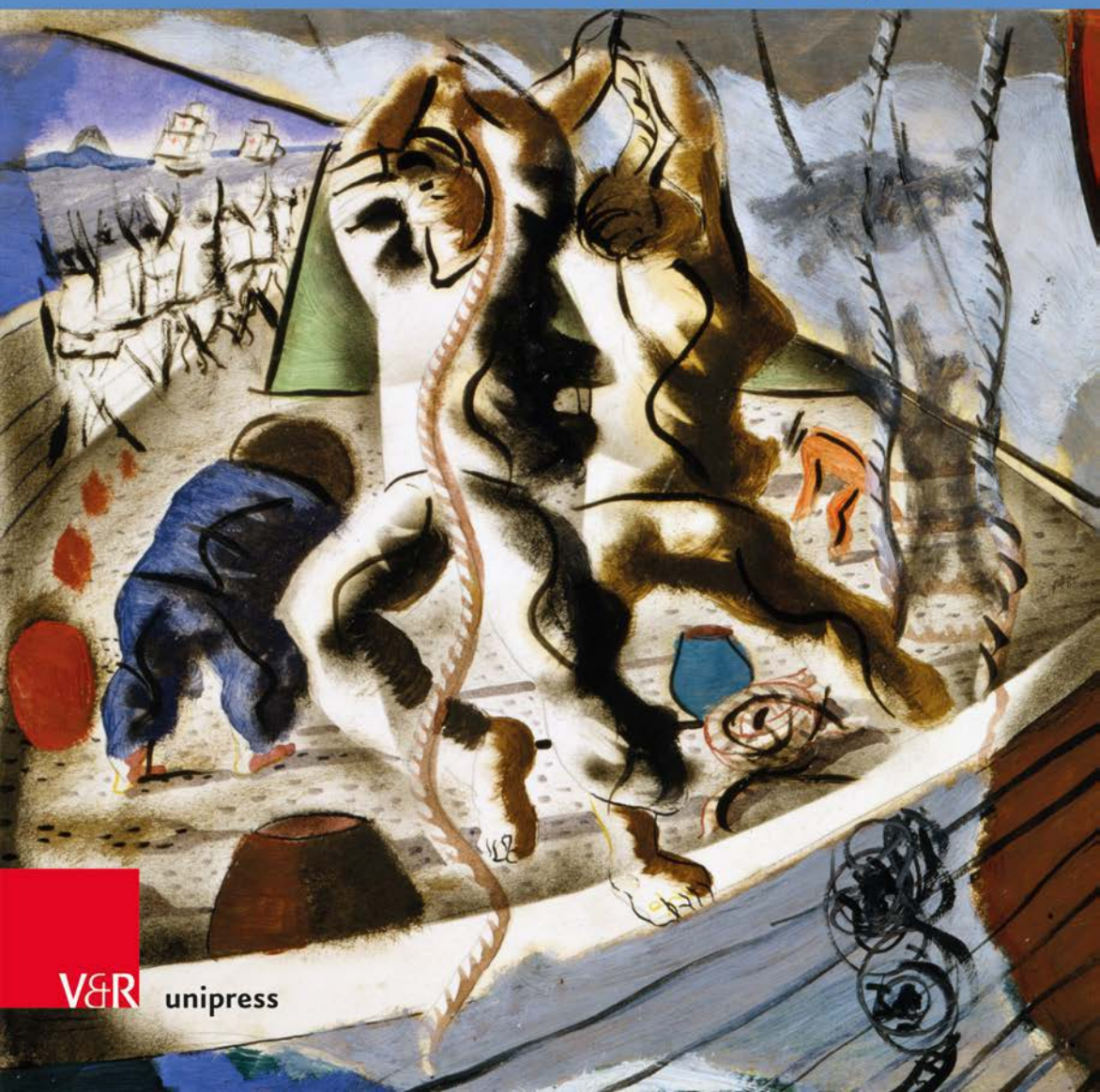
Michael Schulz / Roberto Hofmeister Pich (eds.)

Philosophy of Religion in Latin America and Europe

Bonn University Press



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In memoriam:
Thomas Dewender
† March 23, 2016

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Preface of the Series

About the University of Bonn's series *Interdisciplinary Studies on Latin America* (ISLA)

This volume from the series *Interdisciplinary Studies on Latin America* is the most recent publication of the Interdisciplinary Latin America Center at the University of Bonn. The book series ISLA deals with current issues in Latin American societies. It is distinguished by the breadth of critical reflections on important contemporary topics and the variety of approaches included, from cultural and social sciences, to natural science and legal studies. It considers cultural and social dynamics and changes in Latin America as well as interactions between Europe and Latin America as part of a long and close relationship, which has oscillated between dependence and separation and which also necessitates a comprehensive consideration of cultural and social issues in their precolonial as well as colonial contexts. The following volumes have been published to date:

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Antje Gunsenheimer, Michael Schulz, Monika Wehrheim
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Preface

The contributions in this volume on the philosophy of religion are essentially those delivered at a conference entitled *Philosophy of Religion in Latin America and Europe*, which took place from November 24th-26th, 2014, in the southern Brazilian city of Porto Alegre at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS). The conference offered an occasion for scholars from different continents and countries to come together in order to get a sense of current trends in philosophical studies on religion in Brazil and Germany. It also inaugurated a long-term collaboration between the University of Bonn (Germany) and the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil) aimed at furthering the philosophical – as well as theological – study of religious topics both common and important for the history of Europe and the history of Latin America, especially from the post-Columbian period until today.

The title of the conference suggests a double meaning: on the one hand, most of the contributions outline philosophies of religion relevant for Latin America, without, however, betraying an explicit Latin American perspective. This fact reflects a view often found in Latin America, namely, that philosophical reason always articulates itself in the same way, whether in Berlin or Rio de Janeiro. One is convinced that reading and understanding Kant and Hegel in Munich is no different from doing so in São Paulo, Porto Alegre or Lima – European colleagues expect the same. Anything else would be strange.

In this sense, Isidoro Mazzarolo's contribution serves as the overture to this volume, as the author identifies the Hellenistic components in Pauline thought which form a biblical basis for the philosophy of religion. Jakob Hans Josef Schneider addresses the question of God through his discussion of Anselm's ontological argument. Carlos Adriano Ferraz discusses the theses of the Australian-born legal philosopher John Finnis, who seeks to make evident in his writings the reasonableness of faith in God. By means of recourse to the subject philosophy of the German philosopher Dieter Henrich, Luis Henrique Dreher gains access to the idea of God as a consciousness not responsible for its own emergence. These contributions are supplemented by those of two colleagues

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from Bonn: Cem Kömürcü and Thomas Dewender, both of whom reconstruct religious-philosophical models from the period in which the philosophy of religion emerged as a discipline. Kant and Hegel, though Kant in particular, are considered the "inventor" of this discipline. In contrast to philosophical or natural theology, they conceived of philosophy of religion on the basis of a new transcendental-philosophical, postulatory metaphysics or philosophy of the spirit. In addition, they also reflected on human beings' relationship to God, i. e. religion itself, rather than merely the nature or essence of God, independent of religion, as *theologia naturalis* had previously done. In his article, Cem Kömürcü provides a closer look at Fichte's idealistic philosophy of religion, while Thomas Dewender indirectly turns to Kant's philosophy of religion by way of a discussion of the Jewish philosopher Hermann Cohen's attempt to identify Judaism with Kant's religion of reason.

We dedicate this volume to Dr. Thomas Dewender, who died unexpectedly on March 23rd, 2016, at the age of only 53. He was known at the Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, where he had been a research assistant to Dr. Theo Kobusch, Professor for medieval philosophy, since 2003, not least of all as a highly esteemed expert on Jewish philosophy. The manuscript printed in this book was edited by Dr. Dewender himself. The focus of his research lay on the metaphysics and epistemology of both the Middle Ages and early modern era. Among his topics of research were imagination and fiction, as well as questions about infinity and immortality. Inspired by his studies of mathematics and physics, he devoted himself to the history of natural philosophy and was deeply interested in the history of political theory. We believe that in death he met the God of whom he speaks in his article, namely, the God Hermann Cohen calls the God of redemption and forgiveness.

The second meaning of this volume's title suggests that philosophy in Latin America refers to a specific form of philosophy that has developed regionally and bears explicit traces of its origins that differentiate it from philosophy in Europe. This conception, however, means more than just lending a retrospective, cultural touch to a still European philosophy of religion. It also claims to demonstrate how a specific cultural situation produces both a new way of thinking and new topics in the field of philosophy. The question of whether an independent Latin American philosophy actually exists was asked emphatically in the twentieth century, after bidding farewell to imported elements of the French Enlightenment and above all to positivism, which in both 19th-century Mexico as well as 19th and early-20th-century Brazil, for example, nearly took on the status of a state philosophy. Yet, even in the colonial scholasticism of the 16th and 17th centuries, which seem at first glance to be merely an echo of the "Old World", one can see how the living conditions of the "New World" inspired its authors to find new ways of thinking and new objects of interest, such as the universal nature of

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humanity; the question of just war, just peace, and slavery; the universality of (Christian) religion; the challenges posed by a general understanding of God, truth, and goodness, as conveyed by Christianity and supported, both theoretically and practically, by a universal natural reason; and the status, the dignity, and the rights of the recipients of the new religion. This becomes particularly clear in Roberto Hofmeister Pich's contribution about the Jesuit José de Acosta, Luiz Alberto Cerqueira article about the Aristotelian reception in the Antonio Viera's elaborations on the concept of freedom, and Michael Schulz's article about the 16th-century interpretation of indigenous peoples' natural knowledge of God, as well in his second contribution, in which a current outline of Latin American philosophy of Religion is brought to bear.

Philosophy of religion declares the phenomenon of religious plurality to be a subject of reason. This is an expression of the view that religion must not shy away from rational discourse, but rather recognize it as its ally. Conversely, to draw an absolute boundary between reason and the essence and content and religion would also mean surrendering religion to the irrational. A radically secular reason leaves behind an irrational religion that can quickly be derailed and fall victim to fundamentalism. A reason, however, that does not keep in mind the infinite runs the risk of absolutizing finite quantities such as nation, politics, race, wealth, progress, technology, or other things. Such finite entities can become dangerous realities because, while expected to be infinite or even divine, they are incapable of fulfilling these expectations and are ultimately destroyed by them. And human freedom has often been sacrificed to this. Religion, in its essence, can help to avoid – or at least reasonably question and point out – such pathological aspects of rationality by opening reason up to the true and strong sense of the infinite and by easing its relationship with finitude. Reason does not threaten religion; it can help overcome certain pathological tendencies of religion. As one can see from lived reality in Latin American, reason itself moves between different understandings of what is plausible, including mythical ideas that follow their own logic. One can recognize a cultivated and civilized reason by the fact that it is able to deal with those plausibilities and need not push them aside by force. With this in mind, the genesis of an intercultural philosophy and philosophy of religion in Latin America and Europe is and will continue to be a major task.[1]

Michael Schulz & Roberto Hofmeister Pich

1 Carlos Miguel Gómez: *Interculturality, Rationality and Dialogue. In Search for Intercultural Argumentative Criteria for Latin America,* Würzburg 2012.

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Origins

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Isidoro Mazzarolo
(Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)

The Hellenistic philosophical components in the thought of the Apostle Paul

Introduction

It was a good opportunity for us to introduce the Apostle Paul at the symposium that took place in 11/24–26/2014 in the Catholic University of Porto Alegre, Brazil, with the theme *Philosophy of Religion in Latin America and Europe – A Dialogue on Current Issues and Developments: The Reason as a Mediator between Religions and Cultures.*

Paul of Tarsus in Cilicia (currently Turkey) or Gishala (or even Gicala, a village in northwest of the Sea of Galilee) is a man of *three worlds, three cultures and three minds* (Jewish, Greek and Christian) but *only one God, one Lord, one Spirit, one faith, one baptism and one Gospel* (cf. Eph 4,5). The philosophical basis of Paul is fundamentally Hellenistic, not Roman. The principles of autonomy, freedom, creativity and overcoming do not come from the *status quo* or from the idea of "we always do as the previous generations did" that belongs to the Jewish criterion. We can say that as a young Jew in Tarsus Paul has nourished himself from two sources: a) The source of the Greek-Roman culture; b) The source of Jewish religiosity. The insertion in Tarsus environment, a very Hellenized city, transformed the family environment. His father was an eclectic Jewish who acquires the Roman citizenship. As a result Paul inherits from his family this opening to Western culture, with an identity document that was very useful for the transit within the empire and to face complicated situations with local justice courts such as in Philippi (Acts 16:16–24) and in Jerusalem (Acts 22:25).

In Paul's teaching, spirituality transcends the understanding and the grace overcomes the law. The Greek philosophers like Heraclitus, Plato and Aristotle tried to explain all aspects of the human life from the reason. Paul uses all the knowledge to center the life in the faith, in the grace, in the justice as well as in the law too. Everything that he had learned as a Greek, a Jew, a Roman, and then as a Christian will be filtered, reformulated and accepted from the perspective of the teachings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The pedagogy of Jesus will be the Paul's evangelization methodology in pursuit of the inclusion, restoration and release

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of archaic and obsolete paradigms in order to a new concept of society. To reach this aim, his knowledge of the Greek philosophers and the Roman law was in great and inestimable value.

Paul's rationalism continued throughout his mission, but the grace of meeting Christ on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1–9) relativized the power of the reason to give birth to the love in his heart. The understanding of the risen Christ, that achieved Paul as a child born abnormally (1 Cor 15:8), induced to the great transformation. The Jewish religion that fueled him while young apprentice at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3) encouraged the segregation and the death penalty for heretics (Acts 8:1–3; Lev 20:8–27). From the discovery or recovery of the Greek philosophical principles, Paul finds freedom as the path to Christian faith (Gal 5:1). From this perspective, the Christ of Paul is closer to Hellenism than Judaism. For associating criteria of the Stoics and happiness of the Epicureans with Christian teachings, Paul points to the importance of seeking the things above, build the heavenly abode and in the day of the presentation to be found dressed with the clothes of the Spirit (2 Cor).

1 Hellenism and its manifestations in the religiosity of Paul

1.1 Introduction

If someone wants to understand the scale of the thought and the theology of Paul is necessary to pass by a route within the general lines of Hellenism. To some extent, this overview allows us to immerse in the world of the letters of the Apostle (especially 1/2 Thessalonians, 1/2 Corinthians, Philippians, Galatians, Romans and Colossians, which can be considered genuinely Pauline). This knowledge shows up the elements that Christianity shares with Greek culture. In two of his autobiographical accounts, Paul states that was born in Tarsus, Cilicia, one of the main cities of the western region of Asia Minor (Phil 3:3–5; Acts 22:3–5). According to recent research, Paul was born in Gishala.[1] He has moved to Tarsus with his family when was a child. In despite of being a Jewish son of the tribe of Benjamin (Phil 3:5–7), Saul's family was very influenced by the local culture. This influence allowed the family interact with the principles of Hellenism and Romanism (Acts 16:21,37; 22:25). This multicultural training allowed

1 Recent researches, guided in Josephus references, maintain that Paul (Saul) was born in Gishala, a small town in the northwest of the Lake of Tiberias. When Saul was a child, his family had moved to Tarsus in search of better living conditions. In Tarsus Saul grew up and lived up to go to Jerusalem to be educated under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3; 26:4–5). That is the reason why he was called Saul of Tarsus and not of Gishala, for he had been known as a young man of Tarsus (Acts 22:3).

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Paul to open and transit as a Christian man in the polytheism environments of the Greco-Roman culture. The flexibility, adaptation and inculturation of the Gospel were largely fruits of this coexistence with Hellenism.

After the encounter with the Lord on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1–9), Paul does not disavow the Judaism, but differs from Jewish culture for ethical reasons. The Conservative Judaism did not get to live with the different and the unknown, so Paul approaches the Hellenism by being more open and politicized. Jesus overcame the Jewish paradigms of patient treatment, of foreign relationship, of woman's relationship, of unclean people and of the Samaritans. All of these paradigms were used as exclusion motions in the post-exile period (around 450 BC). After his conversion, Paul recovers his youth elements from the Hellenistic universe and follows the philosophy of Jesus. The apostle states that there should be no more discrimination of gender, social status or race (Gal 3:28). When Paul says that in Christ *there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all* (Col 3:11; Gal 3:28; Rom 10:12) he is approaching himself to the rhetorical style of the Roman philosopher and orator Cicero.[2]

Even with Greek references like Cicero, Paul uses the pedagogy of inclusion of Jesus and exceeds the Jewish and Greek-Roman parameters. The Jews rejected the pagans because they are unclean and the Greeks rejected the Scythians for consider them ignorant and unlearned. If the associations between humans had the parameter of language and tribe, Cicero says that it could be overcome to seek membership of a State or City, for the cities were independent (city-state). The "polis" is the home to people of many different cultures, races and social conditions. The Greeks did not worry about to drive out of their cities who were from other places, but they worry to assimilate other paradigms to add it to their own environment. It took place in society, culture and language. Paul, as a Hellenistic Jew, uses many elements of Greek language to get in touch with them in the fields of rhetoric, religion and philosophy.

The Jews wanted signs and the Greeks wisdom (1 Cor 1:22). The language and many pictures of Paul's statement reveal a big close with Hellenism and its forms of everyday life in cities, sports, education and others. We find many words that do not have correspondence in Hebrew language and so resonate as exclusive influence Hellenistic, such as *egkráteia* (*self-control*, Gal 5:23) and the verb *egkrateúomai* (*to have continuously self-control*, 1 Cor 7:9; 9:25); *euschêmosynê* (*decorum*, 1 Cor 12:23) and derivatives in Rom 13:13; 1 Cor 7:35; 12:24; 14:40; 1 Thess 4:12; the noun *paidagôgós* (*educator*, 1 Cor 4:15; Gal 3:24–25); *parousía* (*coming of the Lord*), used by Paul both to set the historical-biographical sense

2 Richard Wallace and Wynne Williams: *The Three Worlds of Paul of Tarsus*, New York 1998, p. 117 (quoting Cicero: *De Officiis*, 1,50.53).

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(1 Cor 16:17; 2 Cor 7:6–7; 10:10; Phil 1:26; 2:12) as in the Christological-Eschatological sense (1 Cor 15:23; 1 Thess 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23); *políteuma* (*citizenchip*, Phil 3:20), with the verb *politeúesthai* (*to become a citizen*, Phil 1:27); *prokopê* (*progress*, Phil 1:12,25); *syneídêsis* (*awareness*, *understanding*, Rom 2:25; 9:1; 13:5; 1 Cor 8:7,10,12; 10:25,27–29; 2 Cor 1:12; 4:2; 5:11; cf. 1 Cor 4:4); *hyouthesía* (*filiation*, Rom 8:15,23; 9:4; Gal 4:5).[3]

Moreover, Paul has its own theological vocabulary when associates the images of the stadium, the competition and the athlete with the Christian life. He inserts this "competitive" language in a specific reflection to indicate the feelings, situations and trials of a Christian. Whether in his own defense before the Jews in Philippi (Phil 2:16), or in the face of the "remarkables" in the Jerusalem church (Gal 2:2), Paul uses sporting language to associate it with the process of the Gospel proclamation. He wants to make sure and the safety of "not running or had run in vain" (Phil 2:16; Gal 2:2).

The understanding of the competition environment projected in a theological perspective evokes in the readers a very important reflection for not facing the life as being a predestination, something determined a priori and without liability to the reader or listener. Life is not an airtight chamber, nor enclosed in a series of fateful requirements to comply or in an irrevocable predeterminism. Life is like a game in a stadium: to fight is necessary, because only winners receive the crown. To witness of the Gospel, the Apostle of the Gentiles wants the Christians look like or have the same awareness of who will enter a stadium to compete. Life is a competition, it is a fight and one must have well-defined objectives and goals if want to win. If only the best people win, so Christians must prepare themselves to fight together with one soul through faith in the Gospel (Phil 1:27; 4:3). They must have cultural competence, strength in the faith and steadfastness in the knowledge of Jesus Christ in order to lead them successfully both to the philosophers as the rich, the poor, the Jews and the pagans.

The Greeks valorized highly the competitions in order to stimulate the integral development of the person. From this perspective, we see some sports words used by Paul to bring near the sporting challenges to the proclamation of the Gospel: *agôn* (*fight*, Phil 1:30; 1 Thess 2:2), and the verb *agônízomai* (*to go into battle*, 1 Cor 9:25); *brabeîon* (*prize*, 1 Cor 9:24; Phil 3:14); *pykteúô* (*to deliver punches*, 1 Cor 2:19); *stádion* (*stadium*, 1 Cor 9:24); *stéfanos* (*crown*, 1 Cor 9:25; Phil 4:1; 1 Thess 2:19); *synathléô* (*fight together*, Phil 1:27; 4:3), *tretchô* (*to run*, Rom 9:16; 1 Cor 9:24,26; Gal 2:2; 5:7; Phil 2:16).[4] The lexeme *stádion* (*stadium*) have the meaning of *measure* and *objectives* or *goals*, as a metaphor for the competition or

3 Cf. Romano Penna: *Paulo de Tarso e os componentes gregos do seu pensamento,* Rio de Janeiro 2009, p. 58.

4 Penna: *Paulo*, p. 58.

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the need to struggle to overcome the obstacles: "Do you not know that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win it" (1 Cor 9:24).

1.2 Some features of Hellenism in Paul's anthropology

Paul absorbs the Greek-Roman culture knowledge from its cradle, keeps it in the luggage and brings it in due time. Paul always has in mind the Greek concepts of *arêtê* and *cosmopolitanism*, both from Achaia and improved in Macedonia in the sixth and fifth centuries BC. This phenomenon revolutionized not only the way of thinking, but also the whole vision of the human person, society, politics and economy. According to Corsen,[5] Hellenism brands the history with concepts like:
a) *Cosmopolitanism;*
b) *Individualism;*
c) *Realism;*
d) *Theocracy*.[6]

a) The *Cosmopolitanism* was a way to reach a citizenship used by educated people, the ones who had already initiated in letters and sciences. Therefore, the Greeks did not separate national and foreign people, but ignorant and educated. Even if someone was a foreigner (man or woman), but has had intellectual culture, knowledge and scholarship, was considered citizen (*cosmopolitan* was the same thing that *citizen of the world*, regardless of geographic boundaries). This concept influenced directly the Paul's view when he argues that in Christ there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male or female (Gal 3:28; Rom 10:12; Col 3:11).

In Paul's thought, this cosmopolitanism tips over all exclusive archetypes between social classes, cultures, languages or borders, especially those created by post-exilic Judaism (cf. Ezra 9–10). The rapprochement of cultures and races lies in the comparison that Paul sets up between Adam and Jesus (1 Cor 15:22). In the text Paul argues that *in Adam all die*, namely all are made from clay, from the humus of the ground, so all of the humanity is made from transitory matter. Nevertheless, *all will be made alive in Christ*. The whole descent of Adam is similar in the nature and origin, so the cosmos is the homeland of Adam's children, while the sky is the homeland of all the humanity in Christ (Phil 3:20).

5 Peter Corssen: *Über Begriff und Wesen des Hellenismus*, in: *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde des Urchristentums* (1908), p. 83.

6 Many scholars (especially exegetes) prefer accept a *monolatry* instead of monotheism. They believe that the attempts to worship the only God, although seem a monotheistic option, can be considered more properly interpreted as a monolatry posture.

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The earthly Adam, moulded from clay, is made from the living soul, from the breath of God over the clay, but the heavenly Adam (the last Adam) is made from the life-giving spirit, which promotes life in the cosmos (1 Cor 15:45; Rm 5:12–21).[7]

Another concept of cosmopolitanism comes from the expression *plêrôma* (Rom 11:12,25; 1 Cor 10:26; Gal 4:4; Col 1:19; 2:9). The concept of *plêrôma* has the perfection of the time and the inclusive mission of all peoples in Jesus Christ. It broke all barriers, overcame all distinctions and brought Jews and Gentiles to the same community, in the same love and the same faith. *But when the Pleroma of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children* (Gal 4:4–5).

b) The *Individualism* was the source of the Hellenistic ethics. The adage "know yourself" pointed to the need of each person to know its capabilities and potential in order to "get by in life." When writes to Corinthians, Paul quotes a maxim, used by them, that expressed "All things are lawful for me" (1 Cor 6:12), but he immediately corrects and adds "But not all things are profitable." Jesus uses this principle in the parable of the dishonest manager (Lk 16:1–8). We can see that the parable appears only in the Gospel of Luke. It means that the evangelist may have harvested it from the awareness of individual responsibility usual in Hellenism. On economic issues we can realize the Hellenistic inspiration in the guidelines about the dignity of each worker must receive their pay (Lk 10:7; 1 Cor 9:9; 1 Tim 5:18).

c) *Realism* was a principle created by Socrates, but developed by Plato and his disciples. In Realism, the most important thing was the *real*, the *definitive.* They also call it the "ideal". In this philosophical tendency, transitory things do not have much importance, so does it matter is the "eternal", the "definitive" and the transcendent. The gnôsis played an important role and, at the same time, ambiguous. It showed that individuals, as soon as achieved the "knowledge", would be going into higher spheres and would stand out from the others. The real and the shadow are showed up in the myth of Plato's cave. With the awareness of rupture and disintegration of things, the so-called *dualism* arises. It distinguishes between soul and body, life and death, real and shadow, and gives priority to the high things (cf. Jn 3:1–8).The *Realism* in the mental structure of Paul corresponds to a genuine maturity in faith and justice. The real man takes place when he reaches his maturity and perfection, which Paul characterizes as *téleios* (1 Cor 13:10; 14:20; Phil 3:15; Col 4:12). The apostle picks up the Greek concept of higher

7 Isidoro Mazzarolo: *Carta de Paulo aos Romanos*, Rio de Janeiro 2006, pp. 83–84.

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realities as definitive before the transitory things of this world and applies it on his method of evangelization. The humanity is going to the perfection, so its real world is the ideal world which is also the eternal one (Eph 2:19) and its citizenship (*políteuma*) is in heaven (Phil 3:20).

d) The *Theocracy* was the position that justified the direct interference of the deities on humanity and cosmos. We can easily see an integrative and holistic movement: philosophy, culture, aesthetics, mythology and politics are within the same sphere: *the pólis* (the city). For the platonic, ruled by the *myth* of Plato's cave, the transcendental sphere becomes more important than the immanent sphere, since in it is the real, as the *shadow* is in the physical universe. The creator God (from the Old Testament tradition) is now understood as the *Lógos* (according to Heraclitus, the *Lógos* is the pure and perfect reality), but not the only one, for in the *Pantheon* the creator and absolute God of the Judeo-Christian tradition must to dispute a place with the other gods (Acts 17:16–34). Therefore, the wisdom of Pythagoras, Anaxagoras and Plato blooms and creates a new conceptual and virtual world. On the other hand, as Dobschütz states, the human intelligence is challenged to solve its puzzles in two ways: the first is a rational way and the second is by divine inspiration.[8]

In the Apostle Paul's discourse, the God's sovereignty, *invisible* and unknown to the philosophers (Acts 17:23–24), becomes visible in the person of Jesus Christ (Eph 1:3–6; Col 1:15–20). It is exactly the anxiety for novelty that leads some Greeks in Palestine, after hearing about the wonders Jesus performed, to Philip and beg him: "We want to see Jesus (Jn 12:20)! In this same track of the absolute God, Paul, who has a good knowledge of Greek-Roman theosophical schemes and about Zeus as the great father of the Gentiles, proposes the God of Jesus Christ as the *Abbá!* Father (Rom 8:14–17; Gal 4:4–7). Gradually, the Greek scheme of the filiation of Zeus becomes the affiliation in the God of Jesus Christ, as the supreme and only God.

1.3 Paul and the relationship between Christianity and Hellenism

Christianity must make adaptations at the meeting with Hellenism. So the intellectual capacity of the evangelizers of the "first hour" knew how to *acculturate* his language and his message. The Hellenists expect and even crave the news and the event Jesus Christ interests them, but the answer of Christians comes in a direction that surprises them. When Paul begins to speak about the Messiah *with*

8 Ernst von Dobschütz: *Christianity and Hellenism*, in: *Journal of Biblical Literature* 33 (1914), p. 246.

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the Cross, the expectation and interest become *paradox* and *contradiction.* The language of the Cross becomes in the ears of the philosophers "madness", but Paul explains: "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor 1:18).

Paul increases the "scandal" when goes on to say "We preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles (*Greco-Romans*) foolishness" (1 Cor 1:23). Instead of being a satisfaction to individual searches and isolated solutions proclaimed in Hellenism, Christianity proposes a mutual solidarity and commitment, both in the material sphere as in the spiritual one (cf. 1 Cor 12:1–12). The solution to all things begins in the imperative of creating communities and families that integrate different languages, cultures and races. The Stoics held a thinking that taught to each individual forget the own history and tradition and start by themselves and for themselves. This individualism strengthened some brutal aspects of Hellenistic life. Movements of return to the culture of the Eastern deities and to the Platonic wisdom took place.[9]

Hellenism suffered influence from cosmogonies and from Egyptian and Iranian religiosity, as well as it incorporated in its mythological constellation deities from conquered peoples. This process of assimilation will lead to the *metamorphosis* of the deities. Cybele,[10] for example, *Magna Mater* of Phrygia, goddess of nature and mother of the gods par excellence, widespread especially in regions of the Aegean Sea, will take the place of Artemis in Ephesus later.[11] The same thing with Isis of Egypt, which will move to Greece and then to Rome by the name of Artemis and later Diana. This movement of adaptation of services and transformation of names is called *metamorphosis*[12] by many researchers. This fact reveals a multicultural dynamic in the adaptation of the forms and religious concepts of Hellenism. Religion can not be separated from culture, for religion is culture and tradition.[13] Therefore, with the transformations of culture and politics, the religiosity assumes prisms and hues according to specific times and places. Paul's letters are the typical example of this adaptation and variation of concepts, so each letter respects the culture and religious hues of each place.

9 Dobschütz: *Christianity*, p. 248.
10 Cf. Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant: *Dicionário de símbolos*, Rio de Janeiro 1994, p. 237.
11 Cf. Gerhard von Kittel: *Die Religionsgeschichte und das Urchristentum*, Tübingen 1931, pp. 25–35.
12 Cf. Marie Delcourt: *Légendes et Cultes de Héros en Grèce*, Paris 1942, p. 18.
13 Isidoro Mazzarolo: *Jesus e a Física Quântica*, Rio de Janeiro 2013, pp. 32–40.

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1.3.1 The Cosmogonies

In the cosmogonies (possible systems of shaping and origin of the universe) of Hellenistic literature, the *Lógos* has an important role, but its father is Hermes. The Logos and Hermes were sent by Zeus[14] to create the world. Hermes corresponds to the Egyptian Thoth. In view of this interconnection of religious deities and concepts (a metamorphosis), one can draw up a question: *Amid the formation of the doctrine of the Logos, in Hellenism and Filo, is not there an Egyptian influence of theosophy?* In a review of this literature, Reitzenstein (Poimandres) states that the Egyptian theosophy is part of a vast body of mystical-mythological writings that have a cosmogonic, theological and religious expression.[15] The *hermetic* literature of Poimandres must have influenced some aspects of Christian theology. In one specific case, the Shepherd of Hermes, in its main vision, it refers to Poimandres in many aspects. In face of this we can conclude that the source of Poimandres and of the Christian prophet is the same (cf. the issue of metamorphosis of symbols)[16].

1.3.2 The religions of mystery

The Greek polytheism was beneficial to the "new religion" (Christianity) while did not close doors or borders to the news. However, the polytheism offered some difficulties when it came to reach a common point: *the Christian monotheism.* The so-called religions of mystery were steeped in myths, rites and esotericism. The deities Zeus and Hera, a kind of metamorphosis of the Egyptian gods Isis and Osiris, also present in Gnosis, had the characteristics for being deities of *freedom and redemption* from the bad situations and filled its redeemed with grace.[17] Christianity ought to face the strength of the mythological religion from Hellenism when begins its expansion by the Greco-Roman world. In the specific case of Paul and his collaborators, they venture with much security at the heart of this religiosity using that language, to some extent, closed or encrypted: the mystery. Paul uses a Hellenistic language to explain that *Jesus Christ is the mystery of God in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* (Col 2:2–3).

14 Zeus is the organizer of the world by inside and by outside. According to Mircea Eliade, Zeus is the archetype of the patriarchal family man. He rules from Olympus with his wife Hera. *The design of Zeus as supreme deity and as a universal force was developed from the Homeric poems and reached among the Hellenistic philosophers as the design of a unique Providence. In the Stoics…, Zeus is the symbol of the unique God who personifies the Cosmos. – Grid, 478* (Chevalier and Gheerbrant: *Dicionário*, p. 971).

15 Auguste Bill : *La littérature religieuse hellénistique*, Strasbourg 1923, p. 446.

16 Ibid., p. 447.

17 Hans Dieter Betz: *Hellenismus und Urchristentum*, Tübingen 1990, p. 61.

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The mystery language was itself the Gnosis and was reserved to the initiates in the knowledge and wisdom of the "hidden" things. In Christ, there is the fullness of knowledge and understanding, so Paul insisted that Christians of Rome do not ignore this *mystery* and strengthen their hearts (Rom 11:25). This mystery was kept secret for long ages (Rom 16:25). Paul uses the words as if he was talking with the initiates in mystery religions and says that he will introduce the God's Wisdom, hidden in a mystery, which God predestined before the world to our glory (1 Cor 2:7). The great news in Paul's theology regarding to the Greek philosophical schemes is that while in the Greco-Roman theosophical schemes the mysteries were still hidden, in Christianity *this mystery, hidden since before the world take place*, was now revealed in Christ Jesus, as the whole of the fullness of knowledge and wisdom (Gal 4,4). The argument served to urge Christians who lived in these environments to believing in Christianity and to assert that there was no reason to be induced by vain philosophies and mental speculation.[18] Paul uses this language repeatedly and shows in an easy but apologetic way the overcoming of the ancient archetypes of the "occult" to the neophytes. He still shows that Jesus Christ, as a hidden mystery, is no longer hidden, but revealed.[19]

2 Hellenistic Philosophical-anthropological Schemes and Paul

2.1 Gnosis[20]

Gnosis is a philosophical-religious system that advocates social, cultural and religious differences among the people, according to their level of knowledge and intellectual development. It argues that it is possible to achieve higher levels (strata) through knowledge and intellectual speculation, which ensures privileges and a better position for someone before his neighbor and God. In the books of *The Republic*, Plato states that Gnosis is the ability of the "higher" men to reach the perfection and the fullness of being. In the *Politics*, Aristotle states that Gnosis is the privilege of scholars and judges, so that knowledge belongs to the reason and it is a privilege of the noble, rich and learned men, which knows how to discern and rule. *Gnosis* means *knowledge*, and this system had supported many schools of thought, political ideologies and religious structures. The Greeks craved the "transcendence" through the reason or the intellect. The Jews longed

18 Isodoro Mazzarolo: *Colossenses, exegese e comentário*, Rio de Janeiro 2012, pp. 69–72.

19 Cf. Rom 11:25; 16:25; 1 Cor 2:1,7; 4:1; 13:2; 14:2; 15:51; Eph 1:9; 3:3,4,9; 3:32; 6:19; Col 1:26–27; 2:2; 4:3; 2 Thess 2:7.

20 From the point of view of history, Gnosis belongs to the Greek world, around the fifth century BC. From the standpoint of religious and sociological praxis, Gnosis can be characterized as something present in all religions and societies.

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for salvation through the practice of the precepts of tradition (memorization) and the Torah. In Christianity, the salvation meant the awareness of Jesus Christ crucified, that made him a victim of expiation, but he agreed to make himself the price of the redemption and liberation from the yoke of sin (Mk 10:45).

Paul takes many sentences from Gnosis to use in his new kerygmatic lines. He distinguishes the "*sárkiko*" or "*sômátiko*" man (1 Cor 3:3; Rom 1:26–27, 7.4; Col 2:9) from the "*pneumatic*" or "*spiritual*" one (1 Cor 2:13; 9:11; Eph 6:12). The physical or somatic man can represent the Jew attached to the Jewish Law and the pagan attached to idols. The spiritual man represents the Jew free from Jewish Law (Gal 5:1) and the pagan free from idols (cf. 1 Cor 8:7–10). When dependent on the "sárx" the human being is linked to the rudiments of this world, which Paul calls "stoicheîa kósmou" (Gal 4:3.9; Col 2:8.20). In his theology, Paul takes the Gnosis to emphasize an elevation of the human being through the approximation to the deeds of Jesus Christ (Phil 2:5). He urges the people to seek what is above, for Christ is seated at the right hand of God. He asks his audience to think about the things above, is spite of the feet are on the solid ground of the Earth. He asks them to die to this world in order to rise with Christ[21].

