In other words, the political doctrines are also performed by the contents of Christian faith.

"The entire activity of the Church is an expression of a love that seeks the integral good of man: it seeks his evangelization through Word and Sacrament, an undertaking that is often heroic in the way it is acted out in history; and it seeks to promote man in the various arenas of life and human activity. Love is therefore the service that the Church carries out in order to attend constantly to man's sufferings and his needs, including material needs. And this is the aspect, this *service of charity* (…)"[98]

Hence, in order to concretize love in the social structures of human societies, we must presume an ontology within which all human beings share some kind of nature that participates in a Being who is entirely *love*. Only under this condition, the *logos* of human being will be love itself: meaning that only from an *analogical ontology* towards the fount of Being as *love* as such, would it be possible to see *love* as the primordial metaphysical principle that creates reality, instead of the Nietzschean one, the *will-to-the-power*.

"The 'commonness' which now embraces them both is not the commonplace of the given neutral terrain, nor of the act in its initial

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[95] J. RATZINGER - J. HABERMAS, *The Dialectics of Secularization*, 55.
[96]BENEDICT XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 2005, 7.

[97] T. ROWLAND, *Ratzinger's Faith*, 71.
[98]BENEDICT XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 2005, 19.

conception, but instead of the new differential relationship. The question of the possibility of living together in mutual agreement, and the question of whether there can be a charitable act, therefore turn out to be conjointly the question of whether there can be an 'analogy' or a 'common measure' between differences which does not reduce differences to mere instances of acommon essence or genus. In other words a likeness that only maintains itself through the differences, and not despite nor in addition to them."[99]

The Christian option for the *logos*, which includes openness to a philosophical dialog with different cultures and systems of thought, is also an option for a *narrative* that interprets reality from the love point of view, because the origin of all reality is the Trinity. The ultimate reality is *love* because that is what divine nature is.

"This constitutes a tradition of thought, language, and vision capable of eliciting our will and our reason toward our final end—the God who as Trinity is charity. This vision must necessarily be repeated, and in so doing the natural is graced."[100]

John Milbank and his fellows are also quite philosophical at this level, because he does not impose the Trinitarian doctrine on the human sphere, but he tries rather to show how such a doctrine is consistent with human nature and human aspirations, on a phenomenological level.

The argument consists in showing that a life determined by the metaphysical principle of will-to-power is inconsistent with the real and concrete fact of human existence. In fact, human individuals are necessarily born into a historical and communitarian context. Thus desires, human will, and aspirations, arise out of a communitarian language and culture to which individuals belong necessarily. In other words, as post-modernity assumes, human individuals are actors inside a *narrative*, but they were born into it, without choosing or created themselves autonomally. Something is given, and this something is communitarian, and from its thoughts, desires, decisions and actions are made by human individuals.

"To argue that the natural act might be the Christian (supernatural) charitable act, and not the will-to-power, is therefore to argue that such an 'analogical relation' is as possible a transcendental conception as the positing of an a priori warfare. And what is more, the former conception permits a purer 'positivism', a purer philosophy of difference, still less contaminated by dialectics. For a priori warfare not only supposes an ineradicable presence of the negative, it also supposes its dominance, as giving the only possible meaning-in-common."[101]

This means that human beings, and their desires, are intrinsically communitarian. Hence, the relationships between human persons cannot be merely temporal or instrumental in order to achieve such desires, but they must rather be permanently active, because such relations constitute an indelible element of human existence: relations are not only *accidents*; so, they cannot be merely *instrumental*. Thus we may say that human desires, thoughts and aspirations, which are in their origin communitarian, must be satisfied *liturgically*. Meaning that the full achievement of such desires and aspirations must be realized not in the extreme autonomy of contemporary individualism, but rather in the communitarian context within which they were born.