The apostle, with such argumentation, answers even the Valentinianism, which said that the "spirituals" were the ones who reached the Gnosis and with it returned to the Plêrôma, while the "sárkikos" or "somátics" were Jews or pagans destined for damnation. Paul still ironizes the "spirituals" that become independent, for believing that belong to Christ through Gnosis (1 Cor 1:12). For the Apostle this stance is just a nescience of God Himself and Jesus Christ who created the Christian community as a succession of commitments (1 Cor 3:5–6).[22]

2.2 Education

Education is the key element of Hellenistic training. In this culture, education is one of the most sought values in which one could express and develop their skills and talents. Masters in art, playfulness, politics and philosophy, the Greeks consider education an orientation process for life. The *paideía* (education) was the greatest virtue for the cynics. According to Diogenes, education is the grace for the young, consolation for the elder, abundance for the poor and ornaments for the rich (Diogenes, *Laertius*, VI, 68). Monimus claimed that it was better to be blind than not polite.[23] The education has a determining factor:

21 Mazzarolo: *Colossenses*, p. 88 (cf. Col 3:1–4).
22 Elaine Pagels: *The Gnostic Paul*, Pennsylvania 1992, p. 60.
23 Cf. William Barclay: *Hellenistic Thought in the New Testament Times: The Cynis, the Way of Renunciation*, in: *Expository Times* 71 (1959/60), p. 373 (quoting Diogenes Laertius, VI, p. 68).

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the polis (city). "*Only in the polis you can find what covers all spheres of spiritual and human life, and decisively determines its structure. In the early period of Greek culture, all branches of spiritual activity sprout directly from the unique root of community life*".[24]

The polis is the reference point of all life in Greek culture. Paul and his fellows were not evangelists of the countryside but of the cities, and in the cities they always sought the thinking elites, influential people and critical agents for the implementation of the Gospel. Education was the art of the masters, but for reaching a good performance it was necessary knowledge, conditions and capabilities to persuade and make disciples. The knowledge of Hellenism and the Roman law is fundamental to Paul and his fellows to get success in their mission in the large cities of their time. From this perspective, we can conclude that all Paul's letters are didactic and aim at education, even in its moral exhortations. Paul argues that to be preachers there was necessity of instructors: "How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?" (Rom 10:14). Paul followed the principles of the great Greek masters and made a school of disciples.

2.3 Virtue

Even with own purposes, some tendencies of Hellenism had evidenced the paramount importance of the ethical virtues. The *aretê* (virtue) was a great ethical value for any educated person as a way to shape and develop their skills. The values and qualities of each person needed "education", guidance and development.

The human being needs values and virtues to make his conduct and existence noble. To the cynics, virtue is the weapon that can never be abandoned or lost and the wisdom is the greatest strength that cannot be thrown away and even less betrayed (Diogenes, *Laertius*, VI, 12–13).[25] The word *virtue* (*aretê*) appears only three times in the New Testament: the Second Letter of Peter (Phil 4:8; 2 Pet 1:3,5). However, the virtue as improvement and knowledge of the well supports other reflections of Paul (Rom 7:7–25). One of the major steps for the improvement of the life was the knowledge of divine justice and of the necessity of turning around the mind to the love (Rom 10:1–13; 12:3–21). In the context of Pauline theology, virtue is the passage from a dependency stage of addiction to the grace and freedom.

24 Werner Jaeger: *Paideia: A Formação do Homem Grego*, São Paulo 1995, p. 107.
25 Ibid., p. 107.

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2.4 Pauline Eschatology

Eschatology did not have a strictly theological character in the Greek world, but it was part of future expectations built from the virtue and ethics. In Stoic philosophy, the good human being was that it was found improved in his morality, for only this one could aspire to happiness.[26]

In 1 Cor 15:23 Paul is employing a technical term derived from the apocalyptic language, *Parousía*, already used before in 1 Thess 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23. In this theology, Paul develops a trust from the Resurrection of Jesus, related to his Second Coming. This apocalyptic kind of Jesus' Second Coming has Hellenistic hues in its systematization.[27] In this expectation, the *Parousía* means a definitive overcoming of Law, of Sin and of Death. In fact, Paul believes in the Resurrection and Parousía as the definitive overcoming of death and limitation. Convinced of this, he exclaims "*Oh death, where is your victory? Oh death, where is your sting?!*" (1 Cor 15:55). The *Parousía* (eschatology) expressed as a great yearning of the Apostle is not mere expectation of the future, but above all the certainty of a release from all forms of imprisonment. It is the climax of life. That is the Reign of God as recorded in Matthew 11:5: "The blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them".

2.5 The Gnosis in Corinth

Ulrich Wilchens analyses the terminology of 1 Cor 2:1–16 and states that the use of terms such as *sophía* (wisdom – 2:6), *árchontes* (leaders – 6:8) and *téleios* (perfection – 2:6) reveals a link with Gnosticism, even if the content is from ethics and Jewish eschatology. Paul reveals a way of putting Christian content in a literary style and Gnostic language. Like Philo of Alexandria, Paul demonstrates an ability to adapt a Semitic content (the mysteries of God's revelation in Jesus Christ) to a Hellenistic language. It is the result of the mastery of two cultures. The mystery of Christian revelation would never come so quickly and with such intensity in Hellenism, if it were not this ability to adapt it to the Gnostic-Hellenistic thought structures.[28]

26 Isodoro Mazzarolo: *Apóstolo Paulo, o Grego, o Judeu e o Cristão*, Rio de Janeiro 2011, p. 89 (quoting Frank B. Jevons: *Hellenism and Christianity*, Cambridge 1908, p. 175).

27 Ibid, p. 89.

28 Cf. Robert Mcl. Wilson: 'Gnosis at Corinth', in: M. D. Hooker and S.G. Wilson (eds.): *Paul and Paulinism: Essays in Honour of C. K. Barrett*, London 1982, p. 106 (quoting Ulrich Wilkens: 'Zu 1 Kor 2,1–16', in: Carl Andresen (ed.): *Theologia Crucis-Signum Crucis*, Tübingen 1979, pp. 501–538., p. 528).

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On the other hand, the distinction between *pneûma* (spirit) of man and his *psychê*, (soul, mind) as well as between man *pneumatikós* (spiritual) and *psychikós* (mental, intellectual) reveal a duality of Gnostic substrate. However, this dualism between soul and spirit rarely occurs in pure way. In addition, we always have an anthropological trichotomy in which the soul is between the body and the spirit.[29] Wilckens does not accept this Gnostic position. He states that there is no way to make a real distinction between the two elements. However, the communities of Corinth and Ephesus are very involved in these theological-philosophical-gnostic schemes. Thus, Paul feels himself forced to Hellenize the *Kêrygma* in order to adapt the Gospel to reach those who were under this influx also.[30]

The *sophía* (the wisdom) of the Corinthians' religiosity can be seen as a classic terminology of Gnosticism. On the other hand, it is also an important element of the Hellenistic-Jewish religion present in the Wisdom of Solomon and Philo. Herein one can note the movement of a common terminology between *Gnosis*, Hellenistic Judaism and Christianity. It requires taking any of the three conceptual bodies (Hellenism, Judaism and Christianity) not as exclusionary, but within a certain conceptual property, which suffers slight variations in order to be in the list of contents.

Regarding to Christology, we can see a substantial distinction in Paul's position relative to Gnosticism. According to E. Schweizer[31], the text of 1 Cor 8:6 presupposes the pre-existence of Christ in the act of the creation. The same thing would be the prologue of John (Jo 1:1–6). The text of 1 Cor 8:6 can be placed in parallel with Prov 3:19; 8:30; Wis 7:22; 9:2–4. In the same view, Schweizer says that these texts are opposed to the traditional stance of Gnosticism, since the Gnosticism devalues the creation. The same with other themes such as baptism, the experience of redemption and restoration of the human being in Christ, as found in 2 Cor 4:6. All of them are present there in a beautiful picture of the New Creation in Christ, in whom all thing are made new.

Similar idea appears in Col 1:5–20 with another parallelism with the Wisdom that reveals a downward/upward movement of the Redeemer. The Redeemer's role in the creation is an active participation and not simply a change of the phase. He is an *active* agent in both cases, both in Creation as in Redemption. Finally, in Heb 1:3 the author approximates Christ with the conception of Wisdom-Image of God. The glorification of the Son in the participation of Creation

29 Wilkens: 'Zu 1 Kor 2,1–16', p. 528: "Diese wurde überall dort vertreten, wo die platonische Leib-Seele-Differenz durch die gnostische Pneuma-Lehre lediglich überboten werden sollte." R. Wilson: *Gnosis*, ibid., p. 107 (quoted by Wilkens).

30 Wilkens: 'Zu 1 Kor 2,1–16', p. 537.

31 Eduard Schweizer: 'Paul's Christology and Gnosticism', in: M.D. Hooker and S.G. Wilson (eds.): *Paul and Paulinism: Essays in Honour of C. K. Barrett*, London 1982, p. 117.

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becomes an exaltation of the Father. In both cases, the earthly aspect of Jesus goes into a secondary plan.

The problem of the *pneumatikoi* (spiritual or spiritualist, 1 Cor 2:13–15) in the Pauline writings, especially in 1 Corinthians (14:1 ff), brings some difficulties in its interpretation. Elsewhere, the *pneumatikói* are associated with the *teleiói* (perfect, 1 Cor 14:20; Phil 3:15; Col 4:12). Paul was not supportive of things that did not seem pragmatic, consistent and anthropologically verifiable. He was very concerned about the distortions of language and manipulation of concepts that some people had made. It left others in compromising situations. The *sárkinoi* (carnal, 1 Cor 3:1) can be called *népioi* (childish, immature) when the knowledge about Jesus Christ and the use of their own intelligence and their spiritual gifts are misused and do not fructify in the community.[32] This rare use of the *pneumatikói* expression in Corinthians (it does not appear in the LXX, and just in a few other texts like Eph 3:15) can be interpreted from the Corinth community reality. Paul also speaks with the Corinthians about glossolalia, expression linked to the gifts of the Spirit, which is linked to mystery religions (*mystérion*, cf. 1 Cor 2:1,7; 4:1; 13:2; 14:2).

Conclusion

Christianity is a debtor of Judaism regarding to the path to the faith, to the monotheism and to the revelation of liberating God. It is also a debtor of Hellenism when learns about largesse, refuge and the organization of the communities. In religion, Zeus was competing with the Christian God as the supreme father. In the person of Jesus Christ, the Christians learned to call God "Father" ("And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do… pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father…'", Mt 6:7,9). In his pedagogy of inclusion, Jesus looked to outside of Judaism in order to embrace all categories of people without prejudices: the poor, women, sinners, strangers, unknown and marginalized.

We can also say that Christianity is a debtor of Hellenism regarding to the way of openness, social integration, community vision and rupture of archaic paradigms. The Hellenism did not have religious prejudices, religious sins and each person was responsible to cultivate the freedom. Maybe Paul was inspired by it

32 According to John Painter: "At Corinth the *pneumatikói* are also called *téleioi* and they refer to others as *psychikói* and *sarkikói* (*sárkinoi*) and also called *népioi*" (John Painter: 'Paul and the Pneumatikoi at Corinth', in: M.D. Hooker and S.G. Wilson (eds.): *Paul and Paulinism: Essays in Honour of C. K. Barrett*, London 1982, p. 237.

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when he insisted on the integration of all the churches, for in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, slave not free man (Gal 3:28).

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Reason as the Root of Freedom and Coexistence of Opposites

> What has the freedom of a bird, with feathers and wings
> for flying, to do with the prison from which you cannot
> escape for months and years, or perhaps never?
> – Father Antonio Vieira, *Sermão XIV*, 1633*

1 Self-Consciousness by Conversion: Father Antonio Vieira, S.J.

Taking the conversion of black African slaves as a fact, the Jesuit Antonio Vieira developed a doctrine on the inequality between masters and slaves in the sugar plantations in Brazil that revolved around a fundamental question that can be summarized as follows: How can opposites whose essence lies in the same inequality coexist? We would like to show that, according to Vieira, self-consciousness as a power over the individual's own actions makes that coexistence possible. Moreover, this possibility should result from the conversion if conversion is due to self-consciousness as a power – a divine gift – that those who have converted become bound by the received good, which is reciprocated in terms of duty (*officium*) as a measure and limit of the human condition:

> Não é necessária Filosofia para saber que um indivíduo não pode ter duas essências […] Quis-nos ensinar Cristo Senhor nosso, que pelas conveniências do bem comum se hão de transformar os homens, e que hão de deixar de ser o que são por natureza, para serem o que devem ser por obrigação […] porque o ofício há-se de transformar em natureza, a obrigação há-se de converter em essência.[1]

Vieira's doctrine not only tells us about the use of reason that individuals should make to learn to become indifferent to their own sensations and appetites, in

* Our translation.

1 See Antonio Vieira: *Sermão de Santo Antonio* (1642), V: Internet: <http://textosdefilosofiabrasileira.blogspot.com.br/2016/01/sermao-de-santo-antonio.html>. Status: 02/02/2016. (Our translation): "Philosophy is not necessary to understand that an individual cannot have two essences. It was an instruction of Christ, our Lord, that men must transform themselves for the convenience of the welfare, and that they should cease to be what they are by nature to become what they should be by obligation […] because duty must be turned into nature and obligation must be turned into essence".

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accordance with the Rule of the Society of Jesus and with the teachings of its founder Ignatius of Loyola, but it also focuses on the concept of freedom rooted in the intellect which, as we will show in the following sections, was defended by the Jesuit Pedro da Fonseca in his *Comments* to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.

In a sermon to a black brotherhood in a sugar plantation that gathered to honour Our Lady of Rosary (in Bahia, 1633), Father Vieira highlighted the idea according to which freedom was the same as indifference. He taught that it was by means of their physical body that all men could be subjugated and forced to do what they did not want to do. Although this corresponded to the condition in which black Africans were brought to Brazil for work, once instructed in the faith and by leading a life based on Christ's Calvary, black Africans could benefit from the internalization of prayers and from the knowledge that they were not just bodies but souls as well. It was through this self-knowledge that they could see themselves as souls freed from the prison into which their bodies had transformed. For this reason, conversion had saved them from the limits imposed by their own bodies – "What is conversion of a soul other than the act of a man entering inside himself and seeing himself?"[2]. For these men conversion meant a second rebirth in Brazil, a situation which imposed on them new duties owed to the new homeland:

> Começando pois pelas obrigações que nascem do vosso novo e tão alto nascimento, a primeira e maior de todas é que deveis dar infinitas graças a Deus por vos ter dado conhecimento de si, e por vos ter tirado de terras, onde vossos pais e vós vivíeis como gentios; e vos ter trazido a esta, onde instruídos na Fé, vivais como Cristãos, e vos salveis.[3]

> […] quis Deus que nascessem à Fé debaixo do signo da sua Paixão, e que ela, assim como lhe havia de ser o exemplo para a paciência, lhe fosse também o alívio para o trabalho […] Que tem que ver a liberdade de uma ave com penas e asas para voar, com a prisão do que se não pode bulir dali por meses e anos, e talvez por toda a vida?[4]

2 See Antonio Vieira: *Sermão da sexagésima*, III. Internet: <http://textosdefilosofiabrasileira.blogspot.com.br/2015/11/sermao-da-sexagesima.html>. Status: 02/02/2016.

3 See Antonio Vieira: Sermão XIV, VI. Internet: <http://textosdefilosofiabrasileira.blogspot.com.br/2016/01/sobre-condicao-do-negro-escravizado-no.html>. Status: 02/02/2016. (Our translation): "Starting with the obligations that arise from your new and such high birth, the first and greatest of them is that you must give infinite thanks to God for self-consciousness, for taking you from the land where your parents lived as Gentiles, and for bringing you to this land where, once instructed in the Faith, you may live as Christians and get salvation for your souls".

4 Ibid. (Our translation): "It was by God's will that your birth by Faith occurred under the sign of His passion, which is both a relief for your suffering from labour [by force] and an example of patience [ ]. What has the freedom of a bird, with feathers and wings for flying, to do with the prison from which you cannot escape for months and years, or perhaps never?".

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2 Vieira's Idea of Freedom as Indifference

Nowadays, we know that in Vieira's epoch it was common among the missionaries of the Society of Jesus to use the term 'freedom' in the sense of 'indifference', which referred to the effect of the "spiritual exercises" proposed by Ignatius of Loyola by means of which it could be learned how to separate the mechanism of appetites and material interests from the habits learned in the religious asceticism.[5]

However, in Vieira's doctrine such separation is justified by the Aristotelianism promoted in the Arts course that was instituted by the Society of Jesus in Brazil. Vieira differentiates two modes of being. The first one is the natural mode of being, by which our actions are explained in regard to immanent forces that correspond to the Aristotelian form in the living bodies, this meaning that matter is gradually shaped by the soul.[6] Not only does this aim at validating the doctrine of the Patron of Catholic schools and education, Thomas Aquinas, according to whom the soul of an individual, albeit created, is *produced* in the matter,[7] but it also serves to highlight the idea that it is through the body that the soul dies from the necessity that, regardless of our wishes, exerts power, such as the necessity of death, which makes the soul inseparable from the body. The second mode is the moral being, in which our actions are explained by the power of being indifferent to the aforementioned necessity of the body as a material mechanism. Given that this creates a distinctive spiritual need of the human condition, Father Vieira asserts that "one should separate soul from body" in the human acting proper, because "once freed from the entanglements and dependencies of the body, the

5 See Paulo Roberto de Andrade Pacheco and Marina Massimi: 'The experience of 'consolation' in the *Litterae Indi petae*', in: *Psicologia em Estudo* 15 (2/2010). Internet: <http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1413-73722010000200013>. Status: 02/02/2016.

6 See the *Comments* on *De anima* by Aristotle (Manuel de Góis, 2010 (orig. 1598), p. 228, our translation): "it should be clear that the matter of a foetus is first shaped by the vegetative soul, then by the sensitive one and, finally, by an intellective soul".

7 See Thomas Aquinas: *On Being and Essence* (*De ente et essentia*), II. Internet: <http://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/aquinas-esse.asp>. Status: 04/02/2016: "But because matter is the principle of individuation, it would perhaps seem to follow that essence, which embraces in itself simultaneously both form and matter, is merely particular and not universal. From this it would follow that universals have no definitions, assuming that essence is what is signified by the definition. Thus, we must point out that matter understood in the way we have thus far understood it is not the principle of individuation; only signate matter is the principle of individuation. I call signate matter matter considered under determinate dimensions. Signate matter is not included in the definition of man as man, but signate matter would be included in the definition of Socrates if Socrates had a definition. In the definition of man, however, is included non-signate matter: in the definition of man we do not include this bone and this flesh but only bone and flesh absolutely, which are the non-signate matter of man".

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soul can work with other species, with another light, with another freedom".[8] He concludes by arguing that, in its practical dimension, freedom not only involves the order of eminence in human actions, contrary to the order in which the body depends on the soul in the vegetative and sensitive realms, but it also justifies the merit by the degree of achieved perfection for which it stays whole and incorruptible and, hence, divine.

At stake here is the view that necessity as nature's determinism does not hinder the freedom of discretion of the human acting: "There is no heavier tribute other than the tribute of death and, still, everyone has to pay it and nobody complains about it, because it is everyone's tribute".[9] This way, Vieira's argument for the separation of body and soul is perfectly in line with the *Comments* written by Manuel de Góis (1598) when he explains that the intellectual character of the soul corresponds to a state that is higher than the vegetative and sensitive states. These three states are improvement levels: "the intellective soul […] is the farthest from the impure matter and from the materiality of the human body".[10] Concerning the causality in human actions, it is argued that, in the vegetative and sensitive levels of the soul, the order of dependency prevails, i. e. the following level depends on the previous one; in contrast, in the intellective level, the order of eminence prevails, i. e. what comes next – the conceived and aimed end – exceeds the previous one to the extent that what is mentioned first is that which is exceeded. Vieira's argument for the separation of the soul is, therefore, theoretically justified:

> […] neste mundo racional do homem, o primeiro móbil de todas as nossas ações é o conhecimento de nós mesmos. As obras são filhas dos pensamentos; no pensamento se concebem, do pensamento nascem, com o pensamento se criam, se aumentam e se aperfeiçoam […] Sendo pois o conhecimento de si mesmo, e o conceito que cada um faz de si uma força tão poderosa sobre as próprias ações […] Qual será logo no homem o limpo conhecimento de si mesmo? Digo que é conhecer e persuadir-se cada um, que ele é a sua alma […] Assim é no homem o conhecimento de si mesmo: se para no corpo, ignora-se; se reflete sobre a alma, conhece-se […] Quando S. Paulo (e eu com ele) chama homem à alma, não fala da parte do homem, senão de todo o homem; mas não do homem físico e natural, senão do homem moral, a quem ele queria instruir e formar […] o homem natural compõe-se de alma e corpo; o homem moral constitui-se ou consiste só na alma. De maneira que, para formar o homem natural, há-se de unir a alma ao corpo; e para formar ou reformar o homem moral, há-se de separar a alma do corpo

8 See Vieira: *As cinco pedras da funda de Davi*, Discurso I, IV. Internet: <http://textosdefilosofiabrasileira.blogspot.com.br/2008/07/antonio-vieira-1608-1697-o-que-conduz.html>. Status: 02/02/2016. Our translation.

9 See Vieira: *Sermão de Santo Antonio* (1642), IV. Internet: <http://textosdefilosofiabrasileira.blogspot.com.br/2016/01/sermao-de-santo-antonio.html>. Status: 04/03/2016. Our translation.

10 See op. cit., ed. cit., p. 237. Our translation.

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> […] vivamos como almas separadas […] livre a alma dos embaraços e dependências do corpo, obra com outras espécies, com outra luz, com outra liberdade.[11]

Since the political thought of Antonio Vieira on matters of the law, such as the dignity of man, is based on this view of freedom, it is line with the tradition of the School of Salamanca (Francisco de Vitoria, Domingo de Soto), particularly with the doctrine of the Jesuit Francisco Suarez, who taught for almost twenty years at Coimbra (1597–1616). According to Francisco Suarez, "in two ways […] one can say that something belongs to the rights of populations. In the first one, because it is the law that all populations and all sorts of people should follow; in the second one, because it is the law that the cities and kingdoms follow within their limits and it is the law which, by similitude and convenience, is called the rights of the peoples"[12]. From this point of view, Vieira acknowledges the right of freedom to the Brazilian Indians as a cause or way of life that is entirely separate from the life of the Portuguese colonizers; but he also acknowledges the right of the colonizers to use the labour force of the slaves

11 See Vieira: *As cinco pedras da funda de Davi*, Discurso I. Internet: <http://textosdefilosofiabrasileira.blogspot.com.br/2008/07/antonio-vieira-1608-1697-o-queconduz.html>. Status: 04/03/2016 (our translation): "in this rational world, the first driving force behind our actions is self-knowledge. Artworks are the offspring of thoughts; it is by means of our thoughts that they are conceived, given birth to, raised, enhanced and perfected […] As self-knowledge and the concept that we have of ourselves are such a powerful force over our own actions […] What does a clear self-knowledge mean for the human being? I believe this is about knowing ourselves and persuading ourselves that we are our own soul […] This is what self-knowledge means for the human being: if it stops at the bodily level, then it is ignored; if it reflects over the soul, then it creates self-knowledge […] When Saint Paul (and I do too) calls the human being "soul", he is not referring to a part of the human beings but to all human beings; he does not refer to the physical and natural human being, but to the moral human being, whom he wanted to teach and guide […] the natural human being has a soul and a body; the moral human being has just a soul. Therefore, in order to train the natural human being, one has to unite the soul with the body; and in order to train the moral human being, one has to separate the soul from the body […] let us live with separate souls […] free the soul from the entanglements and dependencies of the body, work with other species, with another light, with another freedom".

12 See Francisco Suárez: *Tractatus de legibus ac Deo legislatore*, II, 19. Internet: <https://archive.org/stream/tractatusdelegi01sugoog#page/n167/mode/1up>. Status: 02/02/2016. Our translation.

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3 The *Conimbricenses* Aristotelianism

For three centuries starting from 1572, the first time in Brazil that an Arts course was offered by the Jesuits in Bahia, the Brazilian teaching of philosophy remained in the public politics of teaching[13] as an Aristotelianism on the moulds of the Colégio das Artes at the University of Coimbra, which had been founded in 1548 by the king D. João III and entrusted to the Society of Jesus from 1555.[14] This Aristotelianism developed in the *Conimbricenses*[15] – Comments to Aristotle's works for the use in the Arts course – was brought to Brazil with the pedagogical method of the Jesuits, the *Ratio Studiorum*, which we need to examine so as to understand what the study of philosophy in the Arts course was like and how it was conducted at the time of Father Antonio Vieira, in Brazil.

It was called 'Arts' with regard to the study of the liberal arts (*liberalium artium studia*). The term referred to the contemplative nature of knowledge whose value did not depend on the objects to which it could be applied. This corresponds to the Aristotelian explanation on the contemplative use of reason in philosophy as a discipline:

> […] just as we call a man independent who exists for himself and not for another, so we call this the only independent science, since it alone exists for itself.[16]

When he defines good as something that is conceived and wanted at the strict level of the soul, Aristotle places contemplative reason at the theoretical level of knowledge. However, Aristotle also relates the same use of contemplative reason to the level of action, because evidence does not depend on the empirical factor and the activity derived from it keeps a certain independence based on the use of the intellect. This is what he called 'prudence' (*φρόνησις*),[17] a term translated by

13 The concept of philosophical study as preparatory for higher studies, introduced by the Arts course in the early medieval university, was only put aside from the 1930s in Brazil when the university as an institution was formally created.

14 In response to an old intention of reforming the public teaching method, the royal college of Arts was originally formed by humanists hired from the Collège de Guyenne. Among these humanists were Nicolas de Grouchy, who inspired the Jesuit scholars to study Aristotle based on his source texts. Grouchy translated the *Posterior analytics* written by Aristotle (1549): Aristotelis De demonstratione sive de secunda parte *αναλυτικών* libri duo. Internet: <https://almamater.sib.uc.pt/ptpt/fundo_antigo/aristotelis_de_demonstratione_sive_de_secunda_parte_analutikum_libri_duo>. Status: 03/02/2016.

15 See Antonio Manuel Martins: The Conimbricenses. Internet: <http://www.saavedrafajardo.org/Archivos/Conimbricenses_Presentacion.pdf>. Status: 04/03/2016.

16 See Aristotle: *Metaphysics I*, 2, 982b. Internet: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0052%3Abook%3D1%3Asection%3D982b>. Status: 03/02/2016.

17 See Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1098b/2. Internet: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0053%3Abekker+page%3D1098b%3Abekker+line%3D20>. Status: 03/02/2016.

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Cicero as 'prudentia' to illustrate the stoic concept of an absolute power over the divine providence.[18]

According to Cicero, prudence consists in the virtue of seeing beforehand, by means of intelligence, both good and bad things simultaneously. Such virtue is attributed to the divine nature[19]. This way, Cicero used the Latin term 'indifferens'[20] to refer to the divine mode of an absolute power, which cannot be reduced to nor confounded with one of the two opposite possibilities of acting – good and bad –, named *διάφορον* by Stoics. This led him to define human liberty as an attribute of the indifferent will of the sage:

> For what is liberty? The power of living as you please. Who, then, is he who lives as he pleases, but the man surely who follows righteousness, who rejoices in fulfilling his duty, and whose path of life has been well considered and preconcerted […] To the wise man alone it happens, that he does nothing against his will, nothing with pain, nothing by coercion.[21]

The concept of indifferent will shows in the doctrine of Thomas Aquinas which was developed from the Aristotelian ethics. For him, prudence consists in the use attributed by Aristotle to the intellect and the contemplative agent that is the subject of faith, i. e. the correct reason that the human being follows to govern himself by the righteousness of the will:

> For since prudence is the right reason of things to be done, it is a condition thereof that man be rightly disposed in regard to the principles of this reason of things to be done, that is in regard to their ends, to which man is rightly disposed by the rectitude of the

18 As it is known, it was Cicero who established the equivalence between *φρόνησις* and *prudentia*. Given that it derives from 'prouidentia', the term 'prudentia' refers to the Aristotelian concept of virtue that is specially related to the intelligence, such as the power to see beforehand, which is so important for the political wisdom; but it also refers to the stoic reception of the Aristotelian concept of divine providence.

19 See Cicero: *The Nature of the Gods* (*De natura deorum*), III, XV, p. 117. Internet: <https://books.google.com.br/books?id=AdAIAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA1&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false>. Status: 03/02/2016.

20 See Cicero: *De finibus bonorum et malorum*, III, 53 (transl. by H. Rackham): "But since we declare that everything that is good occupies the first rank, it follows that this which we entitle preferred or superior is neither good nor evil; and accordingly we define it as being indifferent but possessed of a moderate value – since it has occurred to me that I may use the word 'indifferent' to represent their term *adiaphoron*". Internet, p. 273: <https://ryanfb.github.io/loebolus-data/L040.pdf>. Status: 03/02/2016.

21 See Cicero: *Paradoxes*, V, 34 (transl. by Cyrus R. Edmonds). Internet: <http://www.archive.org/stream/cicerosthreeboo00cice#page/279/mode/1up>. Status: 03/02/2016. Latin text: "Quid est enim libertas? Potestas vivendi, ut velis. Quis igitur vivit, ut volt, nisi qui recte vivit, qui gaudet officio, cui vivendi via considerata atque provisa est? […] Soli igitur hoc contingit sapienti, ut nihil faciat invitus, nihil dolens, nihil coactus". Internet: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2007.01.0045%3Asection%3D34>. Status: 03/02/2016.

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> will, just as to the principles of speculative truth he is rightly disposed by the natural light of the active intellect.[22]

The scholars of the royal Colégio das Artes had assimilated, in the context of the Humanism from the 1500s, the Aristotelianism bequeathed by Thomas Aquinas that dates back to Cicero and, also, to the question raised by Seneca in his *Moral Letters to Lucilius:* "granted that all things are either good or bad or indifferent – in what class does *being wise* belong?"[23] That is what we see in the opening of the Arts course at the University of Coimbra, for example, when Arnold Fabrice, an expert in Cicero, stated during his *Speech on Liberal Arts* [*Discurso sobre as artes liberais*; *De liberalivm artivm stvdiis oratio*] that:

> [Among the arts] Prudence, which the ancients fairly called 'the art of life', takes the first place […] From this came the arts that were called pure and liberal because they are worthy of the pure and free spirits. Corresponding to the habit gained from being virtuous are [the liberal arts]: Grammar, Dialectics, Rhetoric; Arithmetic, Music, Geometry and Astronomy. This way, Prudence improves reason more and more [which], then, becomes wisdom […] And once this is the foundation for a happy life, we consider Philosophy, which is the study of wisdom and it is so called for its Greek name, the worthiest art.[24]

According to the *Ratio Studiorum*, the Arts course lasted three years and included not only mathematics (arithmetic, Euclidian geometry) and astronomy (*Tractatus de sphæra* by Sacrobosco), literary studies (which were related to the concept of *studia humanitatis* raised by Cicero[25]) but also Aristotelian subjects

22 See Thomas Aquinas: *Summa theologiae*, I–II, q. LVI, a. 3. Internet: <http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/sth2055.html>. Status: 03/02/2016: "Cum enim prudentia sit recta ratio agibilium, requiritur ad prudentiam quod homo se bene habeat ad principia huius rationis agendorum, quae sunt fines; ad quos bene se habet homo per rectitudinem voluntatis, sicut ad principia speculabilium per naturale lumen intellectus agentis".

23 See Seneca: *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium*, CXVII, 9: "cum omnia aut mala sint aut bona aut indifferentia, sapere in quo numero sit?". Translated by R. M. Gummere. Internet: <https://archive.org/stream/adluciliumepistu03seneuoft#page/342/mode/2up>. Status: 04/03/2016.

24 See Arnold Fabrice: 'De liberalivm artivm stvdiis oratio', in: Sebastião Tavares de Pinho (ed.): *Orações de sapiência* 1548–1555, Coimbra 2011, p. 34 (our translation): "In iis Prudentia, quae recte a ueteribus ars uitae nuncupata est, primum locum obtinet […] Ex quo fonte deductae sunt artes, quae idcirco ingenuae et liberales dictae sunt, quod ingeniis liberalius sint dignae. Hae uero sunt quidam habitus animi ad uirtutem […] ut Grammatica, Dialectica, Rhetorica, itemque numerorum, sonorum, mensurae, siderum rationes […] Talium itque […] prudentia […] stipata rationem […] magis ac magis perfecit. Quae ratio cum ad sumum perducta […] efficitur illa Sapientia […] Quae cum beatae uita sit effectrix, Philosophiam, quae est studium sapientiae, de eius nomine Graeco uerbo sic dicta, maxime dignam arbitramur".

25 In his *De oratore*, for the teaching of the public spirit, Cicero argues that subjects on the act of knowing are insufficient; subjects on the art of convincing, such as rhetoric, poetic and eloquence are also necessary. He argues that Socrates separated philosophy from oratory and wisdom from eloquence when he combated the sophists, because – see Cicero: De oratore, I, [63]) – "what Socrates used to say, that all men are sufficiently eloquent in that which they

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on logic, nature in general (*libros Physicorum*, *De caelo*, *Parva naturalia*), human nature (*De anima*), ethic (*Ethica Nichomaquea*) and metaphysics (*libros Metaphysicorum*). These two subjects were based on the *Comments* about the aforementioned works by Aristotle.

4 Reason as the Root of Freedom: Pedro da Fonseca

Despite the scholastic profile of the *Ratio Studiorum* that recommended the study of Aristotle as it had been interpreted by Thomas Aquinas,[26] it should be noted that the Aristotelianism followed by the Jesuits cannot be reduced to a "Second Scholastic" because it was developed in the context of the Humanism and because modern philosophy originates in it. In fact, the Aristotelianism followed by the Jesuits was based on the demand for rigor in the use of Aristotle because they believed that Aristotle's thought had been adulterated by the interpolations in the various receptions, transmissions and adaptations of the *corpus aristotelicum* since Boethius. Such demand for rigor gave rise to a pedagogical enterprise without precedent given the excellence of the didactic material produced at that time: the compendia on logic, which were considered fundamental for the Aristotelian doctrine, by Francisco Toledo (*Introductio in dialecticam Aristotelis*, 1561) and by Pedro da Fonseca (*Institutionum dialecticarum libri octo*, which replaced the famous *Summulae logicales* (*Tractatus*) by Pedro Hispano and had at least 53 re-editions in the period from 1564 to 1625; *Isagoge philosophica*, Lisboa 1591). Besides Fonseca's contributions,[27] the famous *Con-*

understand, is very plausible, but not true. It would have been nearer truth to say, that no man can be eloquent on a subject that he doers not understand; and that, if he understands a subject ever so well, but is ignorant how to form and polish his speech, he cannot express himself eloquently even about what he does understand". In *Pro archia*, Cicero refers to the literary art as an expression of the dignity of man (see Cicero: *Pro archia*, II, 10). Similarly, Pedro da Fonseca – see Pedro da Fonseca (1964b): Instituições dialécticas. Coimbra, Universidade Coimbra, p. 515, clearly teaches that "the orator that uses mathematical reasons or pure philosophy and eliminates all ornaments will be accused thereof".

26 See the Rules of the Prefect of Studies, 30 (Internet: <http://www.bc.edu/sites/libraries/ratio/ratio1599.pdf>. Status: 04/02/2016): "He shall not give permission to students of theology and philosophy to have books of any and every nature. They should be allowed only those which have been recommended by their instructors and approved by the rector. The theologians should have the Summa theologiae of St. Thomas, the philosophers Aristotle"; also the Rules of the Professor of Philosophy, 3–6: "He shall be very careful in what he reads or quotes in class from commentators on Aristotle who are objectionable from the standpoint of faith, and he must be cautious lest his pupils come under their influence […] On the other hand, he should always speak favorably of St. Thomas, following him readily when he should, differing from him with respect and a certain reluctance when he finds him less acceptable".

27 In the preface of the second edition of the *Institutionum dialecticarum* (1574), Fonseca admits that, owing to these several occupations, he did not have enough time to write the

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imbricenses include five books with eight volumes published between 1592 and 1606 under the direction of the *collegium* of the Society of Jesus at the University of Coimbra.

Therefore, it is important to note that the *collegium* of Jesuits assumed as a prerequisite for the elaboration of the *Comments* the use of the Greek source text and its Latin translation, a decision that contributed historically to consolidate the textual exegesis as a principle of objective validity in philosophy teaching.[28]

For the purpose of this paper, what really matters us here concerning the meaning of indifference introduced by Father Antonio Vieira as a condition of the coexistence of opposites is the definition of freedom provided by Pedro da Fonseca as something that is rooted in the intellect, especially if taken in the view of the human spirit or consciousness that transcends the limits of the experience of opposites.