"Cultural metaphors are sites where a certain cultural isomorphism, linking disparate fields, condenses (…) For the condensing of iconic meaning takes place because of a collective, public attraction. They are generated out of, furnish and foster a public participation (…) we come to understand the constitution of a certain knowledge; that which makes such knowledge possible (…). It is not what has caused them that is of central significance, but rather how they came to be, and what they allow to be, believed by the society producing and produced by them. It is in this way, then, that we might speak of analyses of these metaphors as disclosing the 'unconscious of knowledge'. The analyses are the cultural equivalents of biopsies; an

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[99] J. MILBANK, *Theology and Social Theory*, 290.
[100] J. MILBANK, *Divine Economy: Theology and the Market*, Routledge, London 2003, 217. This vision from *love* as the main principle of all kinds of realities is very present in Augustine's theology of the history, that is share both by Ratzinger (cf. T. ROWLAND, *Ratzinger's Faith*, 3-4) and by Radical Orthodoxy as well (cf. J. MILBANK, «Suspending the Material: the Turn of Radical Orthodoxy», in *Radical Orthodoxy*, edited by J. Milbank, C. Pickstock and G. Ward, Routledge, London 2002, 9-10).

[101] J. MILBANK, *Theology and Social Theory*, 290.

examination of the tissue of the social body at a given point in time and space."[102]

In summary, at a *phenomenological level*, it is possible to see that human beings are intrinsically social subjects, that must live and realize their fullness in a social context. In order to have the possibility of a peaceful coexistence of such individuals in the same common place, which is one of the great desires and aspirations of human beings, we must presume the possibility of *communio*. The Trinitarian doctrine and the Christian belief that human beings and the world participate in God's nature is also the foundation of the peaceful coexistence of men at an *ontological level*.

Thus, in a certain sense, Christianity assures a global intelligibility of faith and of human life, in circularity. On one hand, the theological principles consent the intelligibility of an *analogical ontology* required for the intelligibility of peace in human relations. And, on another hand, the desires and aspirations of peace by a subject who is intrinsically communitarian, corroborates the Christian doctrine of Trinitarian love as the ultimate principle of reality."«If you see charity, you see the Trinity», wrote Saint Augustine."[103]

The Need for Enlarged Reason

Against the Reductionism of Technical Reason

In the previous section, it was seen that *universal reason* is a condition of possibility for real *dialogue*. Only on the condition that human individuals think with the same kind of *logos* would reaching a common understanding be possible. It was also shown that this *universal reason* exists only if each human intellect and nature participates in the same *logos*, as the contents of Christian faith ensure.

Now we must show how this *universal reason* cannot be reduced only to the technical rationality proper to the empirical sciences. Rather, we must embrace a broader concept of reason, as Ratzinger argues, in order to ensure the possibility of cultural dialogue and development within democratic pluralism.

"In the conception of early Christianity the primacy of the *Logos* and the primacy of love were revealed to be one and the same. The *Logos* was revealed to be not only the mathematical reasoning at the basis of all things,

but as creative love to the point of becoming com-passion, co-suffering with creation."[104]

Hence, the Christian option for the *logos* is an option for understanding the world and human life from the perspective of love as the ultimate reality. It is a *rationality* that should be applied to every dimension of reality, including science, morality, and even religion.

This aspect of the Christian *logos* derives from the principle that God is *Trinitarian* and *personal*: He is a person with intellect and will, who loves, and is ontologically the beginning and the fullness of every real thing.

"The philosophical dimension to be noted in this biblical vision, and its importance from the standpoint of the history of religions, lies in the fact that on the one hand we find ourselves before a strictly metaphysical image of God: God is the absolute and ultimate source of all being; but this universal principle of creation—the *Logos*, primordial reason—is at the same time a lover with all the passion of a true love."[105]

In this sense, Ratzinger critiques the modern reductionism that confines *reason* only to the sphere of efficient causality.