In his *Comments* on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, in particular in *Quaestiones* I–VIII referring to Chapter II of Book IX, Fonseca takes the task of answering to both old and new questions, such as the following ones: "Which role do the will and the intellect play in the definition of 'free will' as well as in the exercise of free actions?", "How is it possible that the human being imposes upon himself the imperative mode of acting on his own volition?"; or "How can the merit of the individual in the moral action be justified without freedom?". In the latter question, one presupposes the intervention of the Jesuits in the polemics triggered by Luther when he denied free will[29] by defending the doctrine of Thomas

comments on the books by Aristotle that were studied in the Arts course at that time and for which he had been responsible since the beginning of the 1560s; however, he admits that – see Fonseca (1964b, p. 13–14) –, owing to a philosophical belief, he preferred to dedicate his time to the "books of the first Philosophy (called *Metaphysics*), [because] I thought that, if I explained those themes on the principles and Foundation of all Philosophy, it would be the easiest method for me to write and the easiest for the students of Philosophy to understand". The effort that he put into commenting Aristotle's *Metaphysics* took a lot longer than he first thought and only came to an end after four editions, the last two of which are posthumous: *Commentariorum Petri Fonsecae Lusitani, Doctoris Theologi Societatis Iesu, in libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis Stagiritae*, Tomus I, Roma 1577; Tomus II, Roma 1589; Tomus III, Évora 1604; Tomus IV, Lion 1612); *Petri Fonsecae Commentariorum in Metaphysicorum Aristotelis Stagiritae Libros*, first re-edition (4 Vols.), Cologne 1615; Hildesheim 1964 (reimp. edit. 1615).

28 See Rules of the Professor of Philosophy, 12–13 (available at: <http://www.bc.edu/sites/libraries/ratio/ratio1599.pdf>. Status: 04/02/2016): "He should make it his chief aim to interpret well the text of Aristotle and be as painstaking in this interpretation as in discussing the subject matter itself […] Whenever he comes upon celebrated texts that are often argued in disputations, he must examine them carefully by comparing the more noted interpretations so as to judge which is to be preferred".

29 See Martin Luther: *Concerning Christian Liberty (Von der Freiheit eines Christenmenschen*, 1520). Internet: <http://www.wciu.edu/docs/resources/C11C_Luther_Christian_liberty.pdf>. Access: 04/02/2016. See also Martin Luther: On the Enslaved Will (De servo arbitrio, 1525).

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Aquinas, according to which the essence of the Christian faith is defined as a friendship relation, i. e. as a mutual relationship and, especially, as a free relationship between the Creator and the creature that participates in Him by means of the intellect.[30]

In order to present in a simple manner the argument through which Fonseca proposes to reconcile human freedom and divine providence, we need to take into account that, at the time of the *Conimbricenses*, the theological tradition of Saint Thomas had consecrated a knowledge theory according to which two basic views are distinguished as premises. In the first one, the supreme power of knowledge does not correspond to the use of reason for conceiving, knowing and explaining the things within the limits of experience, e. g. when we say that something called "effect" depends on something else called "cause".[31] On the contrary, by surpassing that model of causal explanation, the supreme power of knowledge consists in learning about oneself not by dependency but by analogy with what is conceived as being better and the most perfect on its own, i. e. God, the Creator. The second premise says that, in God, i. e. in an imaginary time and space, something is not known after another as if these things had different causes, but everything has the same cause and is known at the same time as one sort of things that cannot be differentiated from another.[32] For this reason, the possibilities of actions and opposite events are known in an indifferent and simultaneous manner on the basis of the contingency of what can or cannot be.[33]

Finally, to conclude his argument which is in strict agreement with Thomas Aquinas, Pedro da Fonseca argues that the Creator wants himself as an end in itself and wants everything He creates as they follow the end. In relation to Himself, His will is defined absolutely in terms of the necessity of "what cannot not being", whereas in relation to the events at the level of the actions, which can be indifferent or not, His will involves free will.[34]

To determine and enact one of the opposite possibilities, the condition for the individual to act for the highest good consists in that free power in which he

Internet: <https://www.lutheransonline.com/lo/985/FSLO-1344356985-111985.pdf>. Status: 04/02/2016.

30 See Thomas Aquinas: Summa contra gentiles, III, c. 112 (26647–26648). Internet: <http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/scg3111.html>. Status: 04/02/2016.

31 See Thomas Aquinas: Summa contra gentiles, I, c. 57 (2421–2422). Internet: <http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/scg1044.html>. Status: 04/02/2016.

32 Ibid., II, c. 15 (24526–24527). Internet: <http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/scg2006.html>. Access: 04/02/2016.

33 Id. ibid., I, c. 55 (23995). Internet: <http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/scg1044.html>. Status: 04/02/2016.

34 Id. ibid., I, c. 88 (24304). Internet: <http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/scg1072.html>. Access: 04/02/2016; II, c. 15 (24527). Internet: <http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/scg2006.html>. Status: 04/02/2016.

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participates as the indifferent self-consciousness lasts because, given the fact that he is indifferent, his actions do not depend on external causes that are sustained by his faith only. His actions are, therefore, free. For this reason, an atemporal prescience that explains Providence and Predestination as an absolute future in the world does not go against the view according to which a "middle knowledge" (*scientia media*) explains the meaning of the need of moral actions, when we say that it is necessary that such thing be or be done in such and such a manner on the basis of principles, rules and laws without prejudice to free will.[35] From this point of view, Fonseca states that:

> Therefore, for a better understanding of this matter, and of what they [the commentators] mean, when they say that the will is formally free, I assert that the intellect is in fact the root of freedom, or radically free (as it is said), and this assertion is manifest […] Because freedom formally consists in this potency; 'formally' means that once all conditions are fulfilled and if there are no hindrances, then, this is about the power of acting and not acting by being indifferent. In fact, the intellect is the root and source of freedom as well as the light through which the will prefers something to another, thereby being capable, by choice, of curbing itself and revoking.[36]

Conclusion

In order to conclude, we would like to stress the view raised in this paper of a relation between the idea of indifference in Vieira and the concept of freedom developed by Fonseca, who argues that, by being indifferent through the intellect, the will becomes "capable, by choice, of curbing itself and revoking". In Vieira, this power of curbing oneself and revoking implies that self-knowledge does not relate to the conceptual evidence by which we know things and facts based on a cause and effect relation. On the contrary, it is based on the evidence of what we

35 See Fonseca, Pedro da (1964): Commentariorum in Metaphysicorum Aristotelis Stagiritae libros, p. 119 (our translation): "Thirty years ago (we wrote in the year of the Lord of 1596) we began to explain the subject of the divine Providence as well as that of Predestination, but there were several and serious difficulties. Back then we believed that there was no easier way or reason to solve all difficulties than to establish […] the double state of these contingents which are truly future, i. e. absolute and conditioned. We also affirmed in God the certainty of knowing both of these states".

36 See Pedro da Fonseca (1964a): *Commentariorum in Metaphysicorum Aristotelis Stagiritae libros*, Tomus III, Liber IX, c. II, q. II, p. 565–566: "intellectum autem esse libertatis radicem, seu (ut loquuntur) esse radicaliter liberum, haec enim assertio ex dictis manifesta est. Namque in ea potentia est libertas formaliter, in qua formaliter, sive complete est potestas ad agendum, et non agendum indifferens, positis nimirum omnibus ad agendum, praerequisitis, et sublatis quibuscunque impedimentis. Ea vero potentia est libertatis radix, et origo, que lucem, et quasi facem uoluntati praefert, ut ex pluribus unum eligat aut ab eligendo se cohibeat, aut revocet".

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conceive and choose as the best and the most perfect that mankind can improve itself in the moral sense.

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Natural Knowledge of God in Early American Protestant and Catholic Missionary Theology

1 Introduction: All Peoples are Religious

"Although the adage Cicero is held by all as an indubitable maxim – that there is no people so brutish, nor any nation so barbarous and savage, as to have no feeling that there is a divinity – nonetheless when I consider closely our Tupinamba of America, I find myself somewhat at a loss in applying it to them. Not only are they utterly ignorant of the sole and true God; what is more, in contrast to the custom of all ancient pagans, who had many gods… they neither confess nor worship any gods, either of heaven or of earth."[1]

These are the observations of the Huguenot cleric Jean de Léry (1536–1613)[2] in his *Historia Navigationis in Basiliam, quae et America Dicitur* (1563). Together with other missionaries, he was sent to the New World by John Calvin and reached the area surrounding present-day Rio de Janeiro in March of 1557, sailing under the French flag. Nicolas Durand de Villegaignon (1510–1571), a Huguenot French vice-admiral, had already founded the colony *France Antarctique* on the island of Sergipe in modern-day Rio de Janeiro's Guanabara Bay, protected by Fort Coligny, which was built by the French colonists, and it was he

1 Cf. Jean de Léry: *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil*, [transl. and intr. by Janet Whatley], Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, chap. 16, p. 134; Marcus Tullius Cicero: *Tusculan Disputations*, [ed. by Ted Garvin, Hagen von Eitzen and the PG Online Distributed Proofreading Team 2005 trans. by C.D. Yonge], New York 1877, I, 13 (p. 21): "…there never was any nation so barbarous, nor any people in the world so savage, as to be without some notion of Gods. Many have wrong notions of the Gods, for that is the nature and ordinary consequence of bad customs, yet all allow that there is a certain divine nature and energy. Nor does this proceed from the conversation of men, or the agreement of philosophers; it is not an opinion established by institutions or by laws; but, no doubt, in every case the consent of all nations is to be looked on as a law of nature." https://www.gutenberg.org/files/14988/14988-h/14988-h.htm (March 19th, 2020).

2 On Jean de Léry's life and curriculum vitae, cf. Janet Whatley: "Introduction", in: Léry, *History*, pp. XV–XXXVIII.

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who asked his friend Calvin to send him some missionaries, among them Léry, who was still studying theology at the time[3].

Jean de Léry would later both relativize the observations he had noted in his diary, while nonetheless confirming Cicero's proof of God *e consensus gentium.* Cicero's proof of God belonged to the theological tool kit, which the missionaries – regardless of their confession – took with them to the New World. For, the proof of God was seen as a proof of humanity. Animals have no gods. And the human being open to God, can be proselytized.

In this article, I will concentrate on the religious-philosophical question of natural knowledge of God[4] in early missionary theology, both Protestant and Catholic. In doing so, I will show that, while confessional differences clearly left their mark on the treatment of this topic, there are nonetheless surprising points of ecumenical agreement between the two confessions[5]. At the end of this lecture, I will connect the results of this examination to the question of an intercultural philosophy of religion.

3 Cf. Hans Jürgen Prien: *Das Christentum in Lateinamerika,* Leipzig 2007, pp. 160–162.

4 The expression "natural knowledge of God" is related to what Aristotle (384–322 BC) called *Theologik* and Marcus Terentius Varro (166–27 BC) designated *theologia naturalis.* For Cicero, the adjective "natural"referred to the nature of God in order to distinguish it from the artificial construction of God's reality byhumans. The word "natural" refers in Aristotle's philosophy to the dimension of the physical, experienceablereality; finally, natural theology is a theology based not on Christian revelation and faith, but onexperience and reason. In this essay, natural knowledge of God refers to a knowledge of God which the humanbeing can obtain by virtue of its intellect. This knowledge is articulated in cultures and religions and is,according the theologians and philosophers of the 16th century, a criterion for possession of human nature. Philosophy can detect and reflect this natural knowledge, systematically developing it into a philosophy ofreligion. In a Christian context, natural knowledge of God is distinguished from knowledge of God based onthe revelation of God in the history of Israel and Jesus of Nazareth and reflected upon by theology. A complex topic of Christian theology is the question about the revelatory content of non-Christian religions or about the "supernatural" grace (of Christ) that is communicated by non-Christian religions as God's salvation. Cf. Otto Muck: 'Natürliche Theologie. I. Begriffsgeschichte', in: Walter Kasper (ed.): *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* vol. 7 Freiburg/Basel/Rom/Wien 1998, pp. 676–677; Wolfhart Pannenberg: *Systematic Theology I*, [trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley], Grand Rapids 2001, pp. 73–117.

5 Cf. Mariano Delgado: 'Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede zwischen der katholischen und der calvinistischen Weltmission der Frühen Neuzeit', in: Martin Sallmann / Moisés Mayordomo / Hans Rudolf Lavater-Briner (eds.): *Johannes Calvin 1509–2009. Würdigung aus Berner Perspektive,* Zürich 2012, pp. 258–280; Mariano Delgado: 'Missionstheologische und anthropologische Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede zwischen Katholiken und Protestanten im Entdeckungszeitalter', in: *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 87 (2003), p. 111; Mariano Delgado: 'Gottes Weisheit und Güte als theologischer Verstehens- und Handlungshorizont. Von der Aktualität der Missionstheologie des Bartolomé de Las Casas', in: *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 76 (4/1992), pp. 285–300.

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2 Protestant and Catholic Missionary Theologies of the Knowledge of God

2.1 John Calvin

John Calvin (1509–1564), who sent Léry to Brazil, was naturally also aware of Cicero's ethno-theological thesis regarding the religiosity of all peoples[6]. Like the early Christian tradition, the reformer of Geneva presupposed a *sensus divinitatis* in the human being[7]. Every human being has a *semen religionis* implanted in them. In order to emphasize that this feeling for God, which is the source of religion, cannot be lost, Calvin uses the image – drawing here as well on Cicero[8] – of a sense of religion being carved into the human being: *Insculptum mentis humanis esse divinitatis sensum, qui deleri nunquam potest*[9].

Calvin's positive anthropology, however, serves a hamartiological and soteriological purpose: because every human being is directed towards God, it must, as such, also live according to this direction. But, this is clearly not the case. Thus, the human being must be seen under the qualification of its being a sinner, for which reason it requires a savior as well as missionaries, who make evident its need for both salvation and the savior itself. Calvin draws this hamartiological and soteriological reasoning, which he connects to natural knowledge of God, from a train of thought presented in the Letter to the Romans[10]. In the first chapter of this letter, Paul attributes to the pagans, and thus to all human beings,

6 Cf. Eva Maria Faber: *Symphonie von Gott und Menschen. Die responsorische Struktur von Vermittlung in der Theologie Johannes Calvins*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1999, p. 103, note 63.

7 On the natural capacity for the knowledge of God in Calvin's thought, cf. Faber's study: *Symphonie von Gott und Menschen*, pp. 103–106.

8 Cf. Marcus Tullius Cicero: *Vom Wesen der Götter / De natura deorum*, [ed. by Olof Gigon and Laila Straume- Zimmermann], Darmstadt 1996, II lib., 12 (p. 108): omnibus enim innatum est et in anima quasi insculptum esse deos.

9 Johannes Calvin: *Institutio Christianae Religionis* (1559), [ed. by A. Tholuck], Berlin 1846, I, 3, 1 (p. 40) und I, 3,3 (p. 41).

10 Romans 1:20–23: "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood (νοούμενα) by the things that are made, even His eternal power and [Godhead, so that they are without excuse (ἀναπολογήτους), because, although they knew (γνόντες) God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man – and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things." Cf. Calvin, *Der Brief an die Römer. Ein Kommentar* (Calvin Studienausgabe, Band 5.1), Neukirchen-Vluyn 2005,80: "Hic tamen videtur voluisse [Paulus] indicare manifestationem [Dei] qua propius urgeantur quam ut refugere queant; ut certe eam cordi suo insculptam quisque nostrum sentit." (But here he [Paul] obviously wanted to point to a manifestation [of God] that drives [people] into such a corner that they cannot escape it; each one of us feels it as surely as if it were engraved in our heart.) Cf. id. 82.

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the capacity to recognize the invisible creator through creation. He connects this anthropological distinction to the religious obligation to honor and pay thanks to the truly apprehended God. And yet, as Paul recognizes, human beings do not fulfill this obligation. Instead they deify finite realities such as other human beings and animals. They perform idolatry. However, because human beings could have truly recognized God through God's self-witnessing in creation, they could also well know better and are, thus, inexcusable (ἀναπολογήτους) and consequently in need of salvation (Rom 1:20–23).

Léry also follows this Pauline and Calvinist train of thought, identifying clues which point to the religiosity of the Indians. While the Brazilians, unlike the Mayans or Incas, have no temples, their belief in a great demonic force, in the immortality of the soul, their ritual dances, songs, and their shamans prove their religiosity. Léry interprets their religiosity as a hidden knowledge of God: "So although our Americans do not confess it with their lips, nonetheless inasmuch as they are convinced within themselves that there is some divinity, I concluded that just as they will not be exempt from judgment, so, too, they will not be able to plead ignorance."[11] Calling upon Calvin's authority, he adds that even in their case "the seed of religion … germinates in them and cannot be extinguished"[12]. While this implies an appreciation for this indigenous religiosity, Léry arrives at the theologically opposite conclusion that the indigenous people's religion, which contradicts their hidden knowledge of God, reveals that they are sinners, for whom there is no excuse.

2.2 Two Augustinianisms

The church historian Mariano Delgado sees in this mode of thought the effects of the Augustinianism which characterized the theology of the Reformers[13]. The human being without Christ's grace is presented as a sinner painted in exclusively

11 Cf. Léry: *History*, chap. 16, p. 140.

12 Cf. ibid., p. 140.

13 Cf. Delgado: 'Missionstheologische und anthropologische Gemeinsamkeiten', p. 110. The Reformers' strict Augustinianism is a doctrinal consequence of Augustine's victory over Pelagius (at the Synod of Carthage in 418) and the decision of the Synod of Orange (529) against Semipelagianism. According to this decision, a human person cannot, of its own accord, take a step towards the grace of Christ, at least not in the sense that such a step could condition the gift of Christ's grace. Catholic theology on the other hand, spoke of a cooperation between God and human being in line with the classical dictum that grace does not destroy nature, but rather presupposes and completes itself in such a way as to effect a "healing" of the "wounds" that human nature has received through Adam's sin (*Gratia non destruit, sed supponit et perficit naturam*). *Prevenient grace* (*gratia praeveniens*) can motivate a human being to take a step of its own, moving towards the grace of justification and sanctification. The knowledge of God in other religions can therefore be understood as

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dark colors. Thus, natural knowledge of God becomes the scale according to which one can identify factual deviation into superstition and idolatry. It is impossible to discover an even initial, incomplete knowledge of God in non-Christian religions.

In the Catholic tradition, the Pauline statements about natural knowledge of God are primarily seen as the task of philosophical theology or philosophy of religion. In 1870 and with reference to this passage in Romans, the First Vatican Council elevated natural knowledge of God to a dogma. The intention was to express that the human being as such is the addressee of God's revelation and thus *capax Dei*. The human being's general capacity for God was to be made plausible by philosophical-rational means, interpreted as an openness for revelation, and belief thus identified in its rationality. This view, which had already been developed in medieval theology, made it easier, at least for Catholic missionaries, to discover the rudiments of a natural knowledge of God in the indigenous peoples and Catholic Augustinianism, thus, tended to express itself in a milder form[14].

2.3 Jean de Léry and Manuel da Nóbrega

Let us return to Léry, who has now become even harsher in his judgment of the Indians of Rio de Janeiro. Not only have the Indians proven themselves guilty because of their hidden knowledge of God, they have set themselves against the Gospel. Léry bases these statements on increasingly widespread reports passed down about the early prosyletization of the Brazilian Indians by the Apostle Thomas or Matthew. The conclusion is obvious: the Indians will have no excuse on the day of judgment[15]. Through his mission, Léry tries to save at least some of them, namely, those whom God has predestined for salvation.

praeparatio evangelii, as a preparation evoked by the Gospel and at the same time accomplished by human beings.

14 Cf. Faber: *Symphonie von Gott und Menschen*, pp. 105–106, 172–177.

15 Léry: *History*, chap. 16, p. 148: As a Calvinist preacher, Léry endeavors to make clear that this tradition does not originate from a Catholic myth of saints, but rather from Scripture. He argues with reference to a passage in the Epistle to the Romans, in which Paul interprets the fifth verse of Psalm 19 as a reference to the fact that the Gospel has reached the ends of the earth: "Their [= the messengers of the Gospel] voice was heard in the whole world and their word to the ends of the earth" (Rom 10:18); cf. Psalm 19:5: "…Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." Intended here is that the voice and message of the works of God, namely the works of God's creation, which reveal God's glory, have become known to the ends of the earth. Paul turns the voice and message of the works of creation into the messengers and apostles of the gospel. With this, he intends to make clear that all Israelites have been able to hear the message of the Gospel and that a failure to turn to Jesus is not the product of an external cause, but rather the manifestation of an inner refusal

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Léry's Catholic "colleague" and opponent, who founded the first Jesuit College in Latin America and became provincial in 1553, Manuel da Nóbrega (1517–1570)[16], supported Mem de Sá in the fight against *France Antarctique*. He made observations about Brazil's Tupi Indians similar to those of Léry. In 1549, he wrote that "(…) nenhum conhecimento tem de Deus (…)"[17]. The Jesuit Francisco Soares, who was active in Brazil from 1584 to 1589, also confirms Nóbrega's assessment, writing "Naõ tem deos a quem adorem"[18]. Though Nóbrega observes only a worship of thunder or a god of thunder called *Tupã*[19], this is proof that they do possess some natural knowledge of God.

When Nóbrega hears about the cult figure Sumé, he draws a further connection between the Tupi Indians and the Apostle of the Eastern and Western Indies, Thomas or São Tomé. Nóberga was convinced of the apostles former presence by supposedly weatherproof footprints in the sand which he saw. But, what the apostle taught was washed away and forgotten[20]. Some memories remained such as the story of the Flood, which Nóberga believed he had discovered among the Indians[21]. Apparently, the celebration of the Holy Mass also impressed the Indians. Furthermore, Nórberga believes that there is a desire for scripture present in the indigenous people, which he interprets as a sign that they are not only intelligent and rationally oriented human beings, but, above all, that

to believe, which, however, will not lead God to reject his chosen people, but rather to their eschatological salvation through a savior coming from Zion (Rom 11:26), by whom Paul understands the eschatological Christ.

16 On Manuel da Nóbrega's life and mission, see Teresa Pinheiro: *Aneignung und Erstarrung. Die Konstruktion Brasiliens und seiner Bewohner in portugiesischen Augenzeugenberichten 1500–1595*, Stuttgart 2004, pp. 117–134.

17 Manuel da Nóbrega's letter to the first Provincial of Portugal, Simão Rodrigues de Azevedo (1510–1579), Bahia April 10th, 1549; cf. Serafim Leite (ed.): *Cartas do Brasil e mais escritos do P. Manuel da Nóbrega (Opera Omnia)*, Coimbra 1955, p. 21; cit. in Pinheiro, *Aneignung*, p. 119.

18 Cit. in Pinheiro: *Aneignung*, p. 164.

19 The cultural anthropologist Teresa Pinheiro (*Aneignung*, p. 122) suspects that a linguistic problem might underlie this connection between thunder and God, as illustrated by the following scenario. A missionar points to heaven and tries to indicate respect for a heavenly deity through his facial features. In response, a Indian may have thought of thunder, which also instills respect and, thus, responded by referring to thunder, which Nóbrega then interpreted as a reference to a god of thunder. But, how justified are such conjectures? Cf. Fernando Amado Aymoré: *Die Jesuiten im kolonialen Brasilien. Katechese als Kulturpolitik und Gesellschaftsphänomen (1549–1760)*, Frankfurt/M 2009, pp. 114–115: Some Jesuits saw an advantage in the Inidans' lack of a concrete conception of God, namely, that the indigenous peopleseemed to be a religious tabula rasa, on which the Christian Creed could be inscribed.

20 Pinheiro (*Aneignung*, p. 120, 199; pp. 201–202) suspects that this legend too was caused by linguistic problems and that Nóbrega misunderstood the name of the cultic figure Sumé to be Tumé, which he took to refer to Thomas. However, this legend is also documented independently of linguistic similarities.

21 Cf. Pinheiro: *Aneignung*, p. 120, p. 202.

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they would like to hear the word of God[22]. Nóberga expressly opposes the missionary method of leading the indigenous people to the Christian faith by bringing them into contact with the settlers because this contact ultimately leads to the enslavement of the indigenous people. The Jesuit sees the mission's greatest obstacle in the behavior of the conquerors and colonists. However, Nóbrega's attitude changed after 1555. While he originally saw the harshness of the settlement policy as a greater problem than indigenous cannibalism, he now approved of their subjugation and enslavement because he feared and was convinced that the Portuguese people would fall victim to this cannibalism[23]. In short, in his original missionary theology, Nóberga adopted a mild form of Augustinianism, arguing that the proclamation of Christianity should take as its starting point the traces of knowledge of God which can be identified in the indigenous religion and culture.

3 Protestant motives for opposing the mission?

The opposition between Protestant and Catholic missionary theologies lies not only in their divergent interpretations of Augustine. From the start, the two confessions had developed very different relationships both to the missionary idea as well as to concrete missionary activity. For, Léry and his companions' Calvinistic mission on the islands near Rio de Janeiro was ultimately only a short twelve-year intermezzo – almost a mere footnote in the Catholic dominated colonial history of Latin America. In 1560, Mem de Sá (c. 1500–1572), Governor-General of the Portuguese colony of Brazil from 1557–1572, attacked the island of Serigipe in the bay of Guanabara, where *France Antarctique* was located. Survivors were able to flee. In 1567, Estácio de Sá (1520–1567), the founder of Rio de Janeiro, definitely drove out the French and thus ended the first Protestant mission in Brazil[24]. Serious Protestant missionary efforts would have to wait until the beginning of the 18th century and, moreover, for the protection of English, Dutch, Danish and Swedish colonial projects. There were several reasons for the absence of the Protestant mission, not all of which were military.

The religious studies expert Horst Bürkle (1934–2015)[25] sees an appraisal by the University of Wittenberg's theological faculty in 1652 as representative for the

22 Cf. ibid, p. 121.

23 Pinheiro: *Aneignung*, pp. 124–127, and the summary, p. 134. Aymoré, *Die Jesuiten im kolonialen Brasilien*, pp. 118–119. In addition to their polygamy, above all, it was their cannibalism, to which Christians could also fall victim, that served as the justification for their subjugation.

24 Cf. Prien: *Das Christentum in Lateinamerika,* pp. 160–162.

25 Cf. Host Bürkle: *Missionstheologie*, Stuttgart 1979, pp. 46–47.

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Lutheran position regarding the missionary question. Calling upon the Letter to the Romans' statement about God's revelation "through the light of nature", that is, through creation, it is argued that no human being can "excuse itself … by claiming ignorance of God"[26]. Not only, however, does nature preach, so to speak, the true God of Christianity to all people. According to the Wittenbergers' statement, there are also the sermons of Adam, Noah and the Apostles. If there are peoples who still do not know about the Gospel, then it is because they refused to hear both the light of nature as well as the preaching of God's word. Natural knowledge of God plays an important role here.

The theological faculty of Wittenberg also recapitulates Luther and Calvin's teachings regarding the Apostles' *personale privilegium* to preach the Gospel to all peoples, a privilege which meant that neither the "papists" nor the "Lutherans" had been commanded by God to preach to the world.

Still controversial among scholars is the missionary theological meaning of the doctrine of predestination. The Calvinistic version seemed to suggest that God had hardened the hearts of the pagans as he had once done with the Pharaoh during Moses' sermon and that the hardening of the Indios' hearts continues. Consequently, mission is pointless. Yet, the main representative of the doctrine of predestination, John Calvin, did not draw this consequence, as both his very sending of Léry to the New World and his request that the gospel be preached to the whole world make evident. Only then would God decide, in accordance with his predestination, about the acceptance or refusal of the Good News[27].

Other Protestant voices, such as that of the Lutheran theologian Johann Balthasar Lüderwald (†1796), also pleaded for missionary efforts in the 18th century. In this context, Lüderwald contested the theological thesis of the pagans' inexcusability. Because natural knowledge of God does not yet contain any reference to revelation in its relation to salvation, it is also impossible to place it in relation to salvation and condemnation. The failure of a natural knowledge of God in a given religion is not immediate cause for guilt. Lüderwald understands this salvation-neutral natural knowledge of God as an expression of the hope "that Christ would help anyone to their salvation, who proved that they were willing to accept and fulfill this word [the revelation], if only it were taught to them."[28] It is in this way that he wants to understand the scholastic axiom, *facienti, quod est in se, Deus non denegat gratiam.* The realization of natural, rational knowledge of God is thus understood as the authentic expression of a natural direction of the human being towards the saving God, even if this di-

26 Cit. in Werner Raupp (ed.): *Mission in Quellentexten. Geschichte der Deutschen Evangelischen Mission von der Reformation bis zur Weltmissionskonferenz Edinburgh 1910*, Erlangen 1990, pp. 70–71.

27 Raupp (ed.): *Mission in Quellentexten*, p. 31.

28 Ibid., pp. 191–197, esp. p. 194.

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rection in no way effects the grace of Christ, which always remains a free gift. Clear in the case of Lüderwald and, at least partially, identifiable in the case of Léry is that efforts were also made in the Protestant tradition to overcome the pessimistic anthropology of a strict Augustinianism.

4 Anthropological optimism in service of anthropological pessimism in the thought of Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda

Anthropological pessimism is, however, by no means the exclusive privilege of a Protestant tradition, but rather also influenced missionary theological thought within Catholicism. However, far from hindering a missionary movement, this strict Augustinianism tragically served to justify the Conquista and violent colonization. Augustine even seemed to have their biblical justification at hand: *compelle intrare* (compel [force] people to come in)[29]. This command is taken from Jesus' parable of the feast (Lk 14:15–24). When the invited guests did not come and, having then invited the poor and sick, the hall still could not be filled, the head of the house ordered his servants to invite people from the streets outside the city: yes, the servants should "force" them "to enter" (Lk 14:23). Augustine derived from this verse the possible legitimacy of using violence in order to bring the Donatists, a then-active heterodox group, which had declared that the effect of the sacrament depended upon the holiness of its minister, back into the one Church. In the Middle Ages similar arguments had been used regarding heretics. Augustine's interpretation, which had been applied to heterodox Christians, was now applied to a colonial-ethical discourse and served to justify the use of violence against the Indians, who were non-Christian. A prominent example of this is the legal and missionary theology of the humanist Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda (1494–1573).

Having translated Aristotle, Sepúlveda was extremely familiar with his arguments regarding slaves by nature and tried to apply this classification to the indigenous peoples of the New World. A sign of the barbaric status of these, as he put it, *homunculi*, is their *impia religio*, their blasphemous idolatry[30]. This

29 Regarding the concept of "compelle entrare", cf. Joseph Höffner: *Christentum und Menschenwürde. Das Anliegen der spanischen Kolonialethik im goldenen Zeitalter*, Trier 1947, pp. 38–44, pp. 169–170.

30 Cf. Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda: *Democrates secundus / Zweiter Demokrates* (Politische Philosophie und Rechtstheorie des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit), Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 2018, lib. I, 11, p. 66: Dixi de ingenio et moribus barbarorum; de impia vero ipsorum religione et nefariis sacrificiis quid dicam? Qui cum daemonia pro Deo coleret, hunc nullis sacrificiis aeque placari putabant ac cordibus humanis. – I have already spoken of the power of reason and the customs of the barbarians. And yet, we have not spoken a word about their sacrilegious

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blasphemy is, for Sepúlveda, the first ground for war. Here, the Pauline notion of natural knowledge of God is interpreted to mean a reflective and religiously practiced monotheism and thus serves as an argument against the Indians. Should non-Christians realize the monotheism described by Paul, namely, the theoretical and religious-cultic acknowledgement of God as the one and only creator and, consequently, the adoption of a moral way of life in accordance with the laws of nature, there would be no grounds for war against non-Christians[31]. Sepúlveda cites Greek philosophers like Plato and Aristotle as prominent examples of such "good pagans". This noble paganism is, in Sepúlveda's opinion, not present among the *homunculi* of the *novus mundus*, as their idolatry, human sacrifice and cannibalism make evident. Thus, they must be subjugated by the baptized Spaniards, thereby allowing their underdeveloped reason to participate in Spanish intelligence and Christian religion in order to integrate them into Spanish society and to elevate their level of humanity. Though this may be difficult to understand from today's perspective, the intention of Sepulveda's arguments is to realize a humanistic goal: "If, in the course of time, they become more civilized and a more decent way of life and the Christian religion is consolidated among them with this rule, they will become freer and should be treated more liberally."[32]

religion or sinful sacrifices: since they worshippe the devil as God, they believed that no sacrifice would appease him better than human hearts.

31 Cf. Sepúlveda: *Democrates Secundus*, lib. I, 12., p. 76: "Pagani,… qui nihil aliud, peius sunt quam pagani, et quibus nihil obiici potest, nisi quod non sunt christiani, quae infidelitas nominatur, nulla causa est, qua iuste possint christianorum armis infestari atque puniri. Ut si qua gens in Orbe Novo reperiretur culta, civilis et humana, non idolorum cultrix, sed quae Deum verum duce natura veneraretur, Quaeque sine lege ea, quae legis sunt", ut verbis utar Pauli, "naturaliter faceret", nec tamen lege uteretur Evangelica, ne haberet fidem Christi, ut hac ratione debeat infidelis nominari. Huiusmodi ergo gentibus istud recentiorum theologorum, quos citasti, decretum videri potest in causa belli suffragari, ut propter nullam infidelitatis culpam iure possint puniendi gratia a christianis principibus illatis armis oppugnari. – If the heathen are nothing worse than heathens, … so that nothing else can be accused of them but that they are not Christians, in which case we are speaking here of unbelief, there is no reason for which they could justly be attacked and punished by the armed force of the Christians; so that if a civilized, decent and educated people were discovered in the New World, who did not adhere to idolatry, but worshiped the true God according to natural insight and without law, "naturally fulfilled", to use Paul's phrase, everything "which is in accordance with the law", even though they are neither subject to the law of the New Covenant nor have faith in Christ, and would, from this point of view, have to be called unbelievers, so that- as far as peoples of this sort are concerned – one could rightly mention the view of newer theologians about the ability to justify war, namely, that they, being blameless for their unbelief, cannot rightly be fought by Christian rulers, with the use arms, as punishment.

32 Sepúlveda: *Democrates Secundus*, lib. II, 8, p. 210, 212: Nam temporis progressu cum iidem fuerint humaniores facti et probitas morum ac religio christiana cum imperio confirmata, liberius erunt liberaliusque tractandi. See, in particular, Horst Pietschmann's article 'Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda und die amerikanischen Ureinwohner', in: Bartolomé de Las Casas:

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Thus, Sepúlveda can formulate a positive anthropology which has room for a concept of the pagan who advances by means of rationality to a reflective monotheism, ordering its life according to the moral laws of nature. Such an optimistic anthropology appears quite far from that of Augustine. On the other hand, this optimistic anthropology makes only all the more clear the abysmal distance between Hellenistic antiquity and the pre- Colombian America. This distance is the justification for violence against the latter's inhabitants.

5 Las Casas: polytheism and human sacrifice as natural knowledge of God

A response to Sepúlveda's approach required that the criteriological understanding of natural knowledge of God be redefined. Such a redefinition was undertaken by Sepúlveda's opponent, with whom he met in 1550–1551 during the famous debates about the enslavement of the Indians in Valladolid, the Dominican Bartolomé de Las Casas (1484–1566). After his *metanoia* from encomienda owner to advocate of the Indians and with his entrance into the Dominican Order (1522), Las Casas came into contact with the philosophy and theology of Thomas of Aquinas. Las Casas' understanding of divine knowledge is clearly manifest in his text *Apologia* (1551) as well as in his *Apologética historia sumaria* (1553–1559)[33].

5.1 The Aristotelian criteria of civilization: religion

In order to prove that the Indians are by nature full-fledged human beings and not slaves, Las Casas invokes the criteria for the existence of civilization in the form of a Polis-community, as laid down by Aristotle. The fifth of Aristotle's criteria for the existence of a civil society is the presence of religion[34]. In order to prove that the indigenous peoples are human beings it does not, however, suffice to merely point out a religious phenomenon. For, according to Sepúlveda, this

Werkauswahl 1: Missionstheologische Schriften, [ed. by Mariano Delgado], Paderborn 1994, pp. 86–96; here, p. 96.

33 Cf. Bartolomé de Las Casas: *Apología*, [ed. by Ángel Losada], Madrid 1975, 83v–92v; pp. 201–210; *Apologética historia sumaria* (1566), [ed. by Edmund O'Gorman (1967)], Fundación El Libro Total. https://www.ellibrototal.com/ltotal/?t=1&d=4072_4167_1_1_4072 (Oct., 20th 2020), cap. 71.