"Behind this thinking lies the modern self-limitation of reason, classically expressed in Kant's "Critiques", but in the meantime further radicalized by the impact of the natural sciences. This modern concept of reason is based, to put it briefly, on a synthesis between Platonism (Cartesianism) and empiricism, a synthesis confirmed by the success of technology. On the one hand it presupposes the mathematical structure of matter, its intrinsic rationality, which makes it possible to understand how matter works and use it efficiently: this basic premise is, so to speak, the Platonic element in the modern understanding of nature. On the other hand, there is nature's capacity to be exploited for our purposes, and here only the possibility of verification or falsification through experimentation can yield decisive certainty. The weight between the two poles can, depending on the circumstances, shift from one side to the other. As strongly positivistic a

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[102] G. WARD, *Cities of God*, Routledge, London 2001, 15-16.
[103] BENEDICT XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 2005, 19.

[104] J. RATZINGER, *The Truth of Christianity*, Sorbonne Address, Paris 1999.
[105] BENEDICT XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 10.

thinker as J. Monod has declared himself a convinced Platonist/Cartesian."[106]

According to Ratzinger, after the separation that nominalism imposed between God and the world, and, in Kantian terms, between *phenomenon* and *noumenon*, the scope of rationality tended to be reduced to efficient causality. In fact, this separation demarked clearly the domain of *knowledge* and the domain of *faith*, *moral*, and *aesthetics*, in which there is no *legitimate knowledge*.[107]

This philosophical approach supported the scientific revolution in the West, whose success gave to mankind the sense of controlling the world and life. The domains of *faith*, *moral* and *aesthetics*, on the other hand, tended to be limited to the sphere of the individuals, rather than being considered a universal truth for all human beings. In fact, only scientific empirical knowledge could be accepted as a domain in which universal truth is possible to achieve. This kind of universal *truth* regards exclusively efficient causes: a mechanical view of the world and of humankind is imposed, with this criterion of *faciendum*.

"Thus the scientific method, which consists of a combination of mathematics (Descartes!)and devotion to the facts in the form of the repeatable experiment, appears to be the one real vehicle of reliable certainty. The combination of mathematical thinking and factual thinking has produced the science-orientated intellectual standpoint of modern man, which signifies devotion to reality in so far as it is capable of being shaped."[108]

Both Ratzinger's theology and the Radical Orthodoxy project oppose this technical culture. First, because, from a phenomenological point of view, we are assisting, in Western societies, to the impositions of such deterministic scientism in the way of thinking and in moral consequences: if progress is made by science, the question "what is it moral to do?" tends to be answered by "whatever science is able to do." Thus, human beings, human life, human choices must adapt to what science determines in the technological progress, and that is a contradiction of the *emancipatory* project of

modernity, because in such approach human existence becomes limited and conditioned by the scientific determinism.

"Political economy was not, we can conclude, an emancipated secular science which explored the formal aspects of economic relations in abstraction from moral considerations. Rather, it imagined and helped to construct an amoral formal mechanism which allows not merely the institution but also the preservation and the regulation of the secular."[109]

Second, this technical culture that reduces rationality to the empirical sphere is contradictory regarding *reason* itself. Really, if *nature* is intelligible and not arbitrary and chaotic, bust be an *whole* intelligibility: not only to the efficient causes, but also to final causes. That is to say that *reason*'ssearch for *intelligibility* would itself be unintelligible, and we would be left with a world and existence devoid of meaning, regarding final [non-mechanical] causes: everything would be chaotic, absurd emptiness. This is because this reduction of rationality leads to the destruction of the *global reason* able to avoid nihilism.

"(…) the question of their objectivity evades the scope of a discourse of universal reason, which is what Nietzsche's version of 'nihilism' remains. A discourse of universal reason, and, moreover, a new positivism. Positivism narrates the emergence of scientific truth, whereas nihilism narrates the nihilistic destiny of science, namely, the necessity for the discipline of truth-finding to admit that there are no truths, and therefore no objective goods."[110]

This is precisely what Ratzinger critiques in modern contemporary culture: in order to surpass the current emptiness that characterizes post-modern life and society, *reason* must be enlarged to encompass all human domains. Only with a *logos*able to give intelligibility to every dimension of human life and reality can we live with and for a meaning in the world and ensure that no arbitrary will is allowed to impose and destroy the other beings that coexist in the world.