34 Cf. Aristotle: *The Politics,* [transl. by T. Sinclair, ed. by Trevor Saunders] Harmondsworth 1992, VII, 7 and 8 (1328b–1329b); Las Casas: *Apologética historia sumaria*, cap. 71; Bartolomé de Las Casas: *Werkauswahl*, *vol. 2: Historische und ethnographische Schriften*, [ed. by Mariano Delgado], Paderborn 1995, p. 382.

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religion must have achieved the level of a reflected and ritually practiced monotheism. The only other possibility is to successfully redefine natural knowledge of God such that the Indians' idolatry and human sacrifices do not contradict this definition. It is precisely this possibility, on which Las Casas focused all his efforts.

5.2 Diffuse knowledge of God

Beginning with Aristotle, Cicero and Thomas of Aquinas, Las Casa metaphorically speaks of the natural light of the intellect (*lumber natural intellectual*) sufficient to apprehend "that God exists"[35]. But this knowledge does not follow directly from the word "God", since a "conocimiento 'simple'"[36] is not accessible to human beings based only on the concept of God. Like Thomas, Las Casas rejects the Anselmic proof of God[37]: The concept of an essence, greater than which cannot be thought (*aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari potest*), does not guarantee the insight that this essence must also exist. Thomas explains that the Anselmian proof merely informs us that the concept of this greatest essence is in our thought. But, this does not prove whether it also exists in reality independently of our thought. Such a proof, which proceeds from the essence or nature of God, is impossible because the essence or nature of God is not directly accessible to humans. Therefore, this essence cannot serve as a basis for their arguments[38].

Las Casas gives another example. Even if one traces various activities that are typical for humans back to the soul alone, it remains unclear what exactly this

35 Las Casas: *Apologética historia sumaria*, cap. 71: De aquí fue poner la benignidad divina en cada ánima de los hombres al instante de su creación una lumbre natural intellectual y cognoscimiento por ella puesto, que confuso y juntamente [es] un ímpetu, por otro nombre apetitu, e inclinación natural de cognoscer que hay Dios y criador, y que se debe buscar para le servir e adorar como a Dios y señor, como sea principio del ser de toda criatura, porque todas las cosas criadas tienen natural inclinación y apetitu y deseo de se ayuntar como a su fin con su principio en cuanto les es posible.

36 Las Casas: *Apología* 85v. (cap. 18, p. 203); S.th. I 2, 1.

37 Anselm of Canterbury: *Proslogion* 2; Las Casas: *Apología* 83 v. (cap. 17, p. 201); *Apologética historia sumaria*, cap. 71.

38 S.th. I 2, 1 ad 2. In their criticism of Anselm, Thomas Aquinas and Las Casas overlook his Platonic ontology, which in itself also plays an important role in Thomas' philosophy of being. According to it, the knowledge of being implies a knowledge of all its degrees, even the highest degree and perfection, of absolute existence, which is identical with an unsurpassable essence. If being simply means being, then any relation to non-being and a limitation is excluded. That is why limited finite being – as being – gives a hint to absolute and most perfect being, without any limitation (God). Cf. Jens Halfwassen: 'Sein als uneingeschränkte Fülle. Zur Vorgeschichte des ontologischen Gottesbeweises im antiken Platonismus', in: *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 56 (2002), pp. 497–516.

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soul is – whether it is part of the body or how and in what way it carries out these activities. Similarly, the knowledge of God's nature remains inaccurate. One can only recognize it by a similarity of relations, not directly[39].

Additionally, Las Casas cites the *Summa theologiae*, according to which knowledge of God is implanted in us only *sub quídam confusione naturaliter*,[40] as well as the example of Thomas, who compares the indistinct knowledge of God with the knowledge of a human person, who is still too far away for us to know exactly who it is – and that it is indeed Peter[41].

Las Casas argues that the cognitive ability to recognize God is complemented by a voluntative dynamic: just like every creature, the human being is intended, in its *natural inclinación*, *apetitu* and *deseo*, to unite itself (*se ayuntar*) with the origin, since this is also its end (*su fin*). But even the natural *desiderium* for happiness, which Thomas – in accordance with Aristotle – assigns to every human being, does not lead with certainty to a clear knowledge of God, since, for many, the highest happiness lies, for example, in pleasure. And, for Las Casas, it is precisely the Spaniards who confirm Thomas' assessment: gold is their god[42]. How, therefore, if it is not even unambiguously clear to Christians, who or what God really is and on whom or what one can stake one's life in an existential sense, can one demand this knowledge from the indigenous people?

Highly decisive for Las Casas is the consideration, to which we now turn, which even justifies polytheism as a kind of natural knowledge of God. The Dominican summarizes Thomas' consideration of the natural knowledge of God in the *Summa contra Gentiles* as follows.

5.3 One or Many

According to the passage quoted from *Summa contra Gentiles*, lib. III, cap. 38[43], an *ordinator naturae* can be assumed to be present, if natural things take place in an orderly manner[44]. However, according to Thomas, this classical teleological

39 Las Casas: *Apología*, 85v. (cap. 18, p. 203).

40 Las Casas: *Apologética historia sumaria*, cap. 71, Thomas von Aquin, *S.th.* I, 2, 1 ad 1: "cognoscere Deum esse in aliquo communi, sub quadam confusione est nobis naturaliter insertum." *Apologética historia sumaria,* cap. 71.

41 S.th. I 2 1 ad 1 / Las Casas: *Apología*, 85v. (cap. 18, p. 203); *Apologética historia sumaria,* cap. 71.

42 Cf. Gustavo Gutierrez: *Dios o el oro en las Indias*, Salamanca 1990.

43 Inquirendum autem relinquitur in quali Dei cognitione ultima felicitas substantiae intellectualis consistit. Est enim quaedam communis et confusa Dei cognitio, quae quasi omnibus hominibus adest: sive hoc sit per hoc quod Deum esse sit per se notum, sicut alia demonstrationis principia, sicut quibusdam videtur, ut in primo libro dictum est; sive, quod magis verum videtur, quia naturali ratione statim homo in aliqualem Dei cognitionem per-

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argument for God's existence, which even Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) would later call the most honourable and convincing of proofs, does not entirely clarify whether the orderer of created things is a transcendent God in the sense of monotheistic religions or a team of creating gods: "Quis autem, vel qualis, vel si unus tantum est ordinator naturae, nondum statim ex hac communi consideratione habetur…" Las Casas writes, paraphrasing Thomas, "*quién sea o cuál sea, o si uno o si muchos sean los que ordenan las cosas naturales, no lo pueden luego cognoscer por sólo este universal y confuso cognoscimiento*" (Whoever or whatever it is, or if those who order the natural things are one or many, cannot be grasped by this universal and confused cognition alone)[45].

Las Casas uses Thomas' explication of the limited reach of natural reason in the field of divine knowledge as an argument in order to make the Indian's polytheism comprehensible as a kind of natural knowledge of God. As polytheists, they fulfill both the fifth Aristotelian criteria for a complete civilization as well as the requirement that this religion be rational.

5.4 Las Casas' interpretation of Paul

In addition, Las Casas takes the liberty of contextualizing the passage from the Letter to the Romans regarding natural knowledge of God, a contextualization which Sepúlveda's interpretation basically invited. According to Sepulveda, it is philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle who establish a rational monotheism. With their reflections, they prove the natural ability of humans to know God. For Las Casas, however, the real problem presents itself in the reference to Greek philosophy. In order for a culture to achieve the natural knowledge of God in the sense of a reflected monotheism, one needs thinkers at the intellectual level of

venire potest. Videntes enim homines res naturales secundum ordinem certum currere; cum ordinatio absque ordinatore non sit, percipiunt, ut in pluribus, aliquem esse ordinatorem rerum quas videmus. *Quis autem, vel qualis, vel si unus tantum est ordinator naturae, nondum statim ex hac communi consideratione habetur:* sicut, cum videmus hominem moveri et alia opera agere, percipimus ei inesse quandam causam harum operationum quae aliis rebus non inest, et hanc causam animam nominamus; nondum tamen scientes quid sit anima, si est corpus, vel qualiter operationes praedictas efficiat.

44 Las Casas: *Apologética historia sumaria*, cap 71: "Por esto decimos que aquel cognoscimiento que por la lumbre natural alcanzamos de Dios es muy confuso. Y que sea alguno aunque confuso, Sancto Tomás [da] la razón en el libro III, capítulo 38, Contra gentiles, y es ésta, porque por la lumbre natural impresa en nuestras ánimas, el hombre fácilmente puede venir en algún cognoscimiento universal y confuso de Dios, desta manera: que viendo los hombres las cosas naturales correr y perseverar ordenada y ciertamente, como la orden no puede ser ni haber sin ordenador que [la] ponga, conciben por la mayor parte los hombres haber alguno que las que vemos ordene…"

45 Ibid.

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Aristotle. Not without irony, Las Casas notes that even Aristotle had to write many books in order to finally reach a first immobile, immaterial substance in his metaphysics. Reflected monotheism is therefore anything but self-evident – despite the human capacity for natural knowledge of God. Without an Aristotle or the light of faith, we would never have gotten beyond a vague knowledge of God[46].

With Paul's Letter to the Romans in mind, Las Casas therefore argues that the real pagans or other human beings, who, the Apostle claims, have recognized God, are the Greeks and Romans, whose philosophers had already taught them about monotheism. It is precisely because they had the chance to overcome both polytheism as well as all idolatry and yet did not do so that Paul can view this failure as inexcusable. This was not so in the case of the Indians. According to Las Casas, the apostle's statement regarding the natural knowledge of God and a culpable failure to live according to this knowledge does not refer to them or other "common mortals"[47]. Las Casas argues that their polytheism is a natural phenomenon, the product of a '*natural filosofía*', which the Spanish have interpreted incorrectly due to their lack of linguistic and cultural knowledge[48].

5.5 Nature and second Nature

In order to emphasize the basic human or natural elements in the idolatry of the Indians, Las Casas employs a second meaning of the concept of human nature, which can already be found in Hieronymus and Augustine, and which Las Casas explicitly attributes to Aristotle. In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle notes ὅμοιον γάρ τι τὸ

46 Las Casas: *Apologética historia sumaria*, cap. 71: "So that there is God or some cause that governs the world, it is confusingly understood by humans, or then with some little discourse and consideration, since what it is or what properties and excellencies it has and suits it, or whether they are many or one, cannot be known or understood except by the light of faith, and something of it after much and great study and demonstration, like what Aristotle achieved."

47 Cf. Las Casas: *Apología*, 85v–86 (cap. 18, p. 203): "En cuanto a la autoridad de San Pablo, es de señalar que habla de los filósofos que, teniendo el conocimiento de Dios, no lo utilizaron para el bien, sino que se hicieron necios. Dichos filósofos supieron que Dios era un ser excelso por encima de todas las cosas; de esta manera debían tributarle el honor y la gloria… ahora bien, habiendo conocido así a Dios no le glorificaron como Dios… Es cierto que lo anterior [the natural knowledge of the unique God] no debe aplicarse a todos los comunes mortales; por eso a éstos no se refiere el Apóstol." Mariano Delgado: 'Gottes Weisheit und Güte als theologischer Verstehens- und Handlungshorizont. Von der Aktualität der Missionstheologie des Bartolomé de Las Casas', in: *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 76 (1992), pp. 285–300, here p. 292.

48 Las Casas: *Apologética historia sumaria*, cap. 103.

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ἔθος τῇ φύσει ("The ethos/habit is, in a way, similar to nature."[49] What is meant is a habit, a habitus, that can become a deeply embedded second nature. If "*consuetudo similis est natura,*" Las Casas writes, "*ideo difficile est ipsam mutare*"[50]. The Dominican understands the religion of the Old Americans as a second nature and habitus – as something natural, from which humans can hardly be dissuaded. In light of this habitual nature of religion, a conversion to Christianity seems something almost unnatural or even miraculous. At the same time, the theology of sin uses the term of second nature to express the original sinful burden borne by every human being. Las Casas also refers to this hamartiological semantics. Through the theological explanation of the idolatry as a result of original sin, the advocate of the Indians represents its perversity, but also the plain fact that idolatry is found everywhere, which, in turn, means the Indians are not personally guilty for their religious practice[51].

5.6 Positive Aspects of the Indigenous Religion

Las Casas also offers other arguments for a positive evaluation of the indigenous peoples' knowledge of God and their religion. When the indigenous people praise finite realities such as the sun, moon and earth, they do so in a thoroughly rational way: for, even in Christian creation theology, these cosmic objects symbolize the life-giving reality and care of the creator[52]. While Las Casas remains traditional in his view of idolatry as the deceptive work of the devil, he also argues that the devil is forced to make use of creation's positive characteristics and powerful symbols, which point to the creator, in order to create idols. Seen in this way, the indigenous veneration of celestial bodies, stones or water as idols indirectly acknowledges their real creator.

Las Casas makes further plausible his positive understanding of the indigenous religion by analyzing the pre-Columbian pantheons and showing how they attest to the Indians' reason and their power of judgment when choosing

49 Aristotles: *Rhetorik. Griechisch-Deutsch*, [transl. and ed. by Gernot Krapinger], Stuttgart 2018, p. 100. The Art of Rhetoric (I 11–1369b).

50 Las Casas: *Apologética historia sumaria*, cap. 74.

51 Ibid., cap. 103; cap. 74; cf. *Werkauswahl* 2: 398.

52 Ibid., cap. 126: "Decían también que el sol era el principal criado de Dios, y que es el que habla y significa lo que Dios manda. Y no iban en esto muy lejos de la verdad, porque ninguna criatura (sacados los ángeles y los hombres) así representa los atributos y excelencias de Dios (según Sant Dionisio, 4° de los Divinos nombres) como el sol. Y así, como tenga y produzca tan excelentes y diversos efectos, ¿qué otra cosa parece sino manifestar y publicar los excelencias y operaciones que en estas cosas criadas obra el Criador y verdadero Dios? Por lo cual lo sirvían y honraban y ofrecían sacrificio; pero primero y principalmente a Condíti Viracocha, Hacedor del Mundo, como a señor de todo."

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their Gods[53]. The Greeks and the Romans, however, so highly esteemed by Sepúlveda, are given lower scores: whoever cultivates the intoxicating wine cult of Bacchus, slurs irrationally[54]. Many of the antique Gods are of dubious moral character and the rationally recognized God of the philosophers is nowhere to be found in their myths. In contrast, the Andean myth of Viracocha, the creator of all reality, appears to Las Casas to be more rational[55].

5.7 The "Naturality" of Human Sacrifice and Cannibalism

Yet, Las Casas' religious hermeneutics dare to go even further. He suggests that not only polytheism, but also human sacrifice and cannibalism are natural phenomena. He untiringly lists witnesses who report cultic human sacrifice and anthropophagi in Europe. He cites the practice of human sacrifice as documented in the Old Testament. The anthropological explanation for this reportedly so disgusting practice is obvious: natural knowledge of God implies recognition of the fact that the human being should be thankful to the creator for all things and that it connects this thanks to a gift. This gift, cannot, however, be just anything. "…nuestro entendimiento y razón natural juzga y nos enseña naturalmente y dicta que a Dios debemos ofrecer cuando le ofreciéremos lo mejor y más precioso que tuviéremos, y esto con summo cuidado y diligencia, y así es de ley natural" (…our natural understanding and reason makes judgments and naturally teaches us and dictates that we should offer to God, when we offer Him, the best and most precious thing we have, and this with great care and

53 Las Casas: *Apologética historia sumaria*, cap. 127: "en la elección de los dioses tuvieron más razón y discreción y honestidad que las más de todas cuantas naciones idólatras antiguamente hobo, bárbaros, griegos y romanos." See cap. 103, 121.

54 Ibid., cap. 3.

55 Las Casas: *Apologética historia sumaria*, cap. 126. Addionally: The idea that Viracocha brought forth a son who, however, turned away from his divine father and added negative elements to the creation of humans, also makes sense to Las Casas: This myth refers to the sin of angels who seduce human beings: "Decían que este dios [*Viracocha*], estaba en el cabo postrero del mundo, y que desde allí lo miraba, gobernaba y proveía todo; al cual tenían por dios y señor y le ofrecían los principales sacrificios. Afirmaban que tuvo un hijo muy malo, antes que criase las cosas, que tenía por nombre *Tagnapica Viracocha*, y éste contradecía al padre en todas las cosas, porque el padre hacía los hombres buenos y él los hacía malos en los cuerpos y e las ánimas; el padre hacía montes y él los hacía llanos, y los llanos convertía en montes; las fuentes que el padre hacía, él las secaba, y, finalmente, en todo era contrario al padre; por lo cual, el padre, muy enojado, lo lanzó en la mar para que mala muerte muriese, pero que nunca murió. Parece aquesta fición o imaginación significar la caída del primer ángel malo, hijo de Dios por la criación, pero malo por su elación, siempre contrario de Dios, su criador. Fue lanzado en la mar, según aquello de *Apocalipsi*, capítulo 20: *Diabolus missus est in stagnum*, etcétera."

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diligence, and so it is of natural law)[56]. The naturally sensible conclusion is that the best and most valuable thanks which can be given is human sacrifice.

The point of La Casas' reflections is clear: human sacrifices do not contradict natural moral law, but rather accord with it and with natural knowledge of God. Las Casas turns Sepúlveda's argument upside down.

Furthermore, Las Casas praises the noble attitude manifest in the willingness for human sacrifice, as well as other virtues which are behind the complex preparations for completion of the sacrifice (fasting, prayer, etc.)[57]. His argumentation reaches its climax in his recommendation to adopt these attitudes and virtues into the Church's codex of behavior[58]. Naturally, Las Casas never recommends the practice of human sacrifice. But, without further cultural development and, above all, without divine instruction and positive laws which forbid ritual human sacrifice, this practice will, in his opinion, never be permanently overcome – it is too natural. Thus, mission is advisable.

That this mission must operate on the grounds of argumentative reason is self-evident based on what has been said. In his pastoral theological text, *De unico vocationis modo omnium gentium ad veram religionem* (ca. 1522–1523), Las Casas explains the necessity and form of this mission and its arguments[59].

With his reflections on culturally and religiously determined forms of natural knowledge of God, including polytheism and human sacrifice, Las Casas not only succeeds in providing a positive evaluation of the indigenous religion and in affirming in the indigenous people a human nature that demands respect and a mission based on arguments, not on violence. Instead, he develops – from a Christian point of view – a philosophy of religion with an interreligious and intercultural dimension.

56 Las Casas: *Apologética historia sumaria*, cap. 183; cf. *Werkauswahl* 2: 438; Thomas von Aquin, ScG III, S.th. II–II, q. 85, a. 1c. cf. *Apologética historia sumaria*, cap. 143.

57 Ibid., cap. 188 / *Werkauswahl* 2: pp. 452–454.

58 Ibid.: *Apologética historia sumaria*, cap. 191: "…en tanto grado eran todos los actos y obras que en el culto de sus dioses hacían honestos y decentes y de toda vileza, falsedad y deshonestidad desnudos v limpios, que, quitados los sacrificios horrendos y sangrientos que ofrecían, que nuestra religión cristiana y ley dulce y suave de Jesucristo prohibe, y algunas cerimonias y actos que parecía enderezarse a los ídolos, todo lo demás, de hacerse y complirse dentro de nuestra universal iglesia, aprenderse dellos era dignísimo." / *Werkauswahl* 2: p. 464; Mariano Delgado: 'Missionierendes Christentum und indianische Religionen im Entdeckungszeitalter', in: Mariano Delgado / Volker Leppin / David Neuhold (eds.): *Schwierige Toleranz. Der Umgang mit Andersdenkenden und Andersgläubigen in der Christentumsgeschichte*, Fribourg/Stuttgart 2012, pp. 181–203, here p. 197.

59 Cf. Delgado: 'Gottes Weisheit', pp. 294–296.

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6 The North American Las Casas: Roger Williams

Not surprisingly, Las Casas' pioneering insights did not escape Protestant thinkers. In North America, they were not only known, but also became part of a discussion which mirrored that between Las Casas and Sepúlveda in a Protestant context[60].

In order to make clear their superiority over the indigenous people, Puritans in New England developed a *covenant theology* and metaphor of exodus based on the Old Testament. According to the US-American historian Garrett Mattingly (1900–1962), a Puritan convent passed the following resolution in 1640: "1. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. Voted. 2. The Lord may give the earth or any part of it to His chosen people. Voted. 3. We are His chosen people. Voted". Commenting with bitter irony on this resolution, in which he nonetheless identifies an ecumenical *magnus consensus* of international legal character, Mattingly writes: "With more sophistication, Papists and Convenanters, Spaniards and Dutchmen, Frenchmen and Englishmen, Austrians and Swedes all employed much the same argument."[61] The prominent Quaker, John Archdale (1642–1717), saw the work of God's providential hand in the Indians' decline in population due to disease and genocide: "the Hand of God was eminently seen in thinning the Indians, to make room for the English…"[62].

In opposition to the so-called *Preparationists*, John Cotton (1585–1652)[63], the distinguished theologian of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, developed an extreme, Augustinian "free-grace theology" which contested the possibility of any preparation for the reception of grace. Cotton preached "the doctrine of God's eternal election; the effectual calling of the sinner by irresistible grace"[64]. The thesis of an *irresistible grace* prevented both any positive estimation of a natural disposition to receive grace, such as natural knowledge of God, as well as any religious-philosophical estimation of the indigenous people's idea of gods, their religiosity and their culture. It thus comes as no surprise that those who saw the Indians as nothing other than savages of a demonic religion also denied them the right to property.

The Puritan Roger Williams (1603–1683) opposed this opinion held by the majority of Puritans. The Spanish-Mexican historian Juan A. Ortega y Medina

60 Cf. Delgado: 'Gemeinsamkeiten', p. 277, note 46.

61 Garrett Mattingly: *Renaissance Diplomacy*, Baltimore/Maryland 1955, p. 251.

62 Cf. Lewis Hanke: *Aristotle and the American Indians. A Study in Race Prejudice in the Modern World.* Chicago/Illinois 1959, p. 100.

63 Cf. Gerald R. McDermott: Art. 'Cotton, John', in: Hans Dieter Betz a.o. (eds.): *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, vol. 2, Tübingen 1999, p. 474.

64 A.W. McClure: *John Cotton. Patriarch of New England* (1846), [ed. by Nate Pickowicz. Peterborough], Ontario (Canada) 2019, p. 22.

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(1913–1992) is convinced that Williams had read Las Casas' *Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* and been inspired by the Dominican's cause to protect the Indians[65]. Like Las Casas, he sees no difference between the humanity of the Europeans and that of the indigenous Americans. He writes, "Nature knowes no difference between Europe and Americans in blood, birth, bodies. God having of one blood made all mankind, *Acts 17*"[66].

Williams studied Narraganset, the language of a people living in Rhode Island, compiling his knowledge of the language in his book, *A Key Into the Language of America*.

Attesting to the indigenous belief in the creator of the world, Manít[67], Williams argues that this belief does not, however, exclude the possibility that the Indians see the Englishman's God as the creator of the English and the sky and earth of England. In other words, knowledge of God is understood polytheistically. Furthermore, Williams explains how *Manít* manifests himself in the remarkable phenomena of nature and human life, writing, "…at the apprehension of any Excellency in Men, Women, Birds, Beats, Fish, etc." one calls out "Manittóo"[68]. Imitating biblical and hymnal language, Williams summarizes this idea in the following terms: "*Praesentem narrat quaelibet herba Deum*, Every little Grasse doth tell, The sons of Men, there God doth dwell."[69] Like Las Casas, Williams is capable of identifying traces of the Judaic-Christian story of creation in the Indians' animistic ideas. Nor does he proclaim death sentences for cannibalism, as this practice does not necessarily stand "against God's call"[70]. In the same way as Las Casas, he underscores the necessity of an argumentative conversion.

For supporting a freedom of conscience which applied to all religious confessions, the Puritan majority exiled Williams from the Massachusetts colony. In Rhode Island, he organized an egalitarian community of all ethnic and religious groups in the settlement he founded with the name Providence. Like many Catholic missionaries, he hoped for the establishment of an Indian church. Williams' plans did not last long. During the revolts of various Indian peoples against the loss of their land and identity to the colonists, the so-called King Philip's War, Williams saw his settlement Providence go up in flames in 1676. With this war, the Puritan attempt to proselytize the Indians and integrate them

65 Juan A. Ortega y Medina: *La Evangelización Puritana en Norteamerica*, México D.F. 1976, p. 99; on Roger Williams, see pp. 93–101.

66 Roger Williams: *The Complete Writings*, vol. I. Paris, Arkansas 2005, p. 81. More particularly: "Boast not proud English, of thy birth & blood, Thy brother Indian is by birth as Good. Of one blood God made Him and Thee & All, As wise, as faire, as strong, as personal".

67 Williams: *Writings I*, pp. 147–148.

68 Ibid., p. 150.

69 Ibid., p. 150.

70 Ibid., p. 77.

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into society came to an end. In modern times, theologians like Roger Williams and their contribution to North American identity are a source of pride[71].

7 Summary: interconfessional alliances and the intercultural philosophy of religion

In summary, the religious-philosophical question of a natural knowledge of God, as posed in the missionary theologies of Protestant and Catholic provenance, is defined by the difference between a stricter and a milder Augustinianism.

Stricter Augustinianism emphasizes the possibility of a natural knowledge of God grounded in the human being's reason, and does so with the purpose of revealing the failure of this natural knowledge as manifest in the indigenous peoples' idolatry. This concrete failure is intended to make clear the inexcusability and negative predestination of the pre-Columbian Americans.

In contrast, a more moderate Augustinianism can evaluate the indigenous peoples' knowledge of God and their religion positively. Polytheism, idolatry and human sacrifice are understood as cultural manifestations of a natural knowledge of God.

What makes the positive evaluation of the indigenous people's knowledge of God problematic or even impossible is the equation of a natural knowledge of God with the criteria of a reflective monotheism. Ultimately, an anthropological optimism regarding a natural knowledge of God in terms of reflected monotheism reveals itself to be an extreme form of Augustinianism which can also be used to legitimize the use of violence.

But, the confessional difference between the respective missionary theologies can also take on an ecumenical form, bringing together and drawing upon different confessions. A strictly Augustinian missionary theology connects the Catholic Sepúlveda, the Quaker John Archdale and the Puritan John Cotton with one another, while moderate Augustinianism unites the Catholic Manuel da Nóbrega and Bartolomé de Las Casas with the Lutheran Johann Balthasar Lüderwald and the Puritan, and later Baptist, Roger Williams, while the Huguenot Jean de Léry is claimed by both sides. This openness of the confessional boundaries allows for interaction in the field of ecumenical and interreligious philosophy of religion concerning natural knowledge of God in religions and cultures.

Las Casas' interpretation of Thomas shows the historical and cultural conditions that must be taken into account, when investigating natural knowledge of

71 Cf. John M. Barry: *Roger Williams and The Creation of the American Soul. Church, State, and the Birth of Liberty*, New York 2012.

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God and which make very clear just how far removed from the Thomistic position Sepulveda's assessment of the knowledge of God is. Indeed, even the neo-scholastic understanding of the natural knowledge of God dogmatized by the First Vaticanum should be reread in light of the aspects that Las Casas highlights in his interpretation of Thomas and Paul.

The Catholic philosopher Gustav Siewerth speaks of the historicity of natural knowledge of God[72]; he thereby underlines the numerous cultural conditions that particularly favor or hinder the realization of the knowledge of God. Since the human being is by nature a cultural being, its natural capacity for the knowledge of God can also be called cultural. In positive terms, this means that every culture also contains a manifestation of this natural capacity for knowing God. Whether these religions contain or "reflect a ray of that Truth", Jesus Christ, "which enlightens all men", as explained from the Catholic point of view by the Second Vatican Council[73], i. e. whether the natural knowledge of God is also the result of the enlightenment by Christ, need not be discussed here in this religion-philosophical context. Las Casas' demonstration of the presence of a natural knowledge of God in an indigenous culture and religion is truly impressive. Even if 16th-century theologians labelled indigenous religions, in particular, a product of demonic infiltration, some were able to recognize them as points of reference for the proclamation of the Gospel[74], recognizing an indigenous knowledge of the transcendent and divine. In this sense, we have returned to Cicero's ever-relevant ethno-theological observation, "that no people is so primitive, no nation so barbaric and savage that one could not identify a feeling on their part that there is some divinity."

Even if for some people the divine is identified with gold, as was the case for the Spaniards, according to Las Casas, the unconditionality with which gold is desired in a perverted, "demonic" way still indicates an openness to the unconditional and absolute. Or, to take Martin Luther's (1483–1546) neat wording: "I say, whatever your heart clings to and confides in, that is really your God."[75]

The task of an intercultural and interreligious philosophy of religion is to sound out, in conversation with cultures and religions, who or what comes into question as that to which one's heart rightly clings and on which one can build

72 Cf. Gustav Siewerth: *Das Schicksal der Metaphysik von Thomas zu Heidegger*, Freiburg 2003, p. 67–70; pp. 644–646, 654–667.

73 Declaration on the Relation of the Church to non-Christian Religions *Nostra Aetate* (October 28, 1965), no. 2. http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra- aetate_en.html.

74 Manuel Marzal: 'Introducción', in: Manuel Marzal et altri (ed.): *Rostros Indios de Dios. Los Amerindios Cristianos*, ed., Quito 1991, pp. 9–31, here p. 10.

75 Martin Luther in: *Luther's Large Catechism: God's Call to Repentance, Faith and Prayer,* [trans. By John Nicholas Lenker], Minneapolis 1908, p. 44.

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one's life, in other words, who or what a God might be that one could naturally recognize in a religion and culture.

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Christian Mission and Acquisition of Faith – Notes on José de Acosta's Evangelical-Realist Method

Introduction

In the colonial period, Latin America was a key historical context for the realization of Christian missions and theological reflection on evangelization and the missionary task of the Church[1]. For contemporary critical eyes, the missions for the propagation of faith and the corresponding theological syntheses are, no doubt, surrounded by a large number of contradictions – such as, for example, the legitimation of land conquest, the incredibly violent process of conquest and colonization, and the adoption, for many centuries, of the model of Christendom, in which political expansion and economic development mixed with christianization (and vice-versa) – that have placed permanent (and thick) shadows of suspicion over any possibility that the Church's activities might also have merits.

Precisely in this context, the work *De procuranda indorum salute* by the Jesuit theologian José de Acosta (1540–1600) plays a central role. This study will argue that it is possible to revisit it without denying these shadows of distrust, while still granting the benefit of doubt to what we may learn from it. The image of Acosta's intelligence regarding the principles and the methods of Christian mission,

1 Some important summaries of the history of the Church and the Christian missions in Latin America, with different emphases, though as a rule – and rightly so – critical to the internal contradictions of the Christian expansion in the "New World", include, for example, Martin Norberto Dreher: *A Igreja Latino-Americana no contexto mundial*, São Leopoldo 2007; Martin Norberto Dreher: *História do povo de Jesus.Uma leitura latino-americana*, São Leopoldo 2017; Enrique D. Dussel: *Caminhos de libertação latinoamericana*, São Paulo 1985; Hans-Jürgen Prien: *Das Christentum in Lateinamerika*, Leipzig 2007 (Hans-Jürgen Prien: *Christianity in Latin America*, Leiden/Boston 2012 (Revised and Expanded Edition); Paulo Suess: *Evangelizar a partir dos projetos históricos dos outros*, São Paulo 1995; Roberto E. Zwetsch (ed.): *500 anos de missão – 500 anos de resistência*, São Paulo 1992; Roberto E. Zwetsch: *Missão como com-paixão. Por uma teologia da missão em perspectiva latino-americana*, São Leopoldo 2015. For a critical-systematic reflection on the profound relationship between Christian missions, colonization and European imperialism since the beginning of modernity, see, for example, Horst Gründer: *Welteroberung und Christentum – Ein Handbuch zur Geschichte der Neuzeit*, Gütersloh 1992.

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which results from such a rereading, may be surprising.[2] If taken to be well-founded and genuine, the principles and methods formulated by Acosta are not only and not even primarily able to cross over times, but, above all, to nurture a confrontation of ideas in which both assimilation and criticism emerge victorious. Thus, after (1) a brief presentation of the author and his work, and (2) a synthesis of his theses on Christian mission and of the central themes of his reflections on the propagation of faith in the "New World", I shall focus on a different aspect of Acosta's thought, namely (3) his vision of principles and methods for the "unfaithful" Indians' adoption of the new faith. With remarkable ingenuity, Acosta sketches elements of a theory for the acquisition of religious faith or a set of religious beliefs and attitudes. This is only possible, if we obtain (4) some understanding of what religion is or means in a given foreign culture and go about achieving the final goal of missionary activity by means of strategic steps that indicate that the new faith has effectively shaped (anew) the mind of the targets or the recipients of missionary efforts, that is to say, extirpated every form of idolatry from their souls. General objections aside, Acosta's approach, if compared to our own times, can provide intellectual impulses for reflection on the reasons and means by which Christian faith could be adopted by people to whom it is or has become (partially or totally) foreign (Concluding Remarks).

1 José de Acosta and *De procuranda indorum salute*

José de Acosta was born in Medina del Campo (Valladolid), in 1540, and died in Salamanca, in 1600. His education in philosophy and theology took place primarily at the University of Alcalá (Spain), from 1559 to 1567, where he was definitely influenced by the thought of the Salmantine masters of the generation of Francisco de Vitoria O. P. (1483–1546) and the generation following him[3].

2 José de Acosta's theology and methods of Christian mission continue to be studied; see, for example, Ronan Hoffman: *Pioneer Theories of Missiology*, Washington, D. C. 1960, pp. 72–86; José Manuel Paniagua Pascual: *La evangelización de América en las obras del Padre José de Acosta*, 1989; Marcio Aurelio Poli: *Teología y misión en "De procuranda indorum salute" (1588), de José de Acosta. Un método de evangelización para los índios del Perú, siglo XVI. Estudio histórico, teológico y pastoral*, Buenos Aires 1997; José Vicente do Carmo: *A proposta de evangelização de José de Acosta*, Santa Maria 2003. On missiological methods in the 16th century, see, for example, Johann Specker: *Die Missionsmethode in Spanisch-Amerika im 16. Jahrhundert. Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Konzilien und Synoden*, Beckenried 1953; Pedro Borges: *Métodos misionales en la cristianización de América siglo XVI*, Madrid 1960.

3 Cf. Luciano Pereña: 'Proyecto de sociedad colonial pacificación y colonización', in: Acosta, José de: *De procuranda indorum salute. Pacificación y colonización,* Latín – castellano. Madrid 1984, pp. 12–13. On the life and work of José de Acosta, see also Simón Valcárcel Martínez: 'El Padre José de Acosta', in: *Thesaurus* v. XLIV, n. 2 (1989), pp. 389–428, here: pp. 389–397, as well

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Acosta arrived in Lima, Peru, on April 28th, 1572[4]. In the "Ciudad de los Reyes", he was professor of moral theology and of biblical theology at the College of the Jesuits (San Pablo) and at the University of San Marcos, for at least seven years. For twelve years, he was a member of the Court of the Holy Office and, from 1576 to 1581, was also the provincial head of the Jesuits in Peru. Of particular significance is the mention made of his travels into the countryside of the Viceroyalty of Peru – at least three times – as an inspectionary "visitor" (*visitador*), the first of which occurred soon after his arrival, between 1573 and 1574. These trips brought Acosta into direct contact with the life of the indigenous people and the Spanish settlers and, of course, especially with the situation of Catholic missions and the ministry of the Church. It was on the basis of this experience that Acosta elaborated his theology of evangelization[5] of the indigenous people. Acosta would stay in Peru until 1586, when he left for Mexico. In 1588, he returned, permanently, to Europe[6].

Acosta's most impactful theological work[7], his *De promulgatione Evangelii apud Barbaros, sive De procuranda indorum salute*[8], was first written in 1576, but

as León Lopetegui's pioneering work: *El padre José de Acosta S. I. y las misiones*, Madrid 1942. For a circumstantiated biographical report, see also Claudio M. Burgaleta: *José de Acosta, S.J. (1540–1600). His Life and Thought*, Chicago 1999, pp. 3–69.

4 Jesuit missionaries had arrived in Lima, Peru, in 1568; see Josef Schmidlin: *Katholische Missionsgeschichte,* Post Kaldenkirchen 1924, pp. 311ff.; Hans-Jürgen Prien: *Die Geschichte des Christentums*, Göttingen 1978, pp. 151–155. A simple and very useful collection of significant dates in the Christian mission in the Americas has been proposed by Thomas Ohm: *Wichtige Daten der Missionsgeschichte*, Münster 1956, pp. 71–80.

5 In this study, I do not address the problem of a precise distinction between "mission" and "evangelization", though a distinction might well be proposed and, here, moreover, in coherence with José de Acosta's thought, in the following way: if "mission" indicates, in theology, the comprehensive or total task with which God commissions the Church in order to promote the salvation of the world, "evangelization" implies, in a more specific way and as the very core of the Church's mission itself, the proclamation of the kingdom of God both in the person and work of Jesus Christ, who calls the world to repentance of sins and to faith (Mk 1.15).

6 See Valcárcel Martínez: 'El Padre José de Acosta', pp. 394–395.

7 Some notes on the influence and the historical repercussion of José de Acosta's work can be found, for example, in: Jean-Claude Laborie: 'A dispersão do saber missionário sobre as Américas de 1549 a 1610: o exemplo jesuíta', in: *Revista de História* v. 152 (2015), pp. 9–27 (especially pp. 21–26); Michael Sievernich: *Die christliche Mission. Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Buenos Aires 1993, pp. 126–127. Cf. also Robert Streit: *Bibliotheca Missionum*, Münster 1916, p. 73.

8 A literal translation would be *On the Promulgation of the Gospel among the Barbarians, or the Salvation of the Indians to be Sought*; however, paying attention to other meanings of the Latin verb "procuro", "procurare", namely, "to care", "to take care", and to "administrate", a more adequate translation seems to be this: *On the Promulgation of the Gospel among the Barbarians, or the Administration of the Salvation of the Indians.* Cf. José de Acosta: *De a salute – Pacificación y colonización*, Madrid 1984; José de Acosta: *De procuranda indorum salute – Educación y evangelización*, Madrid 1987.

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finally revised and published only in 1588, in Salamanca[9]. It may be noted that, in 1590, Acosta's most popular work and a work of general interest, *Historia natural y moral de las Índias*, was published in Seville and that, in a certain sense, this work can be seen as a prelude to his theological work on evangelization[10]. *De procuranda indorum salute* both gives expression to the Second Council of Lima (1567–1568) and points out fundamental convictions and practices that would later be confirmed and recorded in the Third Council of Lima (1582–1583). Acosta's participation in that famous council[11], called, by the way, by the Archbishop of Lima, Toríbio de Mogrovejo, was very important indeed, above all as a "consultant theologian" and "redactor" of documents and resolutions[12]. Accordingly, we can affirm that the first writings published by Acosta were precisely the catechisms, a sermonary and a confessionary conceived in the context of the Third Council of Lima[13]. There is, at any rate, no doubt that the later published *De procuranda indorum salute* is, essentially, a report in the form of well-reflected observations of the Catholic missions up until about 1576 and a theological reflection about the principles, purposes, and methods of Christian mission applied to the Spanish colonies in Latin America. To really be fair, however, we should add that the work is much more than that. Josep Saranyana finds in it a

9 On the process of writing, revision and, after several censorships, publication of the book, cf. Pereña: 'Proyecto de sociedad colonial pacificación y colonización', pp. 19–28.

10 Cf. Pereña: 'Proyecto de sociedad colonial pacificación y colonización', pp. 5–8. In Acosta's: *Historia natural y moral de las Indias*, (1962; Seville, 1590), we find an exposition, especially in the second part, of the history of human things or actions by the peoples of the New World, above all, the Aztecs and Incas, from the perspective of a *philosophy of history*, ultimately conditioned by a *theology of history* inspired by Augustine. In the end, there is only one human kind and only one world history of human beings, such that, from a historical-salvific and providentialist perspective, the whole of the Indies' natural and moral past is connected to the universal history of salvation. In that history, the arrival of the Spaniards in the New World plays a particular role and the Apostolic Church has a missionary task. Cf. also Roberto H. Pich: *Sobre a filosofia da história de José de Acosta*, Porto 2013, pp. 223–244.

11 R. Richard: 'Chapitre IX – L'expansion missionaire du Portugal et de l'Espagne aux XV^{e} et XVI^{e} siècles', in: Delacroix, Monseigneur S. (ed.): *Histoire universelle des Missions Catholiques – Les Missions des origines au XVI^{e} siècle*, Paris/Monaco 1956, pp. 223–268, here: p. 260) underscores the importance of the Third Council of Lima as a fundamental document for the Catholic Church in South America for the decades to come.

12 Cf. do Carmo: *A proposta de evangelização de José de Acosta*, pp. 79–82.

13 On the other theological works by José de Acosta, cf., for example, Josep Ignasí Saranyana et alii (eds.): *Teología en América Latina – Volumen 1: Desde los orígenes a la Guerra de Sucesión (1493–1715)*, pp. 161–164. Noteworthy are the works *De Christo revelato* (Lyon, 1592) and *De temporibus novissimis*. The first is an example of themes contemplated by José de Acosta in his activity as a professor at the Universidad de San Marcos (Lima), in which the main thesis centers around Christ as the ultimate end of the Scripture and the key principle to understanding the sacred text as a whole and in which Acosta, thus, addresses certain principles of exegesis and correct interpretation of the Bible. The second work is a dogmatic treatise about apocalyptic topics, featuring an interpretation of the Bible's apocalyptic books, above all, the "Book of Revelation" or the "Apocalypse of John".

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summary of Spanish theology as a whole – and especially Salmantine theology – in the 16th century. In this work, Acosta, whose expertise in the Scriptures, Fathers of the Church and scholasticism should be highlighted, discusses, for example, (i) the universal dimension of salvation, (ii) the necessity, or lack thereof, of an explicit faith in Christ for the attainment of salvation, (iii) the capacity of the indigenous people to receive the sacraments, and (iv) election and human freedom regarding the divine call to live the Gospel[14]. Luciano Pereña presents what seems to be a correct and insightful view of Acosta's compendium as well, when he delineates in it more general goals of a background missionary and ecclesiastical project, namely, a "project of colonial society […] from a moral and ethical perspective" or more simply of a "colonial ethics", which moves towards three major objectives: (a) the urgency of ending all polemical debates regarding the "licitness of conquest" and the "Spanish permanence"[15], (b) the urgent rectification of abuses in the colonization process and formulation of "new instructions of settlement and pacification", and, finally, (c) the need to establish "new bases for humanization and education" for everyone, without which neither the conversion nor – granted the failure of previous efforts (see below) – the re-christianization of indigenous people would succeed[16].

If, however, we wanted to find yet another way of structurally conceptualizing the work *De procuranda indorum salute* in its proper characteristics as a *theological-missiological* text[17], it seems to be justifiable to propose the following reading directions: (i) *De procuranda indorum salute* is partially a report, in the form of a well-reflected assessment of the unsuccessfulness – and real failure! – of the Catholic missions until then[18], that is, of about 70 years of missionary labor in

14 Saranyana et alii (eds.): *Teología en América Latina*, pp. 155–160.

15 The conquest or the presence and perpetuation of Spanish political rule in the New World is a fact, although its justification may continue to be demanded and called into question based on the characteristics of the very process of colonization itself. Pereña: ('Proyecto de sociedad colonial pacificación y colonización', p. 42) understands that, for Acosta, the conquest of the Incan Empire would be justified only on the basis of the following three claims: (a) "defense of innocent citizens' fundamental rights", (b) "the fulfillment of the Papal mandate of evangelization and christianization", and (c) "the protection of Indian vassals against tyranny and repression by their rulers".

16 Cf. Pereña: 'Proyecto de sociedad colonial pacificación y colonización', p. 14.

17 Historically speaking, according to Hoffman: *Pioneer Theories of Missiology*, pp. XII–XIII, Cardinal Brancati de Laurea O. F. M. Conv. (1612–1693) may have been the first to write a systematic (formal) treatise on the "propagation of faith", the *Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* having already been founded, in the College of which Cardinal Brancati was himself a professor. This treatise was, in reality, part of the larger treatise *De fide*, in the *Commentaria in Libros Sententiarum Scoti.* Comparatively, Hoffman (op. cit., pp. 72–73) emphasizes Acosta's strong(er) combination of theory with practice in his work, in contrast to the materials prepared by Cardinal Brancati, which remained entirely at the theoretical level.

18 Cf. José de Acosta: *De procuranda indorum salute – Pacificación y colonización*, vol. 1, I, i–ii, pp. 74–95. From here on, I will make use of the abbreviation *DPIS*, always indicating the

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the Indies. Moreover, *De procuranda indorum salute* is about (ii) a permanent, though not always systematic, reflection on principles, purposes and methods of the Christian mission that always has in view, without any kind of resignation because of missions lack of success (i), but rather with the firmest theological hope, (iii) the formulation of general guidelines and concrete proposals to finally make the evangelization of the indigenous peoples successful in the Spanish colonies[19]. With varying degrees of emphasis from case to case, these three central points repeatedly appear in dynamic relations in the 6 books of Acosta's volume, which bear the following titles (properly suggested by the editors)[20]: "Hope of salvation of the Indians" (Book I), "Justice and injustice in war" (Book II), "Duties on civil administration" (Book III), "Spiritual ministers" (Book IV), "Catechism and method [*ratio*] of catechizing" (Book V), and "Administration of the sacraments to the Indians" (Book VI). Although, in the sequence of the exposition, below, items (i), (ii) and (iii) continue to merge with one another, the emphasis of this study lies on item (ii). The essential points of Acosta's assessment of the blatant failure of the Catholic missions and the most important aspects of the central ideas of Acosta's concept of mission will be revisited in the pages that follow. Lastly, through the subsequent theological grounding of the Church's task of mission and evangelization, it will become easier to see that Acosta indeed conceived of a "missionary method", if, by that, we understand the conscious reflection on steps and proposals for how to successfully proclaim the Gospel to people who had never heard of it before and had, accordingly, no knowledge of it. In the following study, I shall, thus, emphasize some of those steps.

volume (1 or 2), book, subdivisions, and pages. Page numbers will always be provided both for the Latin and the Spanish texts of the bilingual edition.

19 All that, we should keep in mind, was initially sketched and formulated in what was, at least, a comprehensive draft in 1576, i. e., more than four decades before the foundation of the *Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* by Gregory XV, in 1622. Beyond their central aim of theologically thinking of and eccclesiastically coordinating the Catholic missions, the leaders of the Congregation recognized from the beginning the need to transcend the limits and difficulties caused, regarding the task of the Apostolic Church, by Catholicism's alliance of with royal patronage in the territories discovered, particularly in the Americas. With the creation of such a "*Central* of Mission", the Church affirmed its conviction that the Papal office was charged, by duty and right, with the task of propagating the Christian faith. Cf. A. Perbal: 'Chapitre VI – Projets, fondation et débuts de la Sacrée Congrégation de la Propagande', in: Delacroix, Monseigneur S. (dir.): *Histoire universelle des Missions Catholiques – Les Missions modernes*, Paris 1957, pp. 109–131.; Josef Gelmi: 'Die Missionsinitiative der Päpste', in: Bruno Moser (ed.): *Gehet hin in alle Welt. Ereignisse und Gestalten christlicher Missionsgeschichte,* München 1984, pp. 31–46, here: pp. 41–42; Sievernich: *Die christliche Mission*, pp. 72–73.

20 As it seems to be the case Acosta explains the division of his general topics in *DPIS*, (vol. 1, pp. 50–51, "Dedicatoria").

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2 The Christian Mission's *Raison d'Être* and Some Mistakes in Its Execution

With no hesitation, Acosta's theology of mission presupposes that there is one sole true religion, Christian religion, and the religions practiced by the indigenous peoples of the New World are forms of idolatry and, therefore, false. Christian religion has a universal appeal, because, based on its scriptural sources, it contains a doctrine and a message of salvation for every human being in its condition of sin. According to the divine plan, that salvation can only be attained through the knowledge of God through Christ, in faith. In that plan for salvation, the Apostolic Church received, directly from Christ, an active function, namely, the commandment to preach[21] the Gospel of salvation to the whole world (Mk 16.15; Mt 28.19; Lk 24.47; Act 1.8), and, for Acosta, it is in that call by Christ that the missionary foundation of the Church is to be found[22]. Acosta sees the mission of the Church in the task of collaborating on the work of God, namely, faith and salvation[23]. In summary, the Apostolic Church has the undeniable task of teaching all peoples about Christ and, in the end, this consists of making known the necessity of faith in Christ and of being baptized in his name.[24] Within God's salvific plan and although faith, as a gift of grace and that saves, belongs to God alone and depends on the election and predestination by the will of God,[25] the Apostolic Church should help those who do not know of Christ[26] to profess their faith and be baptized. It is important to keep in mind that, from the perspective of the missions to the New World, where Christ had never yet been explicitly announced to anyone, the missionary task was especially aimed at adult human beings, who could only be legitimately baptized after a profession of faith preceded and accompanied by a process of catechesis.

21 In *DPIS* (vol. 2, V, xxi, 1, pp. 330–331), Acosta even defines "missions" as the dynamic movement towards the encounter with others, in other places, for the purpose of preaching: "Si quid in parochiis tenendis minus indorum saluti praestamus, certe missionum commoditate copiose rependi potest. Missiones vero intelligo eas excursiones et peregrinationes quae oppidatim verbi divini causa suscipiuntur". For some quotations, I will provide the Latin original, in the footnotes, in order to highlight Acosta's use of specific terms.

22 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 1, I, i, pp. 74–83; I, iii, pp. 98–105; I, vi, pp. 126–137. Cf. Francisco de Vitoria on the very same Scriptural basis for the missionary task of the Church: *De los índios recientemente descubiertos (relección primera) / De indis recenter inventis relectio prior*, p. 642, 685. Sievernich: *Die christliche Mission*, pp. 17–30 highlights these paschally-structured texts found at the end of the Gospels, that stress the urgency of the proclamation of Christ and are characterized by conditional alternatives, as a theological basis invoked in the history of Christian missions.

23 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 1, I, iii, 2–3, pp. 98–105.

24 Cf. ibid., I, 2–3, pp. 76–83.

25 Cf. ibid., I, v, pp. 114–125 (especially, pp. 120–125).

26 Cf. ibid., I, v, pp. 116–121.

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In fact, and this will be of major relevance for the development of the central topic of this study, Acosta dedicates many pages to a discussion of the target of the Apostolic Church's evangelization, in this case, the indigenous people of the New World. Generally, Acosta believes indeed that the Indians, the aboriginal peoples who are supposed to be made familiar with the new faith, are "barbarians"[27] and "rude". As is well known, both in *De procuranda indorum salute* and in the *Historia natural y moral de las Indias*,[28] Acosta offered a three-part civilizational classification of the "Indians" – more exactly, of non-European human groups and associations[29], described or re-described on the basis of the "discoveries" –, which ultimately have in common only their minimal possession, at least virtually, of natural rationality and freedom: (i) first, there were those that were not far from "right reason" and the practices of the "humankind", peoples such as the Chinese and the Japanese who would, thus, be able to attain a well-organized and stable social and political life (ruled by laws), in cities, with commerce and magistrates, as well as quite high levels of knowledge (including here, for example, written language and even books). (ii) Second, there were the barbarians, such as the Incas or Peruvians, who had knowledge of neither a written language nor of books, but nonetheless had government, laws, military leaders, established seats, forms of "religious worship", and certain rules of "human behavior". (iii) On the lower and third level were the many barbarian nations of the New World, about which one could rightly say that they were "savages", "similar to beasts" having only "human sensibility" (*humani sensus*). They have no laws whatsoever, nor do they have magistrates, leaders, forms of government, contracts, established seats or residences, etc.[30]. They rather resemble "beasts" and fierce "animals", in that very sense, in which Aristotle had written in Book I of his *Politics*[31] of "barbarians" that might be hunted and tamed by means of force.

27 Cf. ibid., *Prooemium*, p. 61: "Según la definición de prestigiosos autores, bárbaros son aquéllos que se apartan de la recta razón y de la práctica habitual de los hombres. Por eso suelen destacar los escritores más ilustres la incapacidad de los bárbaros, su fiereza, incluso sus técnicas y trabajos, significando lo lejos que están de la práctica usual de los demás hombres y lo poco que tienen de sabiduría y actividad racional".

28 Cf. José de Acosta: *Historia natural y moral de las Indias*, VI, xix, pp. 418–420: "Del origen de los Ingas, señores del Pirú, y de sus conquistas y victorias".

29 Cf. the standard reference works by Anthony Pagden: *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology*, New York 1982; Idem: *European Encounters with the New World: From Renaissance to Romanticism*, New Haven 1993.

30 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 1, Prooemium, pp. 60–69; II, iii, 3, pp. 266–271; II, vi, 1, pp. 292–295.

31 Cf. Aristoteles: *Politik*, I 4–7. Cf. also Otfried Höffe: *Aristoteles*, pp. 255–257; Nicholas D. Smith: 'Aristotle's Theory of Natural Slavery', in: David Keyt and Fred D. Miller (eds.): *Companion to Aristotle's Politics*, Oxford 1991, pp. 142–155.

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Explicitly, Acosta basically classifies the Peruvians as well as peoples of Portuguese-Spanish America under the categories (ii) and (iii)[32]. It is fair, here, to call him a "Eurocentric" thinker, given, after all, that he believes that human groups find themselves in quite different stages of civilization or qualitative cultural development, although he does not believe that "barbarian" peoples, whom he considers uncivilized or only minimally civilized, must remain so permanently due to characteristic and unchangeable defects in their condition as human beings – as Aristotle believed[33]. Essentially, and in association with the ideas of Francisco de Vitoria[34], the Indians' brute (wild) character and rudeness are the product of their "formation", "education", and "customs", not their nature[35]. This not only allows him to establish as a fact, but is in agreement with the principle that there is no human "type" or any nation that should be excluded from the message of salvation in Christ.[36] Here, Acosta seems to speak both of individual human beings and of human groups, in the terms of "people" (*populus*), "nation" (*natio*), or "peoples" (*gentes*), etc.[37]. Theologically, it remains a mystery of divine will *that* and *how* the "barbarians" exist in the New World. But, it is not a mystery *why* they exist. They exist in order to come into communion with God through Christ (Mt 24.14; Rm 10.18) and, even if they are taken to be simple-minded, they are nonetheless capable, through the understanding and the will, of "grasping the doctrine of salvation"[38] and receiving the essential message of the Gospel. After all, Christ himself affirmed that the fullness of the ages will not take place before the good news shall be announced to the entire world[39]. Philosophically, José de Acosta does not believe that there are slaves by nature, though he does believe that there can be 'circumstantial' (my expression) slaves or serfs, that is, individuals and human groups of a servile temper and status due to their circumstances – suitable for tutelage and obedience to others –, simply because of the civilizational stage in which they find themselves. This approach, it must be once more stressed, does not in any way immediate justify the fact that

32 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 1, Prooemium, pp. 62–69; I, vii, 2–3, pp. 136–141.

33 Cf. footnote 31, above.

34 On this point, cf. Roberto H. Pich: *Dominium* e *ius: sobre a fundamentação dos direitos humanos segundo Francisco de Vitoria (1483–1546)*, in: *Teocomunicação* 42 (n. 2, Jul.–Dez. 2012), pp. 376–401 (especially subdivisions 2, 3, and 4).

35 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 1, I, viii, p. 148–157. On these topics, cf. also Michael Sievernich: *La visión teológica del "Nuevo Mundo" en la obra de José de Acosta:* in: *Stromata* 49 (n. 1–2, 1993), pp. 185–201.

36 Cf. ibid., i, 1, p. 74–83. This is entirely in agreement with the positions of Pope Paul III, formulated in the bull *Sublimis Deus*, from 1537, in which the universal character of the Christian doctrine of salvation for all human beings was emphasized. Cf. Lopetegui: *El padre José de Acosta y las misiones*, p. 274.

37 Cf. ibid., ii, pp. 92–93; I, v, pp. 124–125; I, vi, pp. 126–127, pp. 136–137.

38 Cf. ibid., ii, pp. 84–89 (pp. 88–89).

39 Cf. ibid., ii, pp. 82–85.

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people(s) can be legally enslaved (on the civil level) or made serfs by other people(s)[40]. The historically and circumstantially contingent stages of development of individuals and groups can be a basis for accommodating claims to power, but, *at least in principle*, not for suppressing the self-rule of others nor for suspending freedoms on the part of the subjects[41].

For the purposes of this study, however, the main reason for describing these cultural-anthropological perspectives is to stress their effect on Acosta's method as a theoretician of mission. Two aspects must be highlighted: *first*, recognizing that faith and salvation, as objectives of mission, are the work of God and presupposing that the Apostolic Church, by God's command, participates in the universal knowledge of Christ, Acosta is convinced that, on the perspective of that plan and command, all the above-mentioned peoples need, to varying degrees and with varying strength, to be pedagogically prepared and guided – in their acts of reason and in their acts of will, in their beliefs and in their customs or habits –, in order to receive the teachings and the practices of Christian faith and to come to baptism. Without any previous education, no annunciation of the salvific faith in Christ will be successful[42]. *Secondly*, there is an even more specific note about missionary pedagogy when dealing with the categories of peoples described above, namely, regarding the relationship between the proclamation of the gospel and the use of any kind of force (violence, coercion, imposition, authority, etc.), that the use of force will have no beneficial effect only for the acquisition of group (i)'s faith[43]. On the other hand, due to the tremendous difference between the customs, rites and norms of the indigenous people and Christian culture, if they are to adopt Christianity, people in groups (ii) and (iii) will always be in need of some "benign" use of pressure and authority, including, here, the authority of the Church and of the secular power (vice-kings, governors, and magistrates) that promoted colonial Christendom[44]. Within this framework, Acosta sees the state of the indigenous people, especially those in group (iii), as so absolutely distant from the moral sublimity of the gospel that he does not hesitate to call them "half-men", who need to learn to "be men", a "cursed race" (*semen maledictum*), "totally sordid, totally servile" nation (*tota sordida, tota servilis*), etc.[45]. These regrettable words are not, however, *anthropological* notes *on the*

40 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 1, II, i–vii, pp. 246–303 (especially, II, iii–v, pp. 260–293).

41 Cf. ibid., v, pp. 282–293. Cf., here, pp. 293: "Porque esto es, en suma, lo que importa: que los bárbaros no son tales por naturaleza, sino por educación y por costumbre [*sed moribus et studio*], mientras que los niños y los deficientes mentales son tales no por educación, sino por naturaleza".

42 Cf. ibid., Prooemium, pp. 62–71; I, vii, pp. 136–149; I, viii, pp. 148–157.

43 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 1, Prooemium, pp. 62–63.

44 Cf. ibid., Prooemium, pp. 64–67.

45 Cf. ibid., Prooemium, pp. 68–71 (p. 68: "homines aut vix homines"); I, ii, pp. 83–95 (especially pp. 88–91).

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nature of the human beings in question, but rather, and at most, "cultural" or "ethnographic" remarks. The important point is that, if knowledge of the Christian message is acquired with the participation of the Church – to which this task has been given – and has to take into account concrete human beings, then missionaries[46] need, in addition to confidence in divine assistance, a realistic approach, that is, strong realistic views grounded in 'common sense' (my expression)[47] about how religious beliefs and attitudes are acquired by people in a historical context. The contents of natural law or, more simply, of the Decalogue would have to be made clearer and fixed much more *firmly* in their souls, in order to serve as a basis for the law of the Gospel.

By the way, it is in the context of this historical realism of Acosta's perspective on the adoption of a new religion that one should reconstruct his argument and emphatic criticism of the Dominican friar Bartolomé de Las Casas' (1484–1566) method of evangelization. Acosta was a firm follower of Vitoria's Thomistic guidelines[48] and of the first masters of Salamanca[49] regarding the voluntariness one would expect from a rational and volitive creature regarding the act of faith and the adoption of the Christian faith[50], but he takes issue with Las Casas concerning the concrete terms and the factual limits for the observation of that principle. Las Casas, who constructs his point of view based on the experience of the brutal violence of the conquest and first colonization, in which the evangelization was carried in connection with the system of forced labor of the *encomienda*, saw that "the only way of attracting all peoples towards the [only] true religion"[51] was the "evangelical" or "apostolic" method. Directly inspired by the

46 Hoffman: *Pioneer Theories of Missiology*, p. 75, reminds us that José de Acosta had no Latin word for "missionary" at his disposal, making us, instead, of the expressions "ministrum" and "praedicator".

47 By "common sense" I mean to express – with general or universal appeal to all human beings – the way in which people typically, concretely, and historically, not abstractly or ideally acquire beliefs and adopt ways of living by means of several sensorial, intellectual and volitive devices or capacities.

48 Cf. Francisco de Vitoria: *De los índios recientemente descubiertos (relección primera) / De indis recenter inventis relectio prior*, pp. 692–696; Thomas de Aquino: *Summa theologiae*, IIaIIae, q. 10, a. 8 ("Utrum infideles compellendi sint ad fidem").

49 Cf. Lopetegui: *El padre José de Acosta S. I. y las misiones*, p. 249.

50 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 1, I, xiii, p. 196–199 (especially, pp. 196–197); II, i, pp. 246–253.

51 Cf. Bartolomeu de Las Casas: *Obras completas I – Único modo de atrair todos os povos à verdadeira religião*, São Paulo 2005, p. 59. Las Casas' apostolic pedagogy of the proclamation and adoption of faith is developed in an exemplary fashion in Chapter V of his *De unico vocationis modo omnium gentium ad veram religionem*, completed ca. 1537, though it was unknown to the public until the end of the 19th century and published for the first time in 1942. The work that has been preserved is, at any rate, fragmentary and incomplete; cf. Carlos Josaphat: 'Suma de teologia e de democracia no alvorecer do novo mundo. Introdução ao "único modo de atrair todos os povos à verdadeira religião"', in: Bartolomeu de Las Casas: *Obras completas I – Único modo de atrair todos os povos à verdadeira religião*, São Paulo 2005,

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deeds of Christ and the apostles, the idea was to *completely* dissociate proclamation of the Gospel and violence[52], showing, on scriptural, theological, and philosophical bases, that the only way, worth of the human being, to adopt a (religious) belief was through persuasion of the intellect (by means of truth) and the pleasing of the will (by means of the perception of the good)[53]. In missionary practice – this might be understood as "peaceful communication"[54] of the gospel –, the missionary[55] has to induce the recipient of his message to assent in a clear and well-reflected manner, through the intellect, and to make a free and pleasant decision before the good, through the will, if the act of believing – again, an essentially voluntary act – is not to bear the discrediting blemish of violence and of aggression[56]. Although he openly presents himself as an opponent of any violent method or aggressive coercion for the purpose of acquainting people with the gospel, Acosta shares a realistic and pragmatic view about the need to prepare people for the gospel and the teachings of Christianity and invokes records of historical missions in La Florida that show the resounding failure of the utopian

pp. 33–56., here: pp. 34–35. The first four chapters of Book I, in which Las Casas is said to have presented his "method of evangelization", are missing. Chapters V–VII of Book I are the only parts of the text still in existence. Las Casas also mentions a Book II, which is, however, likewise missing.

52 Las Casas' criticism of the Spanish conquest and his understanding of the colonial project and attitude towards it have been astutely evaluated by Vítor Westhelle: *After Heresy: Colonial Practices and Post-Colonial Theologies*, Eugene 2010, pp. 1–8.

53 Cf. de Las Casas: *Obras completas I – Único modo de atrair todos os povos à verdadeira religião*, pp. 64–78. Cf. also Carlos Josaphat: 'Sentido de Deus e do outro: Introdução à vida e às obras de Bartolomeu de Las Casas', in: Bartolomeu de Las Casas: *Obras completas I – Único modo de atrair todos os povos à verdadeira religião*, São Paulo 2005, pp. 9–32; *idem:* 'Suma de teologia e de democracia no alvorecer do novo mundo. Introdução ao "único modo de atrair todos os povos à verdadeira religião"', pp. 33–56.

54 This central topic is explained and defended, theologically and philosophically in Bartolomeu de Las Casas, *Obras completas I – Único modo de atrair todos os povos à verdadeira religião*, Livro I (V), pp. 57–220. In Chapters II and III (VI and VII), Las Casas applies his previous analysis and his conclusions in order to emphatically reject any idea of a just war of conquest against the "Indians" as a legitimate means of evangelization and christianization (cf. Bartolomeu de Las Casas, *Obras completas I – Único modo de atrair todos os povos à verdadeira religião*, pp. 221–309). Cf. also Josaphat: Suma de teologia e de democracia no alvorecer do novo mundo. Introdução ao "único modo de atrair todos os povos à verdadeira religião", pp. 36–40; Giuseppe Tosi: 'Bartolomé de Las Casas y la guerra justa de los indios', in: Murillo, I. (org.): *El pensamiento hispánico en América: siglos XVI–XX*, Salamanca 2007, pp. 639–649, pp. 639–649; Renata Floriano de Sousa: 'A pedagogia inovadora do Frei Bartolomé de Las Casas por trás da obra "O único modo de atrair todos os povos à verdadeira religião"', in: *XIV Semana Acadêmica do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Filosofia da PUCRS / 2015*, Porto Alegre 2014, pp. 681–697.

55 Several personal theological virtues and exemplary life are, indeed, demanded of the missionary, including the consistent practice of social and political justice; cf. Josaphat: Sentido de Deus e do outro: 'Introdução à vida e às obras de Bartolomeu de Las Casas', pp. 19–23.

56 Cf. de Las Casas: *Obras completas – Único modo de atrair todos os povos à verdadeira religião*, p. 80ff.

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methodology, unrealizable in the concrete history of human beings, advanced by Las Casas. For missionaries that employed Las Casas's method, it was the cause of unnecessary and virtually spurious martyrdoms – not of the hero of faith, but of one marching directly to certain death[57]. In its demand for a complete separation of evangelization and the use of force – more specifically, armed military protection or the convoy of armed soldiers for missionary incursions into an unknown foreign land, the so-called "entradas" later requested by Acosta in cases of obvious necessity –, Las Casas's method was too much risky and caused the unnecessary loss of lives[58]. Keeping in mind our exposition of missionary methods above, the position held by Acosta, rooted in common sense and historical realism, suggested that several generations of missionary practice, administered, above all, by missionaries and the secular clergy with firm authority and explicit pressure on the *modus vivendi* of the Indians, would be unavoidable if the Indians were to attain knowledge of Christ and adoption the Christian faith.

It should, however, be noted that, although he seems to interpret the processes of conquest and colonization in the context of a theology of the history of salvation, processes regarding which Acosta proposes a series of normative adjustments[59], the Jesuit was a hard critic of both old arguments for "just war" – re-editing the Lascasian rejection of Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda's (1494–1573) officialist theses, disputed a few decades before[60] – as well as current ones, whether based on religious infidelity, crimes against (universally valid) natural law committed by societies[61], or even abuses practiced by tyrannical leaders[62]. Acosta restricted the scope of "offenses" that might serve as an allegation to deny indigenous peoples their self-rule[63]. Indians have legitimate *dominium* and are the

57 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 1, II, viii, pp. 302–311.

58 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 1, II, xii, pp. 338–349. Saranyana (dir.) et alii: *Teología en América Latina* pp. 156.

59 Cf. footnotes 15 and 16, above. Cf. also *DPIS*, vol. 1, III, pp. 381–593 (topics of civil administration).

60 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 1, II, ii, pp. 252–261; II, iii, pp. 260–271; II, iv, pp. 272–283.

61 Nor does Acosta accept the argument that crimes against innocent people may, in principle, serve as a reason for claiming a right to just war. After all, such crimes happen often and cannot always be verified. The incrimination of nations because of them would make international relationships impossible. Moreover, there are no clear arguments to be found in Scripture to defend such a political principle; cf. *DPIS*, vol. 1, II, vi, pp. 292–299.

62 Tyranny serves only as a clear reason for opposition against a given historical power on the part of the subjects of the republic or kingdom itself. All forms of reaction and revolt against tyranny and crimes against the innocent should come primarily from the subjects themselves within that republic or kingdom. Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 1, II, v, pp. 290–291.

63 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 1, II, ii–vi, p. 252–299. Strictly speaking, the only possible reason to begin to wage a just war would be for one political entity, such as a republic, to commit an *iniuria* or juridical offense – in the domain of the international law – against another political entity, such as another republic. Acosta, however, does not believe that such a cause was verifiable in the initial situation of most of the conflicts between Spain and the indigenous nations of the New World; cf. *DPIS*, vol. 1, II, iv, pp. 272–283. On this topic and the School of Salamanca's

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rightful owners of the goods that they possessed before their conquest by the Spaniards and christianization.

3 Principles and Methods for the Acquisition of the New Faith

Although *De procuranda indorum salute* is primarily a work on theology of mission, it undeniably presents ingenuous views on religion and culture, as well as on a problem of philosophical nature, namely, how a religion, at the level of adopted beliefs and assumed practices (in this case, the knowledge of Christ and of Christian habits), can really be adopted by someone who lacks this very religion, that is, by the indigenous people described above. The glaring importance of this issue for José de Acosta is all the more clear when one considers more closely – beyond the temper and the character of the recipient of evangelization – the 'epistemic status' (my expression) or quality of cognoscibility of the alleged theoretical and practical truths (true propositions) of Christian faith effectively proposed in is text. Once again, we perceive Acosta's common sense and historical realism regarding the, here, fundamental question which the Church, participating in the work of God, has to answer: How, insofar as those truths are (as truths *of the Christian religion*) *totally inevident* to natural reason, being as they are, in a practical sense, *very much contrary* to general human inclinations and, moreover, rigorously new and foreign in comparison to the existing system of beliefs, is it really possible for the Indians of the New World to truly acquire Christian faith?

The doxastic dilemma that Acosta faces, namely, that of attributing a positive epistemic value to the truths of faith, not primarily in order to rationally justify them, but in order to present their adoption as truths *as humanly possible* and even *natural*, is historical, but the relevance of its deeper meaning has an appeal that transcends his times. This is beautifully described in *De procuranda indorum salute* I, iii, 2. Everyone seems to agree that the sincere conversion of the indigenous people is a very difficult task[64]. The obstacles, both those to the Indians' acquisition of as well as those to the conservation and the flourishing of the Christian message among the Indians, are severe and manifold in nature. After

tradition of grounding peoples' rights in natural law, cf. Antonio Gómez Robledo: 'Las ideas jurídicas del P. José de Acosta', in: *Revista de la Escuela Nacional de Jurisprudencia* v. 2 (Jul.-Dic. 1940), pp. 297–313; R. H. Pich: 'Francisco de Vitoria, "direito de comunicação" e "hospitalidade"', in: A. Bavaresco / F. J. G. de Lima / J. H. de S. Assai (eds.): *Estudos de filosofia social e política – Justiça e reconhecimento*, Porto Alegre 2015, pp. 312–357. On the topics, in Acosta, of the law of peoples in the sense of the "international public law" inaugurated by Francisco de Vitoria and of the *ius ad bellum*, cf. also *DPIS* vol. 1, II, xiii–xv, pp. 340–357.

64 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 1, I, iii, pp. 96–105.

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all, (i) Christianity proposes certain truths that simply cannot be grasped by natural human reason alone and which, strictly speaking, Christianity cannot prove. (ii) Moreover, Christian faith proposes a way of living based on premises whose content is far beyond the inclinations of human desire to earthly and material goods and the human tendencies to glory and possession, in other words, proposing ways of living that stand in opposition to certain deeply rooted, detrimental "vices". (iii) Christian faith promises rewards that no one can see and the rewards of this earthly life, which everyone can see, deserve, for Christians, to be despised. In addition, (iv) Christian faith suggests that humans should direct their powers towards objects inaccessible to the senses. (v) In short, Christian doctrine proposes that people should live a superhuman life. Acosta sees in this image of Christian religion, inspired in John Chrysostom, a key challenge for the missionaries' task of evangelizing the Indians[65].

Since his central concern is the acquisition of faith and the theoretical and practical convictions it implies, as well as the corresponding attitudes with which it is met, it is natural that Acosta considers on the means through which this new faith will reach its recipients by focusing on the intellect and the will. The message of salvation demands the conversion of the understanding and of the will or, more precisely, it demands the conversion of a soul in which those two powers join to take on a profoundly new form. Throughout all of Book I of *De procuranda indorum salute*, José de Acosta insists that the simple-minded Indians *are capable* of this and tries to explain to missionaries at the time how this can be achieved[66]. In this sense, he has to propose to the Jesuit ministers a method of teaching and bringing these people closer, both in their intellect and their will, to the doctrines of the Christian Creed. Concretely speaking, it is difficult to say which area poses the greater difficulties for the preacher, i. e., the limits of the intellect or those of the will, but it is certain that the indigenous *modus vivendi*, which is both a result and a corroborating factor of their cultural network of thoughts, actions and representations, will have to be fundamentally thrown into question, since all its elements are grounded in their religion or, in the language that Acosta himself uses in this case, their superstitions and idolatries.

For a method of convincing, adoption and virtual substitution of one religious vision for another, paved on common sense and historical realism, it is significant that José de Acosta draws heavily on the apostle Paul. Paul's status as the major proponent of the apostolic mission among the pagans and the figure who radicalized the urgent and universal appeal of Christ's missionary commands

65 Cf. ibid., iii, 2, pp. 98–99. The reference is to Ioannes Chrysostomus: *Homiliae in Epistolam Primam ad Corinthios*, homilia 7 (PG 61, 55–56).