"The present-day crisis is due to the fact that the connecting link between the subjective and objective realms has disappeared, that reason and feeling are drifting apart, and that both are ailing because of it. Reason that operates in

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[106]BENEDICT XVI, *Faith, Reason and the University: Memories and Reflections.*

[107] Cf. F. COPLESTON, *From the French Enlightenment to Kant, A History of Philosophy vol. VI*, Doubleday, London 1994, 304-305.

[108] J. RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 36.

[109] J. MILBANK, *Theology and Social Theory*, 47.

[110]*Ibid.*, 284.

specialized areas in fact gains enormously in strength and culpability, but because it is standardized according to a single type of certainty and rationality, it no longer offers any perspective on the fundamental questions of mankind."[111]

Indeed, an *enlarged reason* is needed in order to give a possible intelligible option in practical life regarding the 'fundamental questions of mankind'.

Towards a post-secular culture

Critiquing the reduction of rationality to the scientific sphere puts Ratzinger, and also Radical Theology's authors, in an authentic *post-modern view*. In fact, it is not only the issue of a global application of *reasonable* principles for all human domains, but also the consciousness that *reason*, even as applied in the scientific field, is not absolutely *pure*, but always contingent. So, even science is not able to *explain* reality; it can only give a particular and historical *interpretation*.

"In the postmodern era, as I have just indicated, social science ceases to be the main challenge for theology, and is replaced by absolute historicism and the ontology of difference. Here, however, a possible confusion might arise: this claim is not simply a new version of a sharp distinction between the natural and the human sciences, with the accompanying claim that the latter pursue goals of *verstehen*, or of understanding, while the former pursue goals of explanation."[112]

And in the same sense, Ratzinger critiques the Kantian pure reason—that is, thought by an a-historical subject, and presumed in the development of scientific knowledge and technology.

"For Ratzinger 'pure reason à la Immanuel Kant simply does not exist (…) it is none the less true that Ratzinger and Friedrich Nietzsche, the father of post-modernism, are united in their opposition to the Kantian belief in 'pure reason'. The way that Ratzinger often expresses the principle is by saying that 'reason has a wax nose'."[113]

It is, however, important to clarify in what sense reason is not *pure*, according to Ratzinger. His

point is not only, as post-modernists like Deleuze and Derrida would say, to affirm the intrinsic contingence of rationality: i.e., that each rationality has its own historical context and particular interests which influence its reasonable principles.[114]

In fact, for Ratzinger, *reason* is not *pure*, because this contingence, detected by Nietzsche and assumed by all contemporary post-modernists, asserts that *reason* must necessarily have assumptions, which are of a metaphysical and theological character. Just as narrative – which is an *interpretation* and not an *explanation* – has its own implicit ontology, so too this ontology has an implicit way of interpreting the reality of the world and man, and its relationship with God.

"This single philosophy will be regarded as having two necessary aspects: on the one hand, a historicist 'genealogy', on the other hand an 'ontology of difference'."[115]

In this sense, in order to defend *reason* and the democratic principles, we must also ensure the preservation of its theological and ontological presuppositions, which, according to Ratzinger, are situated in the biblical notion of a creator *Logos*, who created a reality with an intelligibility and rationality that participates in that same *Logos*.

This is the way to refute the *ontology of difference*, shared by the post-modernists, and to justify an *analogical ontology*, by which peaceful coexistence among mankind is possible. So, the laity is not *neutrality* in religious or metaphysical terms. On the contrary, laity values can exist inside a theological *Weltanschauung* that allows the intelligibility of an ontology within human beings who share the same reasonable [not chaotic] nature.

"(…) he [Ratzinger] argues that the state must recognize that a basic framework of values within a Christian foundation is the precondition for its own existence and it must learn that there is a truth which is not subject to consensus but which precedes it and makes it possible."[116]

This post-modern discovery of the absence of an absolute neutrality shows how *secularity* cannot be understood as a neutral political society anymore, within which individuals of different

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[111] J. RATZINGER, *Truth and Tolerance*,143.
[112] J. MILBANK, *Theology and Social Theory*, 263.
[113] T. ROWLAND, *Ratzinger's Faith*, 5.