66 Cf. Lopetegui: *El padre José de Acosta y las misiones*, p. 241, pp. 275–276. Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 1, I, i, pp. 74–83.

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and Christ's message of salvation is clearly present in Acosta's thought[67]. In particular, Acosta's clever common sense, objectivity and specific strategies for convincing proclamation might be viewed as a development of Pauline ideas[68]. In this well-considered inspiration, theological criteria and criteria of rational common sense are mixed. On the one hand, Acosta takes from Paul the idea of the necessity of a profound and committed vocational significance and a rigorous spiritual preparation by the missionary[69]. At a certain point, Acosta affirms, based on Paul, that the success of evangelization efforts depends on three personal virtues: (a) "modesty in life", (b) "abdication" of all things of this world and (c) "meekness"[70]. But, whether as the future development of these three virtues or simply as the next item in a catalogue which Acosta does not make any efforts to criteriously systematize[71], we can read that the missionary has to cultivate, *spiritually*, humbleness, perseverance in the face of sufferings and disappointments, prayer, dedication, self-giving, detachment, and confidence[72]. Acosta reiterates the virtues of a perfect life – of the sanctity of life – that missionaries should have: the minister sent must be "chaste", "quiet", "tolerant" and "benevolent"[73]. And he can also affirm that, in contrast, there are three sins or vices in particular, which decisively undermine the proclamation of faith, for which, indeed, "the means is the message" (Marshall McLuhan): "avarice", "dishonesty", and "violence"[74].

On the other hand, in a quite reasonable observation, the missionary undertaking as, above all, a successful communication or testimony includes two basic principles and two basic attitudes regarding precisely the matter of communication for the sake of teaching and convincing: (a) first, although the Indians are as simple as children, who are reliant upon their tutor's education, they are – as human beings gifted with reason – capable of understanding the contents of faith that the missionaries want them to adopt. The missionary has to know how to communicate in a simple and easily comprehensible manner – and without any

67 Cf. Otto Betz: 'Mission III. Neues Testament', in: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*. Berlin/ New York, Band XXIII, 1994, pp. 23–31 (especially, 28–30).

68 On the influence of Pauline theology in the thought of José de Acosta, cf. Flávio Schmitt: 'Recepção de São Paulo na obra *De procuranda indorum salute*, de José de Acosta', in: *Mediaevalia* v. 31 (2012), pp. 14–25. Paul's influence is especially visible in Book I. Cf., for example, *DPIS*, vol. 1, I, iv, pp. 104–115; I, xii, pp. 184–191; I, xiv, pp. 200–209. Cf. also *DPIS*, vol. 2, V, xxiii, pp. 340–341.

69 On the topic of the bad moral-spiritual example set by Spaniards as well as religious men, cf., for instance, *DPIS* I, xi, pp. 168–185.

70 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 1, I, iv, pp. 104–115; I, xii, pp. 184–191.

71 According to Hoffman: *Pioneer Theories of Missiology*, p. 79, these qualities of the missionary were, later, systematized by Cardinal Brancati.

72 Cf. *DPIS*, vol.1 , I, iv, pp. 104–115; I, xii, 2, pp. 186–191; vol. 2, IV, ix, pp. 94–103.

73 Cf. ibid., xii, pp. 184–191; I, xiii, pp. 198–199.

74 Cf. ibid., xii, pp. 184–185.

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falsifications – the complete content of the Gospel and the Christian creed, including what one needs to know about God, the three persons of the Trinity, and the Church, such that the Indians could plausibly be in possession of a minimal and trustworthy understanding, when repeating the articles of faith. (b) Secondly, the missionary has to take into careful account – and, thus, to perceive and to obtain understanding of – all realizations and actions by the Indians, especially those connected to religious views (that being virtually all of them!): customs, moral impressions or rules, superstitions, forms of worship, etc. As a whole, the Indians would not be able to recognize and adopt the good that the Christian faith is or brings with it, if they were not generally induced to modify their habits, thus, to reeducate desires and inclinations of the will[75]. If it was already possible to find in Pauline spiritual discipline and in Pauline-Acostian common sense a series of virtues that could more or less directly induce – being more or less potentially conducive to – the acquisition of theoretical and practical religious convictions, we must remember that, in light of Acosta's view about the status of the Indians and the inevidence of the Christian message's novelty, our Jesuit constantly appeals to an inducing power which goes together with the other powers and which he considers Pauline as well: the setting of an example and its imposition on the recipients with rigor, "discipline", "severity", just as tutors would do with the youth they have been charged with teaching, according to theirs capabilities in development. Perhaps one could speak, here, of a 'principle of authority' (my expression) for the doxastic success of the teaching (the successful adoption or assimilation of beliefs), a principle which is, no doubt, relational and asymmetrical and which Acosta expresses through the use of several different formulations – besides those already mentioned – such as "useful force of fear", in which authority is presented as balanced by love and patience: the principle of authority is, paradoxically, an instrument for conducing-inducing people to Christian liberty[76]. For this last principle or, perhaps more precisely, for the set of capacities and attitudes (related to authority) that he requires of the missionary, Acosta has other expressions, such as "prudent charity"[77]. In fact, Acosta's historical perspective and common sense – which are, perhaps, merits earned by "prudence" (*prudentia*) and "skillfulness" (*dexteritas*)[78] – foster the recommendation that one should be careful that authority does not turn into violence, since inadvertent "pressure" and "fear" have resulted only in

75 Cf., for example, *DPIS*, vol. 1, I, vii, pp. 136–143.

76 Cf. ibid., vii, pp. 144–149. Cf., here, I, vii, pp. 148–149: "Facile enim recuperat charitas, quos disciplina commoverit. Immo vero per utilem timoris vim ad libertatem filiorum paulatim homines divinitus inducantur".

77 Cf. ibid., II, i, pp. 252–253. Due to an editorial or printing mistake, the corresponding Latin expression is missing.

78 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 2, IV, x, pp. 86–87.

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the indigenous people returning to the religion of their ancestors in which they had believed[79].

Acosta clearly pays special attention to the customs or habits of the Indians. With a certain interpretive and conceptual freedom, I dare say that Acosta even sees in their habits a synthesis of the Indians' way of being – of their thought and action[80] –, since these habits are connected to the structures in which one thinks, wishes and accepts, and are determined, through the course of time, both by the actions and the approval of the community, as well as both the education received from childhood on and corroborated examples. Acosta calls habits developed in this way "living forms of the human mind" (*vivae formae mentis humanae*), even calling them – in Aristotelian fashion – "another [or: second] nature" (*altera natura*)[81]. As one might expect, he realizes that customs as a whole are profoundly embedded in religious conceptions, attitudes and practices. There is, therefore, nothing as difficult to change, Acosta affirms, as the set of customs[82] or network of beliefs and practices, the very core of which contains religion. At this point, it seems fair to say that Acosta clearly recognizes the singular role played by religion in customs or in culture: religion both is and binds together a broader system of beliefs, desires, inclinations, attitudes and practices, permanently confirmed by the community and the authorities, that individuals adopt and in which they live. Customs, when actualized through ritual, routines of action or narratives, symbolically confirm religion and culture. As we will be able to demonstrate further below[83], for Acosta, the different religions of the "non-civilized" peoples[84] – all more or less organized forms of idolatry – can be explained, regarding their causal origin, in ways either more natural or more supernatural (and, in this case, demoniac). But, José de Acosta also admits,

79 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 1, I, xiii, pp. 190–199.

80 Valcárcel Martínez: 'El Padre José de Acosta', p. 416, reminds us that Acosta was considered "el primer etnólogo americanista". On the link between "ethnology" as the descriptive-systematic study of human cultures, from a historical and structural perspective, and "Christian mission", cf. Louis Joesph Luzbetak: 'Ethnologie und Mission', in: Karl Müller / Theo Sundenmeier (eds.): *Lexikon missionstheologischer Grundbegriffe*, Berlin 1987, pp. 94–96.

81 In another context, I took the liberty of affirming that customs are a complex network of theoretical and practical beliefs, as well as individually and collectively endorsed attitudes, with which and based on which alone people can live a "form of life" in Wittgenstein's sense of the term, insofar as they offer a primary "picture" or "image" of the world. Cf. Roberto H. Pich: 'Religious Language and the Ideology of Black Slavery: Notes on Alonso de Sandoval's *De instauranda aethiopum salute*', in: *Filosofia Unisinos – Unisinos Journal of Philosophy* v. 18, n. 3 (Sep.-Dec. 2017), pp. 213–226, p. 216. Cf. also *DPIS*, vol. 1, I, vii, pp. 150–151, 154–155.

82 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 1, I, vii, pp. 148–157.

83 Cf. Section 4, below.

84 Cf. Armando Nieto Vélez: 'Reflexiones de un teólogo del siglo XVI sobre las religiones nativas', in: *Revista de la Universidad Católica [del Perú] – Nueva Serie*, v. 2 (Diciembre 1977), pp. 133–148.

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together with Bartolomé de Las Casas before him[85], that all human beings – and, in that case, the "barbarians" as well – possess a sense of the divine[86], that is, for example, a notion of the "supreme God [being]" – or even the notion of a "highest" and "sempiternal" "maker [artificer]" of everything – and of the "highest good", which we can interpret as amounting to basic and universal rational and volitional representations of the divine. The debate on whether and how, for Acosta, at least theoretically, all forms of existing religions manifest and bring with themselves a sense of the divine cannot be pursued here.

From the point of view of rational persuasion, or regarding the actually more theoretical contents, the challenge consisted, for Acosta, both in a certain apologetic work of making explicit the falsity of the idolatry practiced by the indigenous people (see below) and the concomitant truth of the Christian creed and mysteries of faith[87], as well as, in particular, in working with relentless perseverance on catechesis – including the commandments and the sacraments[88] –, in order to generate an appropriate and sincere faith which, acquired with the help of the Church, could finally be confessed by adult individuals as a step leading up to the sacrament of baptism and their introduction into the family of the Church. In this particular point, Acosta insisted on missionaries having good intellectual qualifications and the capacity to explain every item of the Apostolic creed – God, Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, as well as the mystery of the Church –, in order to yield explicit confessions of faith and, particularly, in order to yield *explicit knowledge of Christ*[89], without which God could not be known and without which one was not allowed to receive the sacrament of baptism[90].

85 Cf. de Las Casas: *Obras completas I – Único modo de atrair todos os povos à verdadeira religião*, pp. 82–84.

86 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 2, V, x, pp. 268–269.

87 Cf. ibid., IV, x, pp. 84–87. Cf. also Carmo, *A proposta de evangelização de José de Acosta*, p. 143.

88 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 2, V, xiv, pp. 290–293; V, xv, pp. 294–299.

89 Cf. *DPIS*, V, i–ii, pp. 176–187. On this topic, cf. Teófilo Urdánoz: 'La necesidad de la fe explícita para salvarse según los teólogos de la escuela salmantina', in: *Ciencia Tomista* v. 59 (1940), pp. 398–414, 59, 529–553; 60 (1941), pp. 109–134; 61 (1941), pp. 83–107.; Eduardo Vadillo Romero: 'La mediación de la Iglesia para salvación en la Cátedra salmantina de Prima desde Juan de la Peña a Francisco Araujo', in: *Archivo Dominicano* v. 16 (1995), pp. 311–339; Saranyana (dir.) et alii: *Teología en América Latina*, p. 160; Cândido Pozo: 'Repercusiones del descubrimiento de América en el ambiente teológico de las Universidades de Salamanca y Alcalá', in: *Archivo Teológico Granadino* v. 58 (1995), pp. 9–22 (here p. 19).

90 In his thesis, Acosta insists that even the simplest of people can understand or think of God and of the human person and can, thus, at least at a minimal level, understand that God became man (incarnation), and that that man was Jesus Christ (cf., for example, *DPIS*, vol. 2, V, iv, pp. 220–221): "Tres, son, pues, las cosas que hay que declarar brevemente: primera, que Cristo es Dios y hombre; segunda, que fue muerto por nuestros pecados; tercera, que está en posesión de vida inmortal y bienaventurada y que quiere comunicárnosla". Cf. also Lopetegui: *El padre José de Acosta y las misiones*, p. 289.

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"This is the summary of the whole Christian doctrine: it recommends nothing but faith in Christ, which is effective through love"[91]. It should be mentioned, briefly and without going into any details here, that Acosta's christological-soteriological understanding of the explicit character of the knowledge of Christ required both for baptism and salvific justification was, indeed, peculiar,[92] but also a further indication, at any rate, that, for Acosta, one might only truly believe in the presence of Christian religion in the indigenous people, i. e., in their "souls", if there were but a minimal reason to believe that Christ was known to them. In *De procuranda indorum salute*, Book V, taking advantage of his broad knowledge of scripture and the Church Fathers, Acosta entered into a discussion with the theologians of the first and second generation of the School of Salamanca about the role the knowledge of Christ played for baptism and for justification. While the knowledge of Christ as Son of God and Savior, together with the repentance of sins, was undoubtedly a regular requirement in order to receive baptism – both in the baptizing adult and in the parents and godparents of the child being baptized (cf. Act 8.26–40) –, there were still unsolved disputes about the relationship between the explicit knowledge of Christ and the conditions of salvation. In fact, even in the case of baptism, in its status as a sacrament of faith and instrumental cause for salvation, there were also doubts regarding the exact measure according to which the explicitness and the completeness of the confession of faith in Christ should be present. Apparently, for the theologians of Salamanca, in their interpretation of the first two rules of Session VI of the Council of Trent's (1545–1563) 33 canons regarding the doctrine of justification, it was not the explicit professed knowledge of Christ that was necessary for justification. After all, salvific justification essentially depended on and took place because of the merits of Christ. Every human being that is saved and even one that did not explicitly have or profess faith during its life, is saved only thanks to the grace of Christ[93]. For Acosta, in turn, the same rules of the Council of Trent

91 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 2, V, i, 1, pp. 176–177: "*Finis legis Christus ad salutem omni credenti [Rom 10:4]* et *finis praecepti charitas de corde puro et conscientia bona et fide non ficta [1 Tim 1:5]*. Hic universae doctrinae christianae summa est, quae nihil aliud commendat quam Christi fidem per dilectionem operantem"; V, i, 2, pp. 176–177: "Vere ergo et finem Christum et finem charitatem scriptura dicit. Vere in illo verbo legem pendere *Diliges* [Mt 22.40] et plenitudinem esse dilectionem".

92 Cf. ibid., i, 2–4, pp. 176–179.

93 On that debate (cf. again the references in note 88, above), Saranyana et alii (eds.): *Teología en América Latina*, pp. 158–159. After having briefly summarized the positions of Vitoria, Soto, Andrés de Vega and Melchor Cano, Saranyana concludes that Acosta's position was wrong, at least with respect to the definitions of the Council of Trent, although the matter has been the subject of several interpretations, furthered by the Reformation and even by the context of the proclamation of faith in missions itself, before, during, and after the Council of Trent. Cf. also Lopetegui: *El padre José de Acosta y las misiones*, pp. 282–291. Regarding salvific justification, in Suárez' thought, we find the consolidation of the idea that only an implicit faith was

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– especially from a historical perspective or from the perspective of the new covenant and of the revelation of God in Christ that has been made real – implied the necessity of explicit faith in Christ for justification or salvation[94], since without that faith nobody could please God[95]. The Church has its own place in that mystery and faith, as a gift of grace, is necessarily linked to the knowledge of Christ.

Concerning the goal of attracting the wills of others to the good of faith and of life in Christ, as well as the proper preparation for the reception of faith through a reeducation of the indigenous peoples' customs, nearly everything depends on the virtues and attitudes on life of the missionaries as exemplary Christians and general models in life. In the context of efforts to evangelize the indigenous people, viceroyal lay-civil societies never amounted to a serious option[96]. As already mentioned regarding their capacities for lending a positive quality of cognoscibility – that is, credibility – to the proposed contents of faith, the missionaries were charged with rigorously putting words into action and knowing how to live a coherent life, spiritual, virtuous and worth of emulation[97]. It had always been a powerful auxiliary instrument of dialectical arguments or those that give support to or conclude only theses that are non-evident and merely likely – especially on the practical level –, that is, the strange message of the Christian faith, which moreover was proposed for recipients that allegedly were simple-minded, the symmetry between message and means (here: content and conduct or life), in which, over and again, the emphasis lies on the power of the example of life, of beneficence[98] and of non-violence. Moreover, the preparation for faith through a reshaping of customs also depended, fundamentally, on making the indigenous societies receptive to comprehensive and expressive structures of the Spanish Christian *ethos*, and, to this end, missionaries count on, for better or for worse, the blessings of their royal patrons through their viceroys, governors and magistrates. Preparing these societies for this meant, among other things, a division of time (of the entire calendar), of the daily affairs (of work, of civil and religious functions, as well as of domestic functions), of education and duties, and of attendance to the Church, as well as the introduction into its rites

necessary for persons who would also be in a state of insurmountable ignorance at the time of the New Covenant; cf. also Gerhard Müller: 'Tridentinum', in: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie,* Berlin – New York: Walter de Gruyter, Band XXXIV, 2002, pp. 62–74 (especially pp. 64–68).

94 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 2, V, i–v, pp. 176–229.

95 Cf. ibid., i, 4, pp. 178–179; V, ii, 5, pp. 184–185.

96 That regarded, in particular, the Spanish colonizers; cf. *DPIS*, vol. 1, I, xi, pp. 168–185; I, xiii, pp. 190–199.

97 Cf., again, *DPIS*, vol. 1, I, xi, pp. 184–191.

98 Cf. *DPSI*, vol. 2, IV, xvii–xviii, pp. 128–143.

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and sacraments[99]. From a historical point of view, this configuration's weak point always revealed itself to be the proximity of indigenous populations to the working and colonization system imposed by the Spaniards, which explains to a good extent the 17th-18th centuries' missiological models of societies, "republics", in a nutshell, of a Christian *ethos* as distant as possible from the Spanish colonizing *ethos*[100]. Moreover, it should be stressed that, regarding the two general processes described above, José de Acosta emphasized, without any overstatement the necessity that all missionaries should learn and communicate in the native (aboriginal) languages – above all, in Quéchua and Aimará –, especially for preaching, catechesis and confession. This was perhaps the most significant form of "inculturation" achieved by the Catholic missions until the end of the 16th century, namely, a minimal, though substantial adjustment of the Christian faith to other system of life and beliefs. José de Acosta himself learnt Quéchua, the "general language" of the inhabitants of Peru[101], which was, of course, simultaneously the best way to become acquainted with the indigenous people, with their history, the universe of their traditions, their self-organization, and their self-understanding[102].

4 Idolatry

In any case, turning to the indigenous people's way of life and culture, which was so strongly tied to their religion(s), the processes of intellectually convincing adherents and attracting their wills, which had as its ultimate goal an effective, total and sincere conversion of their souls to the point of their being baptized and

99 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 1, I, vii, pp. 136–149 (in particular, pp. 144–147): "Pues bien, la sabiduría celestial nos ha enseñado los dos medios principales con que puso freno a aquel pueblo de dura cerviz: el trabajo y el temor; medios ambos característicos de los siervos. El trabajo y una cierta ocupación ininterrumpida se puede ver en la multitud de sacrificios, lavatorios, unciones, ritos, observancias y ceremonias de todas clases, para que de tal manera estuvieran entretenidos con estas cosas, que apenas les quedase tiempo para pensar en sus ídolos e invenciones. Y en cuanto al temor, ¿qué página de la ley no infundía?". It is obvious that this pedagogy, in practice, was or soon came to be a form of "authoritarian paternalism", since, due to the various reasons intrinsic to the colonizing-christianizing model itself, the indifference or aversion towards the proposed message was, as a rule, only overcome through the active efforts of secular powers to bring this about and forcefully introduce all aboriginal inhabitants into the new *ethos*. Cf. C. Lugon : 'Chapitre XII – Les Missions d'Amérique du Sud aux XVII[e] et XVIII[e] siècles et la République des Guaranis (1606–1790)', in: Delacroix, Monseigneur S. (dir.). *Histoire universelle des Missions Catholiques – Les Missions modernes*, Paris 1957, pp. 246–280, here: pp. 255–256.

100 Cf. Sievernich: *Die christliche Mission*, pp. 127–128.

101 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 1, I, ix, pp. 156–163.

102 Cf. Sievernich: *Die christliche Mission*, p. 135.

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receiving justification, found a particular synthesis in the *systematic* fight against idolatry, a fight which found its inspiration in the first commandment of the Decalogue[103]. "Idolatry", the most profound enemy of true faith, summarizes the religion of the indigenous people as a "system" (my expression) of beliefs, values, inclinations and attitudes, a system which, ratified by the community, conditions thought and habits. Assuming the existence of such a system, we can more directly affirm that idolatry means devotion to or worship of supposedly "divine entities" in the form of idols and entities that are, thus, concretely represented and materially identifiable. In this sense, idolatry is a confrontation, a "war" against true religion, since it is a mistaken commitment of a human being's entire soul to a supposed and, in reality, false god. Idolatry, thus, represents a concrete historical form of religious life, connected to a total devotion of the mind towards idols or "divine" entities connected to these idols. Idolatry is a *form of the mind* and it is *a real form of life*[104].

Following John Damascene, José de Acosta mentions three forms of idolatry: (i) first, there is the idolatry typified by the Chaldeans, who adored celestial spheres and signals, as well as elements of nature. (ii) Second, there is the idolatry common to the Greeks, which consists in the practice of adoring as gods persons that have died. Here, we find the origin of the inventive representation of gods, the cult of those deceased much loved or admired, who in turn become the object of elevated devotion and, finally, turned into a material representation of a super-human life and a super-human existence. (iii) Third, there was the idolatry identified by John Damascene in the Egyptians. In this case, both celestial bodies (stars) and human beings, as well as animals and parts of the inanimate nature, are represented as gods and objects of religious devotion[105]. For Acosta, these forms of idolatry are common to every human group – including rational, elevated people as well as philosophers – and are connected to practices and representations. Practiced by individuals and groups, idolatry, in which people ultimately give name and form to gods-idols, according to the concrete representations of type (i), (ii) or (iii), is related to all spheres of life, being explicitly tied to rites, worship and sacrifices, to feasts and ceremonies, and to memorials and sacred places, superstitions, laws, religious authorities and political leadership. Idolatry, as religion, conditions fundamental beliefs and representations of

103 As Schmitt has observed in the "Considerações finais" ["Concluding Remarks"] of Recepção de São Paulo na obra *De procuranda indorum salute*, de José de Acosta, it is interesting to note that Acosta connects the indigenous people to both immorality and idolatry, just like ancient peoples whom Paul reached through his missionary activity (Gl 5.19–21). In this sense, the biblical text works as a hermeneutical key to understanding the cultural dimension of the indigenous people and to pointing out obstacles to evangelization.

104 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 2, V, ix, pp. 246–249.

105 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 2, V, ix, 248–251.

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what is good; in a nutshell, all spheres of thought and action. In fact, the barbarians of the New World, as, for example, those from Peru, practiced all three above-mentioned forms of idolatry[106]. It is impossible to bring the Christian faith to indigenous people without suppressing the very roots of every form of idolatry[107] and it is only by knowing such a "system" that one can outline a successful plan capable of *really* replacing their world vision. The success of the new religion in the human heart is not something easily accomplished.

It is not surprising that, with these explanations and in light of the suspicion and alarming fear that the faith or religion performed by the (allegedly converted) indigenous people was not sincere and only dissimulated their continued devotion, both in their hearts and, whenever possible, in the external world, to the gods of the past[108], Acosta effectively initiates a new form of literature that would multiply in the first decades of the 17th century and suggested "remedies against the idolatry [remedios contra la idolatría]", that is, "means of healing", "corrective means" to extirpate or erradicate idolatry[109]. Acosta proposes neither "iconoclasm" nor the violent destruction of idols or images[110]. Faith can only be acquired by those who want to acquire it, as the product of convincing preaching and the proposition of something good and, thus, capable of being loved. The violent destruction of *simulacra* and *monumenta* has as an effect that they reappear, and even more deeply, in the minds of the indigenous people. Missionaries are tasked, however, with creating such an *ethos* of combating idolatry that, where there were once idols, symbols of Catholicism are instead and Christ appears. In order to eradicate the idolatry from their hearts, it is strategically advantageous to focus efforts on converting their leaders to the new faith[111], since, after all, the simple indigenous people respect their authorities in matters of faith – here, again, the Spaniards had done from the beginning a disservice[112], since the *conquest* had been the cause of assassination, not of any religious compliance, of the rulers of Incas and Aztecs. As always, on the basis of his realistic common sense, Acosta argues that one should recognize the usefulness of a particular effort to persuade authorities about the falsity of their gods, in the repetition of

106 Cf. ibid., 252–255.
107 Cf. ibid., pp. 246–255; V, x, pp. 266–269; V, xi, pp. 272–277; V, xii, pp. 278–285.
108 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 1, I, xiv, pp. 198–201.
109 Cf. Saranyana et alii (eds.): *Teología en América Latina*, p. 156. Cf. also Richard: Chapitre IX – L'expansion missionaire du Portugal et de l'Espagne aux XV[e] et XVI[e] siècles, pp. 261–263; Prien: *Das Christentum in Lateinamerika*, pp. 196–224; Sievernich: *Die christliche Mission*, p. 79. The outstanding work of this movement is the one written by the Jesuit José de Arriaga: *Extirpación de la idolatria del Piru. Dirigido al Rey N. S. en su Real Consejo de Indias*, Lima 1621.
110 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 2, V, x, pp. 258–261.
111 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 2, V, x, pp. 262–265.
112 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 1, II, xviii, pp. 372–375.

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simple reasons and arguments – not philosophical ones –, that appeal to experience[113].

Based on his belief that every human being has some idea of a highest and supremely good being, just as they have representations of evil beings or spirits as well, Acosta insists on showing that the missionaries do have starting points, which appeal to reason, in favor of the truth of their deity. Concretely speaking, missionaries should deepen their acquaintance with what the Indians think about their own religion, that is, about the nature of their own habits and natural-religious customs, and, resorting to their solid theological training, be able to directly refute their arguments and reduce them to absurd convictions[114]. In all theses cases, thus, *the firm catechesis* specifically directed against idolatry should be stressed – and here we should note, in particular, that the basic principle is *to teach, not to dialogue* with the catechized: (a) the missionaries must be able to put forth arguments about the true reality of God in contrast with the god-idols, that is, they must be able to explain why the spiritual nature of the divine being cannot be mixed with something material, created and mutable. (b) The missionaries must be able to explain the impotence and the ignorance of the god-idols, who can neither defend themselves, nor feel, nor move and which, as mere natural bodies, have no actual power or control and simply exist as part of nature. (c) Above all, the missionaries must emphasize the illusoriness of the idols offering the Indians any kind of divine protection from human affairs, such as diseases, wars, famine, etc.[115]. Moreover, at least in principle and from the beginning, Acosta states that Catholic ministers would succeed in undermining the influence of the indigenous people's religious leaders, "wizards [or: sorcerers]" and "masters of idolatry", in particular, by pointing out their "deceits", their "frauds" and their "ignorance" and ridiculing their "absurd stances" and by confuting their "cunning"[116].

While there is no proposal of a literal iconoclasm, there is indeed, in Acosta's plan, a mechanism of religious and cultural imposition that missionaries should implement, from a clear position of higher authority. This mechanism plays a strong role in the extirpation of the idolatry from the hearts, He says that, if the Indians should participate in the sacraments, the ministers of faith should carefully examine the conscience of the Indians using the practice of confession[117] (one formal part of the sacrament of penance, which is a prerequisite for participation in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, the "supernatural food [or:

113 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 2, V, x, pp. 260–269.
114 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 2, V, x., pp. 266–269; cf. also IV, ix–xi, pp. 70–95.
115 Cf. ibid., pp. 266–267.
116 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 1, II, xviii, pp. 374–375.
117 Cf. ibid., I, vii, pp. 140–141; I, vii, pp. 144–149; vol. 2, V, x, pp. 270–271; V, xiv, pp. 290–293; V, xv, pp. 294–299.

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nourishment]", whose distribution to the Indians was promoted by Acosta[118]). Acosta sees in the engagement of hearing confessions one of the most important fruits of the Jesuit missions in the Indias and an invaluable aid to the ministers of the secular clergy[119]. After all, the confessor must instruct the penitent in doctrinal matters, propose corrective measures and emphasize his authority, to the point of inspiring in the penitent, a kind of benevolent "fear"[120]. The confessor, thus, oversees the substitution of religion, the new form of the soul *without* the gods-idols and *with* the new true deity. It should be recalled, moreover, that, according to a principle of canon and civil law, all forms of ostensive suppression of superstition and of idolatry were allowed for individuals who have already been baptized and entered into the family of the Church and are, therefore, under the protection of the Christian authorities. This, Acosta admits is the main reason for the demand made by Church Fathers, such as Augustine and Ambrose, that sovereigns and authorities of Christian states (and republics) help the Church for the sake of the good of faith and doctrine[121]. It is precisely at this point, then, that his plan for the replacement of idolatrous religion with true religion reaches an ultimate, 'symbolic' level (my expression). After all, the baptized and tested Indian is introduced into a Christian *ethos*, in which they are carefully and relentlessly led to practical habits and ceremonies, learned and repeated by everyone, such as holy water, images of the saints, rosaries, pilgrimages, festivals, holy mass, preaching, and the reiteration of the catechism. In this way, it will be possible for the new religion to enter and take root, both internally and externally, in the life of the Indians, both in their hearts and their bodies, by impressing upon them thoughts and symbols, which they in turn assimilate. Indeed, Acosta consciously conceives of this methodical process. In the context of the history of salvation, the acquisition of the Christian faith does not demand miracles. Miracles were necessary for the rational and skeptical audiences in Christ's times, such as the Greeks and the Romans. For the Indians of the New World, however, another methodology is required[122]. Acosta even affirmed that the most effective and "necessary", as well as "rare" "miracle" in the missions in the New World is the integrity of life, that is, the strict congruence between confessed faith and practiced faith, the conjunction of the contents of faith with the actions, deeds, and attitudes of faith[123]. If, however, this true miracle is combined with the knowledge of indigenous languages, acquired by the minis-

118 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 2, VI, ix–x, pp. 398–419.
119 Cf. ibid., V, xxi–xxiii, pp. 330–343.
120 Cf. ibid., IV, xix–xx, pp. 142–157; cf. also VI, xi–xii, pp. 420–433.
121 Cf. ibid., V, pp. 274–275.
122 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 2, V, x, pp. 264–265; V, xi, pp. 270–277.
123 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 1, II, ix, pp. 318–325; cf. also II, viii, pp. 308–311.

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ters through hard work, one might even expect the miracle of a kind of new Pentecost[124].

Interestingly, Acosta understands that for the indigenous people a whole network of practices and vices are connected to this idolatry, depending on what is owned to or even required by the alleged god-idols: "suicide", "drunkenness", "anthropophagy", "lust", "levity" [or: "superficiality"], "fornication", "sins of the flesh", etc.[125]. This reinforces even further the idea that the practical dimensions of the Christian faith, its customs, cannot succeed without the suppression of idolatry. With the new representation of the sacred (or the holy), another dimension of behavior or, rather, way of life is also made possible. Acosta call the indigenous people to a new form of love for themselves: it is necessary, while combatting idolatry, to help the indigenous people to love themselves, take care and preserve the "health of the spirit and of the body", "their senses and their body", in order that they maintain, preserve and develop themselves and their "lives" according to nature, that is, according to the "natural law"[126], which dignifies them. The same is true of love towards others, that is, of those dimensions of moral (practical) principles that natural law helps us recognize, such as duties or norms for recognizing (and respecting) the good due to others, in accordance with the fundamental principle that one should not do unto others, what one would not wish for oneselfs[127]. Following the model of how the missionaries, ideally, combine words and actions in their own lives and show "charity" and "generosity" towards others – these being, again, practices of "beneficence" (*beneficentia*), of operating "benefits" (*beneficia*)[128] –, the indigenous people should learn to take care of others, parents, for example, those who are in need or the diseased, etc. In short, they should learn to live their "humanity" (*humanitas*) and idolatry is the enemy of "humanity". Religion, Christian truth, and the highest good proclaimed by Christianity will bring a new network of customs that is to be seen as true humanity, as the application of revealed norms and essentially ratified by natural reason (natural law), which will appear clear to them, as soon as the simulacra-gods are excised from their minds[129].

In closing, something should be stressed that could have been said at the very beginning of this study. Asymmetrical as Acosta's comparative view of the Christian faith and indigenous idolatry may be, the Jesuit thinker inaugurated the idea of inculturation both in his explicit insistence on the excellent learning of

124 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 2, IV, vi–ix, pp. 46–83.
125 Cf. ibid., V, xii, pp. 276–285.
126 Cf. ibid., V, xii, pp. 276–285.
127 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 2., V, xiii, pp. 286–287.
128 Cf. ibid., IV, xviii, pp. 134–143.
129 Cf. ibid., V, xiii, pp. 288–291.

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local languages and on evangelization in native languages as well as in his promotion of a profound knowledge of the indigenous cultures and religions and, last but not least, in the logical consistency of his view that habits of the indigenous people that are not contrary to Christian religion or, by the same token, to reason or "justice", should not be criticized or changed[130]. The new faith should assimilate to those habits and ways of life in a positive and inclusive way. This is, in reality, a simple principle of Christian inculturation. Yet, it was, by the way, opposed to what the Spanish crown seemed to prefer and promote, namely, the total hispanization of the West Indies. As long as it was not rooted in idolatry – or as long as it would *lose its* roots in idolatry –, no culture as such nor any given cultural aspect should be understood as an obstacle for the acceptance of the Christian faith.

Concluding Remarks

The expository and argumentative train of thought worked out in this essay was intended to propose and show that José de Acosta made a conscious effort to elaborate a strategy for propagating the Christian faith that would be loyal to the missiological principle of participation in the salvific plan of God by obeying the evangelical call to proclaim Christ and make him known to all peoples, while being, at the same time, characterized by an explicit historical realism and common sense about the way humans acquire beliefs and attitudes about the new and the non-evident. In this case, we looked at the new and inevident as they appear in the religious dimension, i. e., the very contents of the faith proclaimed.

Is it relevant to take into account, at this point, the four "classical concepts and methods of mission" proposed by Michael Sievernich for an understanding of the Catholic mission in Latin America during the colonial period: (i) "spiritual conquest", (ii) "the only way: convincing and attraction", (iii) "new methods of evangelization" and (iv) "the model of reductions"[131]. In fact, in Sievernich's own opinion, Acosta's conceptions are, according to an implacable – though not necessarily impeccable! – "Western" view about his American recipients, the very summary of concept (iii)[132], the major aspects of which need not be repeated here, in light of their exposition above[133]. Yet, there are important *aspects*, however, or rather *accents* that need to be taken into account – *as the exposition above was intended to do*. What Acosta proposes is the substitution of one

130 Cf. *DPIS*, vol. 1, III, xxiv, pp. 586–593.
131 Cf. Sievernich: *Die christliche Mission*, p. 122ff.
132 Cf. ibid., pp. 126–127.
133 Cf. ibid., p. 127.

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religion or of religions in the plural, presumed to be false, by a religion held to be true. His method is, indeed, rigorously pacifist and opposed to violence, *but*, in an unmistakable way, he operates with a principle of authority, which is asymmetrically persuasive and inducing: the strategy of evangelization Acosta proposes does not constitute a dialogue, strictly speaking, or any inter-religious recognition, nor does it, obviously, in any way suggest a principle of religious pluralism or of the theology of religions as a real theological approach. By the same token, one must admit that Acosta's proposal cannot be squared to the idea of an "integral [holistic] liberation" of the human being as, so to speak, a synonym of the salvation and evangelization goal formulated by the spirit of the Third General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate, held in Puebla in 1979. According to Acosta's concept, however, there is in his combination of Christ's unconditional call, factual human reality and (human) common sense[134], a fundamentally evangelical and pedagogically rational vision of the themes being debated. Regarding the task given to the Apostolic Church of making Christ explicitly known to all those without any knowledge of him, it does not make any sense to propose Christian religion, if it is not convincing regarding the true and the good and if, in the methodical terms that would make the fulfillment of that task possible, Christians themselves have no profound conviction regarding the new and the proper that they give testimony to and, thus, fail to carefully express, in their practices, a fundamental and benevolent sense of authority *in the truth.* In retrospect, the following questions are all quite fair: Did the new faith actually enter into the soul of the indigenous person? How thoroughly? And which Christ? Was it not, in the end, a mere imposition of foreign culture?[135] Was it anything but the shaping of a colonized soul in times of Iberian messianism and salvationist imperialism and mercantilism? Was not the distance between the good that was preached and the evil that was experienced an unsurpassable gap for the human path towards revealed religion? And yet, that said, reflecting on Acosta's *De procuranda indorum salute,* I would like to pose a question with a prospective outlook: Is there, ultimately, for any time, how to think in a way radically different than Acosta's about the necessity of the explicit knowledge of Christ, and most especially in those social-cultural contexts in which Christ is or has become profoundly ignored and unknown?

134 Hoffman: *Pioneer Theories of Missiology*, pp. 82–83, has emphasized the "realistic" and "experience"-based character of Acosta's missionary method.

135 Cf. Stephen Neill: *Geschichte der christlichen Mission*, *Geschichte der christlichen Mission*, [ed. by Niels-Peter Moritzen and transl. by Paul-Gerhard Nohl], Erlangen 1974, pp. 119–120.

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Question of God

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Looking for God: On Anselm of Canterbury's Proof of the Existence of God

1 Introduction

Since the beginning of philosophical thinking the reflection on the *First Principle of Being* has always been a central preoccupation of philosophizing and it still is today. One can go further and state that philosophy was born with this preoccupation. Thus Plato's *Timaios* has God as the Demiourgos, the *causa efficiens* of the world and of the whole being. Therefore the world is eternal, i. e. not created. Correspondingly in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* XII God as the *first unmoved mover* is only a *causa finalis*, which moves the world "as a being loved" (hos erómenon). Of course according to Aristotle the world is also eternal, i. e. not created – a position which provoked controversies in the Middle Ages over the suitability of "creator of the world" as a description of God. Augustine succeeds in making very explicit, in the XIth book of his *Confessions* – the famous reflections on the "Time-Puzzle" – the split and sharp difference between the divine eternity and human temporality. According to him nature and being as a whole is created by God. Thomas Aquinas brings both contrary theses into harmony, whether the world is eternal and/or whether it in fact has a temporal beginning, by differentiating between the terms *eternitas*, divine eternity (without beginning or end), and *sempiternitas,* eternal duration (which has a beginning in time, but no end, continually lasts. Take for example the life of a human being: birth and eternal life after earthly death, be it a happy life in heaven (*visio Dei*) or an unhappy life in hell, and human temporality, i. e. the personal story of a life (birth, schooling, marriage, children etc…), the biography of a human being, then of the political history of the world, historical events, for example the 19th November 1989, the fall of the wall in Berlin, and finally of the time of the clock and of the world.

Understandably, the existence of God as creator of the world played a significant role in the Middle Ages. In this regard the so-called 'ontological' proof of the existence of God, or perhaps better described as the 'ontological argument', in the *Proslógion* (chapters 2–4) of Anselm of Canterbury, is a first step in the

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philosophical discussions about the *First Principle of Being.* The Anselmian proof of the existence of God provoked critical reactions. The first was that of Gaunilo; the second, which came somewhat later, was that of Thomas Aquinas with his alternative of the *quinquae viae* in the *Summa Theologiae* I, q.2. Duns Scotus offered his own view in his *De primo principio*, where he links together the ontological and physical proofs of the existence of God.

In modern times Descartes, in his *Meditationes* III and V, renewed the ontological argument on the foundation of the idea of an *ens perfectissimum* which encloses its existence and which Kant references critically in his *Vom einzig möglichen Beweisgrund des Daseins Gottes* and which he refutes in his *Kritik der reinen Vernunft.* Hegel, on the other hand, defends the ontological argument and thereby reinforces German Idealism.

In current contemporary Philosophy, especially in analytical Philosophy (Bertrand Russell and Willard Van Orman Quine), a renewed critique of the ontological argument has arisen. In the U.S.A. and England a new debate about divine existence has sprung up in the circle of Alvin Carl Plantinga, Richard Swinburne and John L. Mackie. The Finnish School (Jaakk Hintikka and Simo Knuuttila) then again have tried to save the ontological argument on the basis of a 'new logic', the modal logic, possibility, reality and necessity.

I would like then to contribute here to this current and persistent debate over the existence of God by confronting Anselm's argument with other arguments, which both agree and reject it, such as:

1. Thomas Aquinas' critique in the *Summa Theologiae* I, q.2 , his alternative proofs of the existence of God, starting from the effects of God, the *quinque viae,* which to put it briefly, are invalid, with perhaps the exception of the argument which takes as its foundation the differentiation between different kinds of being, i. e. between necessary being and contingent being and perhaps the fifth proof: God as ruler and guide of the world, which seems to anticipate Kant's thesis, namely that the existence of God can only be a postulate of practical reason and so cannot be proved by one of the theoretical sciences or by philosophy.
2. The renewal of the ontological argument in the IIIth and Vth mediations of the *Meditations* of Descartes on the foundation of the idea of a most perfect being (*ens perfectissimum*) and thus on the foundation of the result of the self-analysis of the *res cogitans.* The self-analysis of the contents of the 'Ego', as it were of its own substance, and precisely of the *res cogitans* shows and reveals the *idea innata* of God as an idea which we cannot bring forward for it exceeds the capacity and ability of our thinking and therefore is an idea which has to be caused in us, the *res cogitans,* by a greater force than ours. As a consequence then, this idea, it will be said that God exists because of himself and for himself and by nature in us.

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3. The critique of Kant in his *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, that 'being' cannot be a quality of things, and thus cannot be a determination or perfection of a being (i. e. a thing). Being means the positioning of a thing into reality by human reason and that with regard to its (the thing's) concept. Therefore the existence of God is not a matter of pure reason, i. e. so that it could be theoretically investigated, but instead a matter of practical reason, so that the thieves of this world do not escape it unpunished. But that is no philosophical proof; it is only a postulate and therefore the existence of God cannot be proved, certainly not scientifically. Against this reading there is Thomas Aquinas' view that the existence of God can indeed be proved by theoretical philosophy. That means that the proof of the existence of God is a matter of philosophical science, namely of metaphysics.

2 The Preface of the Proslógion

In the Preface Anselm writes that the *Proslógion* is the result of a request made by several monks to him: "acceding to the requests of some brothers", received just after he had completed his *Monológion.* The *Monológion* also bears the title – in reference to Augustine – of *Solilóquio*, and the *Proslógion:* "Meditation". "[…] I called the first (*Monológion*) an example of meditation on the rational basis of faith, and the second (*Proslógion*): 'fides quaerens intellectum (faith seeking support in reason)'."

The *Monológion* is an example of "meditation of the mysteries of faith". The title of a book by Descartes is: *Meditations on First Philosophy*, complete title: *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia. In quibus Dei existentia & animae de corpore distinctio demonstrantur.* Descartes might be borrowing this title from Anselm, or, more probably, from St Augustine's *Confessiones*, lib. X: De memoria, on memory, 'cogitare', 'raciocinare', 'meditare'. These verbs are synonyms and reflect the Greek verb 'theorein' which is connected to the verb 'horasthai' (to see), whose 1st person perfect form is 'oida', which means 'I know' because 'I have seen'. The method is 'divide' and 'compose', 'separate' and 'join', and finally, 'analysis' and 'synthesis'. This is where the intellectual program of Anselm begins: "fides quaerens intellectum: faith seeking support in reason." This insight represents an enlargement and expansion of reason which cannot be limited from outside, but only by itself, namely the self-limiting of reason in Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft:* in the section "transcendental dialectic."

The *Proslógion* is written by a man who is looking to discover in silence and through reason the mysteries of faith. By 'in silence' it is indicated that the narrator is locked in a secluded room (seclusion), alone with himself; again reminiscent of St. Augustine's work (*Conf.* X, cap. 6), where he speaks of the *homo*

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interior as opposed to the *homo exterior*; where there is no interruption caused by the worries of everyday life (for example, preparing food, washing clothes etc.) – this area of life has to be dealt with before philosophizing can take place, according to Aristotle. Philosophy supposes that the problems of the 'zen' (life, survival) have been solved in order to realize the 'eu zen', the bene vivere, the good life. This results in the thesis that only philosophy can attain the perfection of human being. Similarly, Anselm is looking for the truth of faith with "rationes necessariae" (*Monológion*, Preface). He wants to argue in a way that is based only on human reason, without – as it stands *expressis verbis* in the *Monológion* – recourse to the Bible.

This description of the academic situation of St. Anselm reminds us of a similar situation that Descartes describes in his academic autobiography *Discours de la méthode*, 2ème Partie. It might well be an irony in the history of self-styling that Descartes mentions at the beginning of the second part of his *Discours de la méthode* how he drafted his new philosophy. It was during a hard winter, on the 10th of November 1619, on the point of exchanging the soldier's life for the philosopher's life, but still on campaign in the service of Moritz of Nassau, in accommodation near Ulm, i. e. in a village (therefore not in Faulhaber's "city of mathematicians"), far from any conversation (conversation), i. e. far from any intimate conversation with those similar to him, and furthermore free from being plagued by worries (soins) and passions (passions), closed in in a warm room, sitting by a tiled stove (poêle de faïence), at that time "à la mode allemande", (sitting behind the oven, connoting laziness), when he found the leisure to converse with his own thoughts (m'entretenir des mes pensées), to "meditate" (i.e, penser à quelque chose: méditer). Meditation is thus an exercise of reason, similar to an active intuition, which needs to be actively redeemed and is not simply equivalent to having just an idea or a sudden notion.

One of the most important thoughts that he became conscious of was that "the building of science can only be the work of one single man": "Je m'avisai de considérer, que souvent il-n'y-a pas tant de perfection dans les ouvrages composés de plusieurs pièces, et faits de la main de divers maîtres, qu'en ceux auxquels un seul a travaillé."

Let us return to Anselm. One of his fundamental innovations in the field of Christian intellectuality was his understanding of God: "Then I started by thinking to myself whether it would be possible to find a single argument, valid in and of itself, with no other, which allows us to show that God truly exists."

The so-called 'ontological argument' is in truth no ontological argument. Anselm does not possess the necessary philosophical discipline, the ontology, the universal science of being (Christian Wolff) and the metaphysics, the special science of being; this wonderful philosophical science, which still does not exist, which therefore is a "science looking for", the "epistéme zetouméne" as Aristotle

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puts it, which always embarrasses us and which Aristotle names "sophia" or "prote philosophia" or even "epistéme theologiké". In passing it is worth mentioning that Heidegger's reproach that all western metaphysics is an "onto-theology", thus a *contradictio in adiecto*, is pure polemic. Anselm's argument has nothing to do with that. It is the reasonable substitution of the manifold arguments from the *Monológion* connected to the existence of God for one single argument in the *Proslógion.* And this with the aim of enlightening, reinforcing and facilitating the understanding of God for companions of the same faith.

3 The definition of God in the Chapters 2 and 3 of the Proslógion

> "Deus est aliquid quo maius cogitari non potest." (Anselm's definition)
>
> "God is a being than which nothing greater can be conceived" (translation by Sidney Norton Deane. B. A.).
>
> "God is something of (in) which cannot be thought greater" (my translation).
>
> "We believe, therefore, firmly, that you are the being of which it is impossible to think something greater. Or does such a being not exist; because the fool (incipient) said in his heart: 'There is no God'"?

In what follows I would like to defend my alternative translation. For the moment I will leave the discussion of the questionable translation of the word 'aliquid' as 'being' to the side and will stick with this first. Anselm continues his argumentation in connection to the existence of God as follows: Against the fool, perhaps better 'the ignorant' as the Psalms (14 (13)1[a]) say, who denies the existence of God, it can be argued that he understands when he hears this definition of God *aliquid quo maius cogitari non potest.* This definition exists when heard and understood in his mind. But then it can be thought that there is something greater, namely that which exists in the mind and in reality – and this being is God who exists in the mind and in reality. If not, could something be thought of as being greater than that which exists in the mind and in reality, and if this is something greater, could it then be thought of as something even greater, etc… This reflects the prohibition of the *regressus ad infinitum*, a principle that all medieval authors accept.

A second step of Anselm's argument in the third chapter is the following: This *aliquid quo maius cogitari non potest* cannot be thought of as 'non-existent'; because if it is (exists) in the human mind, then it must exist in reality as well. If not, somebody could think of something that exists in the mind *and* in reality; and this would be greater and would fulfill the definition provided: God is the "being (*aliquid*) of which cannot be thought anything greater". So God does not

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only exist; he exists necessarily. "But what cannot be thought of as non-existing, of course, is greater than that which can be thought of as non-existing."

Creatures can be thought of as non-existing, they are contingent beings; but the "being (*aliquid*) of which cannot be thought anything greater" is not. A third step is that it cannot be thought that this something would not exist. The denial of God's existence is impossible.

4 Interpretation of St. Anselm's argument for the existence of God

Anselm's argumentation here is a breakthrough in the history of European philosophy which occurred long before the reception of Aristotle in Western Europe. How then can we attain an appropriate understanding of the definition of God as *aliquid quo maius cogitari non potest?* I would like to explain this matter in the following way, firstly *ex parte negativa.*

1. The definition of God as "a being than which nothing greater can be conceived", better put in Latin as *aliquid quo maius cogitari non potest* (something of which cannot be thought greater) is not a true *real definition*, at least it is not when we accept the rules of Aristotelian logic: specifying in a definition the *genus proximum* and the *differentia specifica*, as for example is the case in the definition: *homo est animal rationale*, or according to Aristotle (*Politics* I) a 'zóon lógon échon'. Being does not fit into a genus, or rather being is no genus. Being as such therefore does not – according to Parmenides (*Peri Physeos*) – recognize neither space or time, neither more nor less, i. e. levels of being or degrees of being, neither coming into being nor passing away, for out of nothing nothing can come into being nor go into nothing. It does not recognize an above nor a below, neither left nor right, i. e. a place or a point etc… The first quarry or the first content of 'being' is – according to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Logikvorlesung* (1832) – "Nichts" ("to be nothing"). The negativity in the meaning of 'Nothing' or 'not a something' by which the process of the dialectic of being begins is present already in the first concept of reason: "quod primo cadit in intellectu est ens" (Avicenna and Thomas Aquinas). Being is that which is first known by the intellect – and thereby ought to be nothing?! As 'not a something' it is at least no definitive determination or perfection of an actually existing thing or a quality or determination of the being of a thing (Immanuel Kant). Therefore the definition of God that Anselm suggests as *aliquid quo maius cogitari non potest* is no real definition of a really existing thing.

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2. Furthermore, Anselm's definition of God cannot also be a *nominal definition*, as for example, excuse the comparison, <the vegetable 'aipim', in Rio Grande do Sul of Brazil is (is nominated) in Minas Gerais 'mandioca'>. But viewed from this perspective, 'aipim/mandioca', the knowledge of this vegetable is not a new knowledge; therefore it is empty, no new information about its nature is given; and thus it is not – according to Kant – a synthetic proposition, but in fact an analytical one and therefore it is a simple tautology. Therefore in the proposition <God is, or exists> the verb to exist, in this case the predicate 'to be', offers no new information which was not already contained in the subject concept or: the predicate concept adds nothing new to the subject concept. "Being is no real predicate" (I. Kant). The existence of a thing means its "positioning into reality and that with reference to its concept." (I. Kant). The proposition <God exists> is thus not a synthetic but in fact an analytical proposition and therefore a purely tautological proposition. The definition of God as *aliquid quo maius cogitari non potest* is thus in this respect not a nominal definition; and it does not mean something such as the "positioning of something in reality and that with regard to its concept." In this way, interpreted as a nominal definition, the definition would remain on the level of mere words, without understanding of their (the words') meanings. We would remain ignorant as to the existence of God. This, however, runs contrary to Anselm's intention, which is to replace the various different arguments for the existence of God from his *Monológion* with one single argument in the *Proslógion.*
3. Furthermore the existence of God as *aliquid quo maius cogitari non potest* is not a sort of *definite concept*, e.g. *primum principium*, *prima causa*, *ens perfectissimum*, a *necesse esse per se* or an *ens necessarium* or, in the words of Europe's famous author, St. Augustine, for whom Anselm felt great affection, the *ipsum esse per se subsistens.* The definition of God as *aliquid quo maius cogitari non potest* cannot mean or announce some sort of concept. For a concept is always – according to Averroes – an *ens diminutum* – a lessened being, for it is brought forth by human reason or intellect. The general, the universal, the concept therefore or the idea are always the product of intellectual acts of the human mind. Human reason forms its own concepts from reality; and whether the concepts follow reality or agree with it – or not – is a dangerous question. Reality has to bend to the idea and follow it, if not it is that much worse for reality (Hegel). That means that according to Plato (*Theaetetos*) -: opinion should always depict reality and follow it, whichever is that of the ideas, and not the other way round. Plato discusses the same problem in his *Cratylos* with regards to Protagoras's thesis that man is the measure of all things; and that therefore things are and behave as our view of them dictates. An opinion or doctrine which is clearly false because in such a

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case it is not possible to differentiate between true and false, good and evil, and beautiful and ugly. Being does not mean 'being seen' a *percipi esse.*

4. Anselm's definition of God as *aliquid quo maius cogitari non potest* is also not a sort of presentation, an *imagination* of a perfect entity, as Gaunilo proposes in his objection: we can imagine a "perfect island", thus "lost", "hidden", or "unknown", but that does not mean that this island truly exists. The existence of a thing cannot be deduced from the imagination or concept of a thing, whose 'What' is represented and recognized in the concept of the thing. Perhaps that is the case of the Platonic theory of ideas, according to which the idea (of something?), the 'ontos on', in Latin, 'enter ens', the 'true being' includes, of course, its existence. Obviously being comprises its own being and is identical with itself. In this case life and human experiences are necessary in order to guarantee existence. It might be the case that God plays an important role in our lives; but this religious experience is no proof of his existence. But regardless it is clear that if God played no role in our lives, the questioning of his existence would be pointless and empty.
5. Finally the definition of God as *aliquid quo maius cogitari non potest* cannot be a *first premise* of a syllogism, namely a first principle of a demonstration, as Aquinas (Sth. I q. 2 a. 1) understands and interprets Anselm's formula, refuting it. It might be that the existential proposition <God is> known by itself, and thus self-evident, is a *principium per se notum*; for the meaning of the predicate term 'being' is identical with the meaning of the subject term: God is the *ipsum esse per se subsistens.* But that is no principle which is known by itself "quoad nos", with respect to us. And since we possess no insight into God's essence his existence remains unknown to us, too. We can only become aware of the existence of God by starting from the knowledge of his effects. If, therefore, God's existence can be understood as a first principle, as a non-supposed presupposition (*anhypóteton*), then there would need to be no proof of his existence. Moreover such a proof is impossible, for as with the first principle of a scientific demonstration, the principle of non-contradiction excludes it from being proved as Aristotle explains in his *Metaphysics* IV, 4. But Anselm's definition does not assume the function of a first principle, namely that of being one of the first premises of a syllogism, because the middle term is missing; for example: (first premise) "All of which cannot be thought anything greater, is a most perfect being"; (Second premise) "God is all of which cannot be thought anything greater"; (conclusion) "God is a most perfect being." We can transform this syllogism into the *modus ponens* in order to clarify that <God> can be no middle term: If <p>: <God is *aliquid quo maius cogitari non potest*>, then <q>: <God is an *ens perfectissimum*>. The proposition <p> is valid; then the proposition <q> as well. Obviously,

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> neither the existence of God nor of another 'thing' can be derived out of a concept or of a syllogism.

How then can we, and should we, understand Anselm's definition of God as *aliquid quo maius cogitari non potest?* If it is not a definition which agrees with the rules of Aristotelian logic, nor is it an absolute concept (Hegel), nor the idea of an *ens perfectissimum* (Descartes), and when too it is not a definition justified by nature, neither real nor nominal; and when finally it is no figure of the imagination, what should we then think with regards to Anselm's definition? I think that Anselm's definition should be understood as an *operational definition* similar to the instructions and prescriptions of a doctor, as Gangolf Schrimpf suggests: If we want to know, who and what God is, then we have to follow and to fulfill the rule which is described in this definition; God is *aliquid quo maius cogitari non potest: God is something of (in) which cannot be thought greater.* So God is neither an object taken from nature (*prima causa*), nor a concept taken from the intellect (*ens perfectissimum*), nor an image taken from the *imagination.* The existence of God is a result of this way of thinking of him as *something of (in) which cannot be thought greater.* If you follow the instructions of that definition which explains how to think of God, then God exists and, moreover, he must exist necessarily because you cannot deny his existence and at the same time think greater of something else. All other perfections as 'omnipotent', 'supreme good' etc. depend on his existence, corresponding to our way of speaking in propositions with the grammatical structure of <S is P>.

This argument made by Anselm for the existence of God, falsely named an 'ontological argument' is true and possesses an inner coherence, an intrinsic and irrefutable value. Even if God were to be a most perfect being, as Descartes in his argumentation shows, as a consequence of this we find through the self-analysis of the *res cogitans* the idea of a most perfect being, which cannot be caused by us, but which nevertheless must be caused in this same *res cogitans* by an entity which is equipped with a highly complete power and with greater strength than ours; and which thus by necessity must exist. Otherwise we would not find this idea of an *ens perfectissimum*, the effect of the most perfect power, in the *res cogitans.* By virtue of the middle-ages principle that the cause is always stronger than the effect, God exists as this idea of an *ens perfectissimum*, and that without any lack whatsoever of perfection in the *res cogitans* and that by necessity; if not a self-contradiction in its concept would be arise. Certainly, if God exists, then he necessarily exists. But the question is whether God actually exists, or whether his existence is only a thought up one. Incidentally, Descartes does not submit inconsequentially this principle to his methodological and radical doubt; e. g. the sting of the mosquito Dengue, and by that the extremely dangerous transmission of the Zika virus. Small cause with great effect. Even if God were – to close the

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open phrase above – an *ens perfectissimum* his existence does not coming out of that concept or idea.

Kant is right to be opposed to this Cartesian argument. I can deny the existence of God with all his perfections without being caught in a contradiction; for the existence of a thing is not the quality or perfection of this thing; the verb 'being' is no "real predicate", but merely the positioning of a thing into reality with regard to its concept. Therefore the refutation of the existence of God causes no contradiction to its concept. God is one of the ideas, as perfect as it might possibly be, which we find in us, the *res cogitans*, and so it is a good, perhaps even consolation idea, were God not to be the highest judge at the ultimate day of judgment.

Anselm's argument that understands God as *aliquid quo maius cogitari non potest* is not affected by these discussions of modern philosophy. Even if God is the most perfect being, whose very existence is due to this perfection, Anselm's argument can stipulate simply: think of God even greater. This way in which we think and speak in superlatives is one of the conditions of our concessions made to language, to always have to think and speak in the grammatical structure of <S is P>. This way of speaking of God is really a weak and unsuitable way of speaking of God. In God being and essence are identical and express the same thing. If we then speak of God as a most perfect being, then the definition of God as *aliquid quo maius cogitari non potest* demands from us that we think of God as even greater than that which the words *ens* and *perfectissimum* can express; thus my suggestion for the translation of: *aliquid quo maius cogitari non potest* is: *God is something of (in) which cannot be thought greater.* Quod erat demonstrandum.

5 Some observations on the objections of Gaunilo, monk of Marmoutier, Book in favor of an incipient

Gaunilo, monk of Marmoutier, presents one of the first objections to Anselm's argument; Thomas Aquinas, a second. My observations seek to clarify some points about the 'ontological' proof of God's existence.

A first point regards the definition of God. Gaunilo makes a serious change to Anselm's argument which has important consequences. Anselm's argument is: God is *aliquid quo maius cogitari non potest.* This definition Gaunilo changes: the 'aliquid' for 'being', and the *quo maius cogitari non potest* for "the supreme nature", "thought of as the greatest of all things". This is how he understands Anselm's words. But God is not understood by Anselm as a "being greatest of all beings", that is, as an *ens perfectissimum.* The difference in meaning is extreme; since a concept such as that of an *ens perfectissimum* does not include the real

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existence of that thing so named. Anselm's formula is, however, a reorientation of how to think (*cogitari!*) of God. If you think of God in another way, then out of the concept nothing will come to exist, as perfect as the concept of it might be.

But we can – according to John Duns Scotus – define being as that essentiality or *quidditas* that which comes into being from outside or which does not conflict with being, namely the existence, i.e. where being (existence) produces no contradiction in its (the essence's) concept. In this case 'being' is accidentally predicated (*secundum modum accidentis*), as something that comes to this essentiality from outside; or as an essentiality which is apt to existence (*aptum natum est existere*). But in this respect the essentiality holds being or existence outside its concept. Only if understood this way being can, or to put it more precisely, the *ratio entis* can preserve its univocal meaning. Incidentally this is also the view that Kant assumes. Therefore the proposition <*Caesar est homo*> is true, even if Caesar does not exist; for 'homo' means nothing other than the *natura communis concepta ut haec* (the designed common nature understood as this nature); and only this nature is predicated on 'Caesar'. Whether Caesar exists is a question of contingency. Medieval authors discuss this issue under the question: *Utrum haec sit vera:* Caesar est homo, Caesar est animal, *Caesare non existente*; commonly in their commentaries on *De interpretatione* of Aristotle. One principle of our way of speaking is accepted, 'to be' means 'being something', the essence, namely the *quidditas* whose existence is out of its concept. Even Anselm accepts this difference:

> "I have the idea of an object in my mind, and understand that it really exists are different things".

But this difference does not affect the definition of God as *aliquid quo maius cogitari non potest*; because it cannot be thought greater of something else and at the same time denying its existence.

A second key point of critique amongst Gaunilo's objections concerns the difference between 'speaking' and 'thinking', between 'hearing' and 'understanding'. Thinking and speaking as well as listening and understanding, are different activities of the human mind. According to Lewis Carroll's *Alice in the Wonderland* the proposition <I speak what I am thinking of> is not equivalent to the proposition <I think what I am saying>. So if the fool, by denying the existence of God, hears the proposition *aliquid quo maius cogitari non potest*, he could think of something else, for example, of a non-existing perfect island. The language is no guarantee of thought. Although it is true that <I think what I say>, the fact that the language corresponds to thinking is not correct. But it is certain that thoughts correspond to speech. There is an asymmetry between talking and thinking, hearing and understanding. That amounts to a definition of truth, as

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adaequatio intellectus et rei, on whose theme Anselm wrote an excellent treatise: *De veritate.*

So when I hear the phrase <God is "something of which cannot be thought greater"> it does not automatically signify that I understand the meanings of the words of that phrase. For things inexistent – such as 'Pegasus', 'Hephaistos', 'Athena' and all the gods of Homer's mythology – are in my mind without knowing if they actually exist. What is needed is a demonstration that these entities are not only in my intelligence, but also in reality. 'Being in mind' is not a sufficient argument for the actual existence of these entities. Incidentally, the gods of Greek myth exist, but only in the narrative sense, that is, while they are part of Homer's narration; but if this story exists, this is a contingent fact; as is the case for the existence of Homer, which exists insofar as his narration exists.

Anselm responds to Gaunilo's objection in the following way: something can 'be in the mind' only as being understood; otherwise it would only be a heard word (a word for the ear) or a written word (a word for the eyes). The conversation partner knows exactly what is being talked about and he cannot pretend to be dumb, as if he did not know anything. Thus in line with a benevolent interpretation, and if the fool recognizes the rules of this benevolence when interpreting texts and what he has heard, then he cannot dispute the existence of God. It is not possible, without ending in a self-contradiction, to deny the existence of God, and at the same time to think greater of something else than of him.

Out of the difference between speaking and thinking there follows a further one: There are two moments in the human mind: a) to understand the idea of the object and b) to understand the real existence of this idea of that object, for example, the idea of a painting and its existence in the work performed. But at this point, one can ask, or doubt whether this idea actually exists. For example, in the case of Van Gogh's sunflower, is it only a perfect view of a sunflower or does it actually exist as a painted sunflower? Thus, it can be argued that God, if he were "the most perfect being" (*ens perfectissimum*) and being in the mind, exists really only as a being thought; and in this way, as the example shows: as the perfect idea of a sunflower exists in reality only as a painted idea of a perfect sunflower?

The question is cruel. Does the sunflower of Van Gogh exist as a perfect idea painted of a sunflower; or is it a perfect idea painted of a perfect existing sunflower? But it was just argued that Anselm's definition of God does not mean an *ens perfectissimum.* The change by Gaunilo of Anselm's definition of God as *aliquid quo maius cogitari non potest* is not justified.

Another point: Somebody can still think <God does not exist>. But that phrase – as the analytic philosophy, for example, Bertrand Russell and Willard V. O. Quine showed – is incorrect, because there is a contradiction in it: God, who is at least something, cannot be denied in the predicate. To avoid the contradiction, we

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have to do a grammatical and syntactical transformation of an existential proposition: <there is no X and X is a>; for example: <there is no *prima causa* and that *prima causa* is God>. That way we can avoid the self-contradiction of an existential proposition in its negative form. Thus, the affirmation that God exists has to demonstrate the existence of a first cause (*prima causa*), and then to prove that this cause is God.

But with respect to this there arises a problem about proper nouns. If the name of God is a proper noun, then it is impossible to turn it into identifiers such as *prima causa*, *first unmoved mover*, *perfect being*, etc. According to Peter Thomas Geach, this is a very difficult philosophical task and there is another one: to justify the use of the relative pronoun in the proposition <There is a X which is a>, or <There is a X and X is a>. How appropriate, then, that the *prima causa* is God? Is God not the *first unmoved mover*, or the *ens perfectissimum?* It is impossible to identify God with something else.

We should distinguish carefully between (1) the fictive existence, fictions, which sometimes do not differentiate from dreams (R. Descartes, *Meditatio* II); (2) the virtual existence that forms a large part of our life on the internet and often becomes a surreal existence; (3) the artificial existence, the arts, especially literature and music, perhaps philosophy, too, and (4) finally, the living existence, the existence of life. The proper interpretation of this living existence is in this context at stake. In this regard, Aristotle is the measure: *vivere viventibus est esse:* to live is the being of living things. So the proposition <God exists> turns into the proposition <God lives>. The life is his being, the *ipsum esse per subsistens.*

Finally, Gaunilo seems to anticipate the Cartesian idea of an evil genius (*genius malignus*) that misleads us. And so deceived, we believe in everything: false, dubious things, even things inexistent. Here we must have, then, a certain argument to distinguish truth from error. Anselm's argument of *aliquid quo maius cogitari non potest* is not sufficient to exclude this Cartesian idea of an evil genius.

Also this objection of Gaunilo does not well reflect Anselm's argument: God as *aliquid quo maius cogitari non potest.* Obviously I can be wrong in many relationships, I can make mistakes, believe in false things, and I can then consider true something that only has the appearance of truth. But if I am serious and true to myself, entertaining me with myself and analyzing my thoughts; then I cannot behave that way without self-contradiction. Knowing what is true, I cannot believe, at the same time, on the contrary, the false. I dominate my understanding. To men doubting the existence of God, or even denying it, the definition of Anselm is the right answer.

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Is it Reasonable to Believe in God? An Approach from John Finnis

I

After establishing the grounds of his proposal for a "new" Natural Law Theory, to wit, the *'basic forms of human good'* and the *'basic requirements of practical reasonableness'*, John Finnis achieves, at the very end of his classical "*Natural Law & Natural Rights*" (1980), to demonstrate the reasonableness of the belief in God (not of His existence: it is a demonstration of the reasonableness of the faith concerning His existence). So, at this point (chapter XIII) of his seminal book, Finnis focus on the most important question related to the Philosophy of Religion, namely, the idea of God. More specifically, he focus on its reasonableness. After all, Finnis is not trying to 'prove' the existence of God. He is just attempting to show that the theistic faith is reasonable. This part of the book is properly entitled '*Nature, Reason, God*'. That is because in this chapter Finnis will connect those three ideas in order to offer a deeper explanation of obligation. This chapter is object of some controversy, since it is perhaps dispensable for someone interested just in legal theory (like Hart, for example). In other words, someone interested only in legal theory might as well omit this chapter. However, someone interested in natural law as ethics might not. One interested in natural law as ethics just must face the questions Finnis has delivered in this chapter. Notwithstanding, since Finnis himself is deeply interested in natural law as ethics, he will delineate, at this point of his *opera magna,* some important arguments in defense of theistic faith, especially of its reasonableness.

II

Having the natural law tradition as his background, John Finnis assumes classical theses from it, especially from the tomistic tradition. And he succeeds in restoring the very idea of a natural law in the current debate concerning practical philosophy. In effect, explaining previously some basic concepts, by 'natural' I

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understand here a kind of normative pattern independent from the subjective choices I may do. 'Natural' here means *reasonable.* 'Law', on the other hand, denotes a obligation, a pattern of normativity.

In effect, according to the New Natural Law Theory, practical reason is capable of apprehending 'basic goods', which are also evident (they cannot be demonstrated, which does not mean that they cannot be explained). They are principles *per se nota* known just by knowing the meaning of their terms. Shortly, they are known without any middle term (yet, they are, as we will see below, not intuitions without data). These goods are constitutive elements of human flourishing, a new way of understanding the old idea of *eudaemonia.* They give reasons for action (reasonableness to action). Not only it, they are recognized by any acting person since this person is rational (reasonable). Acting according these goods gives reasonableness to the action. As a matter of fact, they are pre moral and lead us to morality. It is important, in any event, to stress that we are not departing from an idea of human nature to get to normative claims. The point is that these goods are immediately apprehended (they are primary principles). This immediacy means here inderivability. The theory of the *lex naturalis* as it is proposed by Finnis is based on the inderivability of those goods with regard to their origin. The moral agents are immediately aware of those goods (of their goodness). This (the question about the relation between basic human goods and human nature) is an epistemological approach, not an ontological one. First we apprehend the basic goods. Then, they point us to our nature.

Epistemologically, the source of the natural law is Aquinas's first principle of practical reason: *bonum est faciendum et prosequendum, et malum vitandum* ("Good is to be done and pursued and evil is to be avoided,"). According to Germain Grisez and John Finnis this is not a command (an imperative), but a kind of a guide principle, which asks us to search and foster those goods considered basic. This practical principle is similar to those basic theoretical principles, such as the non-contradiction principle. Reason has two basic operations: a theoretical and a practical one. When it investigates nature, it needs, as it was demonstrated by Aristotle, principles such as the non-contradiction principle (*It is impossible that the same thing belong and not belong to the same thing at the same time and in the same respect*). This is the firmest theoretical principle. Without it we could not possibly know anything we know. Anything at all. Both principles, practical and theoretical, are evident. They are not inferred from any previous knowledge. So, as it was just asserted, evidency here means inderivability. Notwithstanding they are not evident for all of us. In order for them to be evident we must know both the syntactic and the semantic elements of the proposition. Some previous knowledge (as well as a functional cognitive ability) is, therefore, required. Here Finnis has in mind the idea of a reasonable person: "To be reasonable (well-informed, intelligent, consistent, free from ar-

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bitrariness …) is primarily understood as obviously a good for me and for any person, a good as self-evidently and underivatively good as life itself"[1].

Regarding the first principle of practical reason, both Grisez and Finnis follow Aquinas argument (who, in turn, followed Aristotle): given that any person who acts does so with a view to an end, this end has, for this agent, the nature of a good. In Aristotle words: "*Every human activity aims at some end that we consider good*". Thus the first principle of practical reason says: "Good is to be done and pursued and evil is to be avoided". Good, in this sentence, is the first thing practical reason apprehends. All the other practical principles are derived from it (and grounded on it).

But now we might ask: Which goods are these? Well, there are countless goods. Nevertheless, there are just a few "basic" goods. The list of basic goods is certainly not closed. Yet, although it is an open list, just a few goods meet the criteria of "basicality". In his *Natural Law and Natural Rights* John Finnis holds that there are seven basic goods. Although he occasionally calls them values, they are not moral values. As it was aforementioned, they are pre-moral. In effect, in 1980 Finnis sets the following seven basic goods: life, knowledge, play, aesthetic experience, sociability or friendship, practical reasonableness and religion. All these basic goods are self-evidently 'good' and cannot be deduced from other premises. All these seven basic goods are equally fundamental. 1. *Life* is the universal drive for self-preservation. As Finnis says, "The term life ….. signifies every aspect of vitality… which puts a human being in good shape for self-determination"[2]. 2. *Knowledge* is also a basic good. Finnis speaks of knowledge for knowledge's own sake and not as a means to some other end. Knowledge as a basic human good is self-evident because it is self-evidently preferable to ignorance. 3. *Play* is another basic human good and in essence it means the capacity for recreational experience and enjoyment, with no purpose other than the activity itself. 4. *Aesthetic experience* is in some ways related to play. However, it (play) does not necessarily imply a capacity to experience some perception of beauty. *Aesthetic experience*, on the other hand, does. 5. *Sociability* or *friendship* has many levels. But it is commonly accepted as a 'good' aspect of life. This good is seemingly an essential aspect of human conduct, considering us as social creatures, *politikon zoon* as *Aristotle put* it. 6. *Practical reasonableness* is not only one of the basic forms of human flourishing (a basic human good) but it also shapes our participation in other basic human goods and serves to assess, as well as to pursue, these same other basic human goods. 7. *Religion* refers (since Cicero, according to Finnis) to a sense of the responsibility of human beings to

1 John Finnis: *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, Oxford 2011, p. 378.
2 Finnis: *Natural Law*, p. 86.