[114] Cf. J. MILBANK, *Theology and Social Theory*, 260.
[115] *Ibid.*, 278.
[116] T. ROWLAND, *Ratzinger's Faith*, 112.

traditions coexist. This consciousness of absence of neutrality implies that the current world is no longer *secular* in the old modern sense. We are moving towards a *post-secular culture*.

"(…) also refuses the notion of a neutral or secular account of the world or any of its facets. The rejection of an autonomous world is thus linked to the rejection of autonomous reason. There could be no neutral account of things (od 'being itself') insofar as a thing is properly understood only in its relation to the transcendent, and insofar as any theoretic account will draw on fundamental commitments that operate at the level of religious commitments (…)"[117]

In fact, a world in which geopolitics great discussion seems to develop only at least also from a theological debate is no more *secular* in the Comtean sense. I am referring of the political development in Tibet, Ukraine, Israel and, almost, in the Middle East and North Africa with the emergence of an Islamic State. This puts the defense of *democratic Western values* at the level of a theological debate, from which politics cannot be separated, as the old sociologists and Marxists wanted when they fought for a *secular society*.

"If one of the sources of terrorism is religious fanaticism – and this is in fact the case – *is then religion a healing and saving force?* (…) Must not religion, therefore, be placed under the guardianship of reason, and its boundaries carefully marked off? This, of course, prompts yet another question: Who can do this? (…) Ought we to consider the gradual abolishment of religion, the overcoming of religion, to be necessary progress on the part of mankind (…)"[118]

Ratzinger is aware that, when he tries to dialogue with Islamic faith, he shows the dangers of its implicit nominalist ontology – named, using Milbank's terminology, *ontology of difference* – to democracy. Thus, theology discussion takes place in order to argue in favour or against democracy.[119]

"The dialogue ranges widely over the structures of faith contained in the Bible and in the Qur'an, and deals especially with the image of God and of man, while necessarily returning repeatedly to the relationship between - as they were called - three "Laws" or "rules of life" (…) In the seventh conversation (διάλεξις - controversy) edited by Professor Khoury, the emperor touches on the theme of the holy war. The emperor must have known that surah 2, 256 reads: "There is no compulsion in religion". (…) But naturally the emperor also knew the instructions, developed later and recorded in the Qur'an, concerning holy war. Without descending to details, (…) he addresses his interlocutor with a startling brusqueness, a brusqueness that we find unacceptable, on the central question about the relationship between religion and violence in general, saying: "Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached." The emperor, after having expressed himself so forcefully, goes on to explain in detail the reasons why spreading the faith through violence is something unreasonable. Violence is incompatible with the nature of God and the nature of the soul . "God", he says , "is not pleased by blood - and not acting reasonably (σὺν λόγω) is contrary to God's nature."[120]

What Benedict XVI is saying is that, in order to refute, on a political level, the contemporary terrorism and fanaticism in the Islamic societies, and to preserve Western democratic values, the discussion and the battle will necessarily be a theological one. Contrary to the Comtean prediction that religion tends to disappear in the progress of human societies, we are assisting of an indelible present of religion presupposition on rationality, and on political systems. The political choice requires, thus, a religion one.

Christianity founds its ontology in theology: a relationship among different human beings exists because they all share the same nature, which participates in the same reasonable *logos*. Thus, a pluralistic democracy is anchored in this religious creed at a metaphysical and theological

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[117] J. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-Secular Theology*, Baker Publishing Group, Grand Rapids 2005, 17.

[118] J. Ratzinger - J. Habermas, *The Dialectics of Secularization*,64.

[119] This is also present in *Radical Orthodoxy*'s thought: each political system presumes an ontology of the human beings and the world, which is

inevitably connected with theological presuppositions (cf. J. Milbank, *Beyond the Secular Order: The Representation of Being and the Representation of the People*, Blackwell, Oxford 2013, 3-4).

[120] Benedict XVI, *Faith,Reason and the University: Memories and Reflections*.

level. In this vein, Milbank argues that Christianity, as evidenced in Augustine's thought, bears an *ontology of peace* which offers an alternative to the violent *ontology of difference* implicit in the post-modernist proposals.

"It is in fact the ontological priority of peace over conflict (which is arguably the key theme of his entire thought) that is the principle undergirding Augustine's critique.However, this principle is firmly anchored in a narrative, a practice, and a dogmatic faith, not in an abstracted universal reason. Thus Augustine's contrast between ontological antagonism and ontological peace is grounded in the contrasting historical narratives of the two cities. The *Civitasterrena* is marked by sin, which means, for Augustine, the denial of God and others in favour of self-love and self-assertion; an enjoyment of arbitrary, and therefore violent power over others – the *libido dominandi*."[121]

Hence, presuming the capacity to access universal Truth as an indelible part of human nature does not lead to totalitarian power struggle, but on the contrary, constitutes the condition of possibility for democracy or, in other words, the peaceful coexistence of mankind in a constructive dialogue. Yet supposing the existence of *natural law* as a *universal Truth*, which the Christian pro-*logos* option does, does not presume an ability to reach in both mind and life the fullness of absolute Truth in this life. As Ratzinger states, "we all have to be pilgrims of the Truth."[122]

CONCLUSION

"The kingdom of God is like…" Here is the formula that, according to the gospel, Jesus uses to talk about the kingdom of Heaven. In these parables, the Master compares the *kingdom*, in the divine domain, with ordinary things of human life: "*the Mustard seed*", "*the sower*", "*the weeds*", "*the Hidden treasure*" [Mt 13]—all these show what the *kingdom of Heaven* is like. Thus, on Jesus' view, understanding the natural world is a means to understand the divine realm. The explanation presented in the gospel starts from the ground up, in an ascendant dynamic from common human knowledge to the understanding of God's dominion.

Showing how Christian revelation is intimately connected with natural reason means traveling the route that leads from faith to theology. That is what we have done in the present paper: taken the very same route traveled by first Christians. Receiving the mission of transmitting the *depositumfidei* did not imply the absolute refutation of ancient philosophy. In this journey of understanding the faith, the Fathers of the Church – Justin Martyr, Clement, Augustine, and many others – certainly understood that God's logos was manifested in nature and had inspired many men and women of good will to achieve some level of truth without the aid of revelation.

It was a journey, never ended, within the finite reasonable domain following an intuition until the infinite. The early Fathers interpreted the Incarnation – the eternal God entering into history – as a theological assumption that implies man's ability to access God's nature and God's truth by human nature.

Hence, existential faith had a connection to a speculative theology and philosophy. *Truth* was perennially present, and seeking for the intelligibility of the world and of the faith was an absolute necessity.

In a world such as our own, in which the interest for *truth* is deluding, the Christian religion ought to consistently preserve its main original option for the God of the *logos* – a choice that had the price of the *martyrium* of many ancient believers. In fact, while authors such as Nietzsche, Sartre, Camus, Lyotard and Deleuze[123], propose that we live a life without meaning in a world without intelligibility, reveling as much as possible in the absurdity of existence, Christianity still allows a way to make sense out of the world and human life.

Only maintaining a religion with a rational theology, assuming that it is referred to a God who is the creator of every single being, Christian faith will be able to show its relevance for modern man and the future. Christian faith can give a reason for living, and can affirm that this reason is *love* and is directed to *love*. In a context of lowliness, despair and emptiness as in the present-day crisis, this *reason* sustains and creates hope for human existence.

Hence, in a world in which mankind seems content to live in the inevitability of cyclical social-economic crises and, even worse, without a credible meaning for life, Christianity, professing the Incarnation of the logos for our

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[121] J. MILBANK, *Theology and Social Theory*, 392.
[122]J. RATZINGER, *Truth and Tolerance*, 83.

[123]Cf. J. MILBANK, *Theology and Social Theory*, 261.

salvation, can reopen the fountain of hope. "The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life" (Prov 13, 14).

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