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some greater order than that of their own particularity. It is reasonable to wonder about a sort of order in the universe.

> But is it reasonable to deny that it is, at any rate, peculiarly important to have thought reasonably and (where possible) correctly about these questions of the origins of cosmic order and of human freedom and reason whatever the answer to those questions turns out to be, and even if the answers have to be agnostic or negative?[3]

Regardless their "basicality", their "inderivability", Finnis appeals to some anthropological literature in order to demonstrate (explain) they are instantiated in human communities:

> All human societies show a concern for the value of human life; in all, self-preservation is generally accepted as a proper motive for action, and in none is the killing of other human beings permitted without some fairly definite justification. All human societies regard the procreation of a new human life as in itself a good thing unless there are special circumstances. No human society fails to restrict sexual activity; in all societies there is some prohibition of incest, some opposition to boundless promiscuity and to rape, some favour for stability and permanence in sexual relations. All human societies display a concern for truth, through education of the young in matters not only practical (e. g. avoidance of dangers) but also speculative or theoretical (e. g. religion). Human beings, who can survive infancy only by nurture, live in or on the margins of some society which invariably extends beyond the nuclear family, and all societies display a favour for the values of cooperation, of common over individual good, of obligation between individuals, and of justice within groups. All know friendship. All have some conception of meum and tuum, title or property, and of reciprocity. All value play, serious and formalized, or relaxed and recreational. All treat the bodies of dead members of the group in some traditional and ritual fashion different from their procedures for rubbish disposal. All display a concern for powers or principles which are to be respected as suprahuman; in one form or another, religion is universal.[4]

Anyway, the list of basic human goods is not, as Finnis himself asserts, an exhaustive one. For example, after the publication of *Natural Law and Natural Rights* Finnis came up with two others human basic human goods: 8. *Excellence in Work* and 9. *Marriage*. Excellence in Work was suggested by Finnis, Grisez and Joseph Boyle in 1987[5]. Marriage got the status of basic human good in 1998[6].

3 Finnis: *Natural Law*, 89.

4 Ibid., 83–84.

5 John Finnis, Germain Grisez and Joseph Boyle: 'Practical Principles, Moral Truth, and Ultimate Ends', *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 32, (1987), pp. 99–151. John Finnis, Germain Grisez and Joseph Boyle: *Nuclear Deterrence, Morality and Realism*, Oxford 1987). "As simultaneously rational and animal, human persons can transform the natural world by using realities, beginning with their own bodily selves, to express meanings and serve purposes. Such meaning-giving and value-creation can be realized in diverse degrees. Their realization for its

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All basic human goods are intrinsic to the fulfillment of persons. Any good that is not basic is instrumental (it is not, in this case, an aspect of our human flourishing). Besides, basic human goods are not innate. The very act of grasping (comprehending) a basic human good (which is evident) is similar to what Bernard Lonergan called an "insight". By means of this insight we are able to apprehend, under the light of practical reason, the basic human goods. They are intelligible only by practical reason. This practical process resembles the theoretical one, since in both cases we apprehend indemonstrable axioms which are grounds for knowing and acting. Thus basic human goods give us "reasons for acting". They might be called ultimate ends (reasons with no further reasons). Let's take an example. A medication is good as long as it heals us. Once some latest research shows it is completely ineffective, it simply becomes useless, with no value at all. On the other hand, health is basic because it is part of what "puts a human being in good shape for self-determination" (life). Practical rationality points to those goods worth pursuing. Still, it is not enough to recognize those basic goods. After all, we may use immoral actions in order to achieve them. So we need a kind of method in order to morally achieve them. And here we have the basic requirements of practical reasonableness. These requirements points to the morally right way to achieve those goods. So the question is: how must we act in order to get those goods since even immoral acts might be performed in order to get them? Or, in other words, even a bad act might be performed with the intention to achieve a good such as knowledge (when, for example, someone steals a book from Library arguing that it is a way to foster the basic human good knowledge). A first answer to this question is that any morally justified action ought to promote human flourishing, not only the personal one, but the public human flourishing. Any action ought to be open to the full human flourishing (what includes us and all human beings). All requirements of practical reasonableness follow this idea. Accordingly, the *first* requirement of practical reasonableness is to formulate a rational plan of life. This requirement demands that we must remain open to the value of all the basic goods regardless of what the focus of our rational plan of life is (since it is a rational one). By "rational" I mean here coherent. And this plan is based on one's capacities, circumstances, wealth, pleasure, and so on. We have these elements in mind when we choose a rational plan of life. But we do not give too much value to these instrumental goods. It would be unreasonable to do that, since it would devaluate the basic human goods. The *second* requirement stress that "any commitment to a coherent plan

own sake is another category of basic good: some degree of excellence in work and play" (Finnis, Grisez and Boyle: 'Practical Principles', 107).

6 John Finnis: 'The Good of Marriage and the Morality of Sexual Relations: Some Philosophical and Historical Observations', in: *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 42 (1998), pp. 97–134. See also: John Finnis: *Aquinas: Moral, Political, and Legal Theory,* Oxford 1998.

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of life is going to involve some degree of concentration on one or on some of the basic forms of good (…), but it will be unreasonable if it is on the basis of a devaluation of any of the basic forms of human excellence"[7] (*No Arbitrary Preference Amongst Values*). The *third* requirement is in accordance with the 'Golden Rule' of morality. So it centers on the principle: 'do to others as you would have them do to you'. The *fourth* and the *fifth* requirements ('detachment' and 'commitment') relate to each other and also to the first requirement (coherent plan for life).

According to Finnis the *fourth* requirement demands that one must have a kind of detachment from his personal project. This detachment will keep him 'sufficiently open to all the basic forms of good'. The *fifth* requirement forbids an attitude of apathy toward one's own commitment, because without such a commitment he would not really be participating in the basic human goods. The *sixth* requirement relates to the limited relevance of consequences: efficiency within reason. Here Finnis is saying that one should be efficient in his action in trying to carry out the basic goods. The *seventh* requirement of practical reasonableness is that of respect for every basic value in every act. The *eighth* requirement of practical reasonableness is that of promoting the common good of communities. It serves as the basis for our "common moral responsibilities", obligations, and duties. It assumes that participating in the common good is to realize what would enhance the participation in goods of both one's neighbor and of himself. The *ninth* requirement is that "one should not do what one judges or thinks or 'feels' – all – in – all – should not be done". In other words, practical reasonableness requires that one acts in accordance with one's reason. Later, in his *Fundamentals of Ethics*[8] (1983) he will set the *tenth* requirement of practical reasonableness: it is unreasonable to make an option for simulations of apparent illusionary goods rather than for real genuine goods. For Finnis, the end product of the above mentioned requirements of practical reasonableness is morality.

To sum up, for John Finnis "there are human goods that can be secured only through the institutions of human law, and requirements of practical reasonableness that only those institutions can satisfy"[9]. We have insights that show us those basic goods. And insight here does not mean some sort of deduction. They are not intuitions either. It takes some effort (especially a cognitive effort) in order for us to apprehend them. In another words, here practical reasoning (which is activity) is necessary. Our starting point is how we act spontaneously. Then we reason about action, trying to find a reason for it. Thus we try to find a reason for the actions we had already performed. We start from the ends (goods),

7 Finnis: *Natural Law*, p. 105.
8 John Finnis: *Fundamentals of Ethics*, Oxford 1983.
9 Finnis: *Natural Law*, p. 3.

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or aims, of our actions. Anyway, the point is: "The basic forms of human flourishing are obvious to anyone acquainted (…) with the range of human opportunities"[10]. Anyway, we might ask with Finnis: "But would it not be a mistake to expect any deeper level of explanation of the practical reasonableness of community, authority, law, rights, justice, and obligation, once their explanation has been pursued from practice to self-interest, and thence to the common good which both friendship and rational impartiality require us respect and favour? The answer must be: No, we cannot reasonably rest here. There are further practical questions"[11].

Someone interested only in legal theory might well stop reading *Natural Law and Natural Rights* right here, at the very beginning of the chapter thirteen. Nevertheless, since we are interested in natural law as ethics we must go further. "We cannot reasonably rest here". And it is appropriate to stress that the question of God is here part of *moralis philosophia.* That is why it is related to the first principle of practical reason, which points to it.

As a matter of fact, even though the human basic goods, understood as the basic aspects of human well-being, are evidently good, inevitably some further practical questions will arise, such as the question regarding a deeper explanation of obligation. Or, in a simple question, *what is the ultimate point of living according to the requirements of practical reasonableness?* The answer is: if there is no God there is no ultimate point at all. In this sense, the belief in God strengthens the normative force of reason (its requirements). Anyway, *we first know* the prescriptivity of practical reason's principles. *Then we are* in conditions to know its transcendent source (therefore God is not a reason for acting: the basic human goods are). Thereby God is the great idea that synthesizes the idea of a more-than-human source of meaning and value. To put it differently: morality, *epistemologically,* precedes faith (God comes *ontologically* first).

Another word we might use to denote God is the Greek word *Logos*, in the sense of a full intelligibility, of a full practical intellect. So, the moral obligation to seek the basic human goods would be a compelling motivation to acceptance of the very idea of God (*Logos*). The theistic faith would confirm reason's findings. Indeed, it would not only confirm it, but, above all, it would exceed what can be known without the aim of revelation.

Here we are, as it was stated above, in the context of moral knowledge. So the justification of practical reason does not lie on theoretical principles. As science lies on principles such as the non-contradiction one, practical reason has as its subject action. Its principle is not the same as the one speculative reason uses in order to achieve knowledge about the world. Therefore, here we are interested in

10 Ibid, p. 371.
11 Finnis: *Natural Law*, p. 371.

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facts performed freely (free choices). They are not performed for the sake of something merely empirical. They are rationally guided. There must be a purpose here, a rational one. and it is relevant to distinguish a "*purpose*" from "*that about a purpose which makes one rationally interested in acting for that purpose, namely , the good (understood here as a reason for acting*)". It may be noticed that we are here concerned only with rationally motivated actions (and not with emotional motives). In other words, we are interested in what is rationally desired (and not in what is emotionally desired). We have natural dispositions which will fulfill our potentialities. They provide data for the insights in which one knows the first self-evident principles of practical knowledge corresponding to substantive goods. For example, a scientist pursues systematically the truth. But he does so the same way a curious child does. They both are following the same basic principle (the basic human good 'knowledge'). The difference lies on the fact that the scientist knows better how to pursue the truth. He knows it ('knowledge') is an aspect of integral human fulfillment (happiness). As a matter of fact, knowledge is essential for us to promote the basic goods. Theoretical reflection deepens our understanding of the basic goods. For example, we may not be able to promote life if we do not know something about biology.

In this sense, "the self-evidence of the principles of practical knowledge does not preclude their being rationally defended".

Anyway, let's focus on the foundation of the natural law: the principle according to which "good is to be done and pursued". Just as the theoretical principle of non-contradiction operates in speculative reasoning, prohibiting incoherence, the first principle of all practical reasoning functions as a principle by prohibiting pointlessness. But we must consider that even morally bad actions may have a point. After all, one chooses to do what is morally wrong for some reason. In another words, even an immoral action responds to the first principle: good is to be done and pursued. Indeed, in order to be morally good it is necessary to be completely reasonable. In this sense, right reason is the same as unfettered reason. But it is not always unfettered, since basic goods are not the only source of motivation for rationally guided actions. For example, feelings might very well impair the rational guidance of an action. So we have here two distinct instances, the instance of directiveness ("is to be") and the instance of normativity ("ought to be"): and we must move from directiveness to normativity in order to go towards the integral human fulfillment. That is because the ideal of good will is represented by an ideal community, which embodies the idea of integral human fulfillment (here Finnis is in accordance with the Christian faith: this world we are living in is the first stage of the kingdom of heaven). This integral human fulfillment is not the simple individualistic satisfaction of desires or preferences. It is the realization, so far as possible, of all basic goods in all persons (in past present and future), living together in full balance. Integral

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human fulfillment expresses here the *telos* of natural law theory, namely the full human flourishing. A good will (which has here some similarity with Kant's idea of a good will: in both cases it is guided by reason) lead us to this ultimate end. This ultimate end is an ideal whose attractiveness depends on all the reasons for acting which can appeal to morally good people ultimate object of good will. Not just that, it is a unifying principle, since the life of a virtuous person must be unified in view of a single purpose. And only a religious commitment can establish such a purpose. Human fulfillment, in this particularly sense, can be considered a participation in divine goodness. The religion's idea of God expresses exactly the harmony with the source of all meaning and value. Only a religion commitment can integrate the whole of a morally good life. It is just reasonable to hope for this integral fulfillment, that is, for this *beatitudo perfecta*. Contingent reality express a "*is but need not be*", while the transcendent reality express the "*is*". As a matter of fact, it accounts for the "*is*" of "is *but need not be*". The "*is to be*" of the principle "good *is to be* pursued" points to its transcendent source. And this transcendent source is thought of *as if* it were a person leading us to the integral fulfillment (*beatitudo perfecta*). We might call it 'more than human source' (of meaning and value). Practical reason guides us to this end, which assures its reasonableness. In another terms, a rationally guided volition is always oriented to some intelligible good, which points us to its transcendent source. As it is held by Finnis in "Aquinas"[12], the existence of God is not a "conceptual" or "logical" idea, but a "rational" one. So God is conceived by a "practical understand and chosen by a kind of willing". Or, we are rationally (not logically) required to believe in God. That is because the belief in God makes best sense of everything. We have here a deeper explanation of obligation as well as a comprehension concerning the reasonableness of self sacrifice in friendship and in pursuing the basic goods. Having the idea of God as a background makes reasonable all those demands of reason. Otherwise, its claims would be, paradoxically, unreasonable. Shortly, with the idea of God we understand the point of living according to the requirements of practical reasonableness.

Summing up what I am trying to say, that adherence to natural law is rationally unstable in the absence of a theistic stance. Finnis certanly is not saying that the goodness of the basic human goods is explained by the goodness of God. After all, first we grasp the goodness of the basic human goods by practical reason. Later, and only later, their very reasonableness addresses us to God ('more-than-human' source of meaning and value), a unifying idea that gives sense especially to the obligation, to the basic goods and to the requirements of practical reasonableness. Without it (the idea of God), it would be as if the practical reason would be demanding from us unreasonable actions and purposes.

12 Finnis: *Aquinas: Moral, Political, and Legal Theory,* Oxford 1998.

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Finite Though Striding Subjectivity: Reason as a Reminder of the Finiteness and Infinitude of Religion

As a graduate student in the 1990s I recall a caveat raised by my professor of theological ethics, George W. Forell (1919–2011), at Hans Küng's model in his project of global ethics (Küng 1991). Forell's main point, if I do not misconstrue it, derived from his unwillingness to endeavor inter-religious dialogue as involving much more than straightforward practical dialogue on concrete moral issues.[1]

This kind of dialogue was supposed to take place on the basis of common insights and interests on the achievable good generated by specific, culture-bound, uses of human reason. In my reading, such uses are not to be traced back to a strong and/or static conception of natural law – which is exactly what the catchword itself ordinarily means.

Thus, uses of "reason" are likely to have part of their origin in communal religious convictions, and may to some extent be correlated with particular religious sightings of reality and attitudes towards it. Also, as it must be the case, the latter are filled with historical content and mediated by particular appropriations of revelation which are absent on "reason" itself. Hence, rational deliberation must be seen as procedurally independent, having a modest value and content of their own. From the human perspective, these changeable values and contents should be enough at the very least to keep the world from major collapse. They ought to be protected, lest they be hindered by particular religious claims run amok in the wider public, pluralistic sphere of societies, also as these are necessarily connected to each other.

1 C.f. George W. Forrel: 'Is there Lutheran ethical discourse?', in: *Word & World* 15 (1995), pp. 5–13, here p. 12: "Luther's rejection of reason as a way to reach God must not be misunderstood as the advocacy of non-rational measures to solve the problems that confront us in our life together." For similar results, though coming from a different overall position, see the critique of Küng's project by Gavin D'Costa: 'Postmodernity and religious plurality: is a common global ethic possible or desirable?', in: Graham Ward (ed.): *The Blackwell Companion to Postmodern Theology*, Oxford 2001, pp. 131–143.

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According to this general stance, "reason" as an independent tool intervening between religions and their (surrounding) cultures is always already embedded in specific conceptions of both earthly and transcendent good life, even if "transcendent" be understood rather meagerly. It is good enough, if the "transcendent" sphere is seen to limit human *hybris*, also is it tends to totalitarianisms of all sorts.

Moreover, these conceptions cannot simply be brought under a minimal common denominator. Indeed, not even such one as that expressed by the "golden rule"[2] – understood as some kind of minimalist "core" of an universal divine law both discernible across traditions and sufficient for attaining religious understanding and religiously laden practical purposes. Even the golden rule would presuppose life contexts and varying, possibly differing interpretations of the law and its possible fulfillments. And although these lived contexts and interpretations are not simply private, neither are they meant to reoccupy, through the lauds of "tradition" and "community" (*Gemeinschaft*), the meanwhile independent sphere of ethical and legal deliberation. At the end, the desire to shape reality according to those might lead to religious strife and the strengthening of ideologically laden laicistic conceptions of religion and religious communities. As it is known, this opposite stance tends to see the latter as a case of morbidity or psychological disturbance, and thus incapable of ethical deliberation – which makes religion and religious communities at most a tool to be co-opted and used.

Still according to the chosen understanding of reason and religions as they may contribute to ethical progress, Küng's model would imply unwarranted expectations of reaching religious – let us say: "expressive" or (special) hermeneutic – and not merely practical – let us say: "goal-oriented" – consensus as a realistic basis for common action. But on which grounds would those expectations be "unwarranted"? Well, either because the larger, assumedly agreed-upon model of ethical reasoning is not truly universal, depending on religious and cultural embeddings. Or else because it is far too abstract to be meaningful not only for an aristocratic elite, but for individuals who take seriously the historicity of their own traditions. Or, still, because the proposed model is even less prone to be detached from deeper, both religious and existential, background presuppositions.

> In a word, the overall conclusion seemed to be – and still tends to be now – that, as they get in touch through individuals who really are aware of their historical identities, different religions "want" or even "must" talk to each other first and foremost about

2 Hans Küng: *A global ethic: the declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions*, London 1993, e. g. p. 34.

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practical issues than about theology or a general philosophy of religion proper. If at all, the latter are only overtly entertained by religious individuals.[3]

Indeed, when the latter happens, what may come out as a result is some sort of personal *religious* philosophy instead. This is true especially when various discursive and competence levels are not kept apart with the required degree of definiteness. Should this happen, then one of its popular, not reflected forms may come to the fore as some variety of trans-religious, aristocratic "mysticism". Though without much success, it strives after some communal form in contexts of growing pluralism.

While this may well satisfy and unburden people on the fringes of their own tradition, here and there perceived as coercive, it scarcely – if at all – helps to create a shared understanding of both rational and concrete courses of action. In religion, therefore, at least as far as religions themselves are concerned, convergence on concrete issues on the table must always be gained in a piecemeal way, and to a much larger extent with reference to secular norms for concerted action. The grand appearances of religious leaders on the media tend to prove the point rather than disprove it.[4] Even their symbolic status and usefulness for common action depends on a difficult balance to be gained by interpreters as to overall significance and the building of motivation between political, and thus democratic-pluralist, claims; and religious, and thus (at least relatively) embodied, and less than universal, religious authority.

Given such strictures, it seems advisable to entertain a different prospect and idea. If one realistically expects a deepened discussion about reason as such to come out of religions themselves, then the latter, especially as the owned conviction of autonomous individuals, have to play an integral part in the process.

As a matter of fact, at least qua moral agents religious individuals are able to discriminate between purely religious and rational motivation. They also know these are only partially directed at the same objects, or that there may be all the more overlapping with agents from other religious traditions the lesser impact their general faithful stance bears on "penultimate objects".[5] But insofar as they

3 As to individuals (as persons), any theology done between religions (at times: confessions) endowed with self awareness and identity either fosters better self-understandings or, together with other momentous factors, triggers changes thereof – i. e. "conversion".

4 After all, not only cooperation, but any attainable understanding whatsoever, can only occur under the constraint of varying – both contextual and ever specific – legal, political, and cultural factors. It has become increasingly clear that these factors lead to fragmentation not only across traditions and religions, but within them as well.

5 Insofar as religions fail to make a distinction between penultimate and ultimate goals and/or objects, so as to refer the whole of life to the ultimate, they may tend towards forms of theocratic action and/or government. If such traditions become both dominant and intolerant, the model suggested here is not useful at all. In this case, other religions in the same context have either to approach practical quietism or "bear their own cross", so to speak.

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belong to traditions they really own, they will argue and act morally in the first person which their tradition also "is", so to speak. There is no need to look for the "anonymous" Christian – or for that matter: Hindu and so on – here. Even as it arises from its particular revelation or interpretation thereof, from its historical embedment, religion may tend to reason, too – depending, of course, on what one takes as the accepted definition.

For a similar reason, and from a different vantage point, it may be an unfounded hope to expect "religion(s)" to get translated into something supposedly more or even purely "reasonable", be it as a form of syncretistic religious common denominator or a general, "outer" pattern of belief and action forgetful of its (only) "private", "religious" irrational sphere. Why should religions be so translated partly from without, in a sense suggested not long ago by J. Habermas? And how would they necessarily and sufficiently be translated from within, without at the same time indulging in some sort of incomplete or semi-rationalism?

In a way, the point to be driven home is quite simple: reason in religion, rather than being a starting point, must be in some sense an arrival point, either real (by analogy) or yet to be reached as an ideality infinitely surpassing present conditions and circumstances. The idea that religions are born in a state of general compatibility with practical and even theoretical reason, strengthening the latter through revelation or grace as a form of authority, only begs the question whether the concept of reason as inclusive of a dynamic, inner, and intrinsic movement does not depend itself, exceedingly, on the vitality of religion.[6]

To a large extent, religion and faith tend to live from irrational surroundings. There is no point in arguing for their rationality from outer, objective realms except for the apologetic purpose of reaching a point of agnostic equilibrium. Those irrational surroundings, however, along with and/or notwithstanding their lived-experience, are taken to be benign and ultimately coherent and "realistic" in spite of all judgment on appearances.

Thus, at least before the end time religions, but also autonomous ethical individuals owning them, must to a greater or lesser extent rely on that "positivity" with which the young Hegel struggled so much.[7] This irrationality is a residue of the sum total of experience itself. It remains, not simply being an exception to the "normal course" of nature. The positivity which in religion appears in meaningful ways is multiform. It remains plural and can only be (truly)

6 It must be clear that "religion" here is a normative concept to be found in principle in any religious community/tradition, lest "vitality" be confused with the object of (empirical) measurement, demographics or "success". This normative dimension cannot be gained simply from without, but must be "owned" by conscious, subjective life.

7 Georg W. F. Hegel: *Early theological writings*, Chicago 1907/1948, pp. 67–181.

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binding to free subjects who dare to take a step towards the infinite and absolute in contingent situations: in the very midst of the finite and relative.

Hence, in order for religions to support efforts not only toward practical, goal-oriented and specific understandings – which may be enough in most cases –, but also toward a relatively common expressive attitude which may count as specifically "religious", a minimalist background assumption must be shared. This assumption has a minimal content. It provides a habitual convergence on the grounds of which secular or "profane" reality will be sighted as penultimate and yet as intrinsically worth of being.[8] It would have, however, to satisfy two initial conditions.[9]

First, and on the one hand, the cultural-religious partners ought not to impose their own theoretical or practical perspectives of reason on everybody else, especially in those cases where they may have more than enough leverage for it. And this must obtain even if they are convinced that their own understanding of reason-in-action is somehow universal –up to the point of being, on the inside perspective, all-encompassing of courses of thought and action down to the tiniest details. Of course reason is somehow universal, but there is e. g. no "catholic" reason in the same sense of religious proposals of universality, that is, both anticipatory of the "really real"[10] and claiming different degrees of embodied concretion. Reason is left alone to its natural powers, whereby the sense of "natural" rhymes with "modest", "questioning" and the like.

Second, and on the other hand, partners ought not simply to acquiesce to, assuming as definitive, a secular framework for reason external to religions, however formal that framework could be. One could think here, e. g., of a consensus theory of truth, especially when read in more than a purely procedural way. When read, for instance, as implying ontological assumptions of its own, detached from, or reductive of, faith. Or, what amounts to quite the same, as implying an exclusive agreement with progressive culture or a scientific worldview.

8 This tension must be kept, even if at varying degrees, at least in a normative conception of religion stemming (in any case) from Christianity. It would be able to avoid both (metaphysical) dualism and (if only mitigated) naturalism.

9 Unless, of course, those efforts be, in the meantime, changed into mission. But then it makes no sense to talk about a minimalist content. Minimalist content also and clearly stands for less than what Hans Joas seems to suggest by "value generalization" as one of the required adaptations of value commitments under the conditions of increased contingency. In a way, "value generalization" seems to translate into his own variety of interpretive sociology Küng's project of a world ethic. But "proceduralization" and "empathy" might just be enough for self-conscious religious engagement in rational practical dialogue with other religions and secular worldviews. See Hans Joas: *Do we need religion? On the experience of self-transcendence*, Boulder (CO) 2008, pp. 31–32.

10 In an epistemological sense described by W. Pannenberg's use of "prolepsis" (programmatically since Wolfhart Pannenberg (1968). Dogmatic theses on the doctrine of revelation.

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The first move, namely, to impose one's own concept of reason on everybody else – however quietly and smoothly it may happen –, would not only mean to confuse religion and philosophy. It would force one to assume a concept of philosophy in which "our human knowledge of the ultimate" would pose as "ultimate in the same sense".[11] Though having little reason to do so, authoritarian types of theology have more than once attempted to do this, down to the point of setting limits even to God's wisdom and will. (Indeed, they did it probably more often than philosophers, to whom it was basically left to uncover the hybrid, only semi-rationalistic character of the reason at hand.)

As to the second move – namely, the veto on adopting a rational framework external to the specific religion or religions in dialogue –, probably much more must be said. Generally, the veto only requires a religious use of reason not be agnostic or "non-metaphysical" in the same sense as more recent secular uses might define the terms. Definitely not in the same sense on theological grounds, but neither on philosophical to be yet spelled out.

But what if those in the business of doing an apologetics of religion attempt to show the flaws and gaps in the agnostic or non-metaphysical webs of science as congenial to both scientific and philosophical naturalism? What if they use similar weapons in that attempt as they focus not on the primary acquaintance with truth and meaning of religious subjectivity, but rather, to cite a major current example, on a probabilistic theory of confirmation applied to natural objects or "systems"– and not to history e.g. in Pannenberg's sense? Well, it might be the case that in philosophy of religion such strategy brings back to the agenda, in a credible way, the issue of the supernatural, the possibility of miracles and both the substantial independence and continued existence of a soul, however conceived.

While this gesture may shed light on the openness of science and the provisional nature of background beliefs associated with it, in its positive significance it does rely too much on a realist-objectivistic kind of ontology. Such an approach takes philosophy to be "world knowledge", and ultimately cannot conceive of any metaphysical realism without the notion of objectivity as substance.[12] But not

11 Charles Hartshorne: 'Rorty's Pragmatism and farewell to the age of faith and enlightenment', in: Saatkamp, Jr., Herman J. (ed.): *Rorty and pragmatism: the philosopher responds to his critics*, Nashville 1995, p. 17.

12 Richard Kroner: *Von Kant bis Hegel*, vol. 4, Tübingen 2007, p. 44, 76, 149, against the general concept of philosophy (as already in Plato) as "*Welterkenntnis*". For the refusal of "*Gegenständlichkeit*" in (most) of the newer German theological tendencies, see Dirk Evers: 'Neuere Tendenzen in der deutschsprachigen evangelischen Dogmatik', in: *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 140 (2015), pp. 3–22. Though fair enough in his analysis, Evers does not seem to be sympathetic to most of the positions he classifies as focused on "Arbeit am Religionsbegriff", which he dismisses as in some sense un-realistic. At least in the case of our topic, it is doubtful if this sort of (general) "work" is superfluous or intrinsically flawed.

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only that: it also fails to understand the nature of the conviction of faith internal to religions insofar as it mistakes it for current, more epistemic notions of "belief".[13]

On the other hand, from a background theological perspective one is led to endorse the rootedness of reason in the dynamics of subjectivity. Subjectivity is an overarching concept in which theoretical and practical reason, but also religion normatively conceived, may meet. Indeed, the inner connection between reason and subjectivity makes even room for forms of believing agnosticism. These may be exemplified by Kant's moral or rational faith,[14] compatible or at least akin to certain forms of religion as it is; or by an "active agnosticism" in K. Jasper's sense.[15] To be sure, the concurrent assertion would here apply that reason in its completion, unity, and identity cannot be *a priori* exhausted by (human) subjectivity, remaining for it partly an ideal.

An example thereof might be found in Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals.* The several allusions to a "rational being"[16] there most certainly serve the purpose of thought-experiment and transcendental argument. Still, it cannot simply be discarded that Kant's gesture refers to a living, not only abstract ideal – as the immediately following idealistic developments in epistemology, metaphysics and the philosophy of religion clearly illustrate. The gesture behind the much vilified "doctrine of the postulates" might as well function as a rather poignant instance of "extrapolating" reason *qua* thinking subjectivity which entertains ultimate thoughts.[17] These are ultimate in the sense of being real

13 See my assessment elsewhere: Luís H. Dreher (2010): 'Vida, liberdade e subjetividade religiosa: mapeando um acesso possível à questão filosófica de Deus', in: Xavier, Maria L. L. de O. (ed.): *A questão de Deus: pensaios filosóficos*, Sintra 2010, p. 140, nn. 59, 60.

14 An interesting restatement, clearly similar to, but – despite the title's wording – more decidedly Kantian and at the end ethico-religious than Henrich's, is provided by Volker Gerhardt: D*er Sinn des Sinns. Versuchüber das Göttliche*, München 2015.

15 Karl Jaspers, *Cifras de la transcendencia*, [trans. by Jaime F. Barrio], Madrid 1993p. 15. Gerhardt: *Der Sinn des Sinns*, p. 211, seems to build on Jaspers, though moving, or rather "striding", (still) farther: "In *historischer, systematischer* und *kritischer* Perspektive kommen wir um den Begriff des Göttlichen nicht herum. *Wir* denken es als das über uns *Hinausreichende,* als das uns *Umgreifende,* als das *alles Tragende* und *Vollkommene,* als das *Ganze alles Denkens und Wollens.* Dabei *denken* wir es uns nicht nur als ein (wie auch immer begriffenes) 'Etwas', für das *wir* verschiedene Begriffe verwenden können, sondern *wir verstehen* es als Etwas, *das uns etwas angeht."*

16 Immanuel Kant: *Groundwork for the metaphysics of morals*, [transl. by Allen W. Wood, with essays by J.B. Schneewind et alii], New Haven 2002, p. 5; 16, n.*; 24; 28; 56 (here for "rational beings" as "persons" of an "intelligible world"). Human beings are obviously taken by Kant as our known type of such "being", but the argument – and thus the scope of morality, too – is not at all "anthropological".

17 Dieter Henrich: *Denken und Selbstsein. Vorlesungen über Subjektivität,* Frankfurt a.M. 2007, p. 135, 275, 370.

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enough for us to live by them and within their scope, in a way not at all detrimental to human moral freedom and responsibility.

Among contemporary thinkers, Dieter Henrich seems to move precisely in this direction. According to him,

> Inside the whole of the world which opens up to the subject in connection with the continuity of its self-consciousness, the subject as person of course has a position which its body occupies. But it cannot conceive itself out of this position *insofar as* it is subject. Hence it must equally perform the opposite striding towards both its ground and the whole of the world in which subjects are included and out of which, unlike it happens in the natural scientific image of the world – already on the basis of its formal disposition –, the concept of a subject is not completely eliminated. (2) This striding movement is all the more urgent the more the subject is pressured by the question concerning the background reasons for its life, and the more it is drawn into orientation conflicts. This question has as its goal finding out whether the whole to which that ground belongs, and to whose bottom the subject knows it cannot get, stands in some sort of an agreement to its act of living; or whether it is totally indifferent towards this life – [indifferent] in such a way that any affirmation under the sign of which life can become actualized would need to be first gained or imagined only out of this very same life.[18]

It might surprise us that Henrich's thesis that reason cannot be, in its deepest structure, except as conscious life moving back and forth between subjectivity and moral personhood, is to be found in the repository of religions itself. As a model one can take Luther's Christian type of theology, with which this writer is relatively more familiar.

For the sake of summarizing, I avail myself of Lewis Spitz's reading of Luther[19], who correctly finds textual proof for three different understandings of reason in the reformer's work. They all point to the tension, but also possible provisional agreement, between reason and ethical-religious subjectivity. The *first* and perhaps most important understanding for a contemporary philosophical approach to our problem defines reason as plainly "limited". In a way, it adumbrates what we may broadly call the "Kantian paradigm" as long as we keep at a distance later positivistic and scientistic intrusion.

The *second and the third ones* are less descriptive and more normatively loaded. From here the decision as to the final import of agnosticism may eventually arise. Of these, understanding 2 is polemic: it tirelessly battles against the "arrogance" of reason, also in its practical use. As it is well known, insofar as the historical Luther draws an image of "arrogant reason", he identifies it with

18 Henrich: *Denken und Selbstsein.*, p. 250–251.

19 Lewis W. Spitz: *The religious renaissance of the German humanists*, Cambridge 1963, pp. 247–249.

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scholasticism generally[20]. Understanding 3, on the other hand, opens up room for a healthier use of "regenerate" reason where the dichotomy of, and actual battle, between faith and reason is theoretically suspended.

Insofar as Leibniz – more clearly – and Hegel – to some extent – can be read as both "Lutherans" in these typological senses of reason, they do exemplify uses of "limited plus regenerate" reason. And yet this must be said *cum grano salis.* For from Luther's point of view, the central position of a dynamic, paradoxical anthropology precludes the idea of complete regenerate reason in the present. Indeed, it does so quite in the same way as it digs a trench over against mystical prospects of any total overcoming of human arrogance. (Before the vision of glory as a final gift, that is.) Now of all thinkers, Hegel in particular has been interpreted in more than one major trend of contemporary philosophy as the arch-arrogant thinker of "system closure"[21]. In my opinion neither this (theologically or metaphysically) orthodox, nor the overtly subjectivist or "existential" interpretations are, on principle, adequate examples of a Christian reading of philosophical thought somehow informed by the "Lutheran" type of Christian theology.[22] For there have always been a few, but steady voices in philosophical discourse taking exception to the tale of a would-be stable, foundational, self-transparent, anthropocentric subject since Descartes. These signs allow for reading at least a group of thinkers from early modernity onwards as neither falling back to a contemplative reading of self-forgotten subjectivity, nor moving decisively beyond a subjectivity structurally akin to the one found within the religious horizon.[23]

20 Though mainly in the kind of Thomistic thought that, albeit in a deviated form, he received as a Biblical theologian standing in Augustine's tradition. On the other hand, Luther presupposes D. Scotus work on the "will". "But", according to Karl Holl: *What did Luther understand by religion?*, Philadelphia 1977, p. 60ff, "it is an illusion to think that he finally fell back again into Ockhamism after having surmounted it at the very beginning in his concept of God: God is not indefinite will but will defined as love."

21 As in a "deconstructionist" like J. Derrida, or even as eventually falling short of a true concept of intersubjective reason, as in Jürgen Habermas: *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, [transl. by Frederick Lawrence], Cambridge (Mass.) 1987, p. 23ss.

22 It may sound as a bold claim to state that the "regenerate" use of reason added to the – in principle "naturally" achievable – "limited" use prevents arrogance, either religious or secular. Indeed, the currency of all sorts of "parochial universalism" is to be seen everywhere. But the claim may be more palatable when read through other lenses, e. g. if one applies to Hegel's supposed "arrogance" a hermeneutic akin to that suggested by Friedrich Paulsen: 'Kant der Philosoph des Protestantismus', in: *Kant-Studien* 4 (1900), pp. 1–31.

23 Today, the move beyond subjectivity seems to be leading in religion not so much to relativism, but to (moralistic) fundamentalisms. And yet, through them religions will not be saved from "subjectivism" or "individualism" in a new way. Nor is there reason to believe that the historical and systematic origins of the (assumedly necessary) relation between subjectivity and nihilism are adequately dealt with e. g. by John Milbank: 'The theological critique of philosophy in Hamann and Jacobi', in: John Milbank / Catherine Pickstock / Graham Ward

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Even if from afar, these instances implicitly show the importance for philosophical, but also for religious ethics, of what one may generally label the idealistic heritage. Here one might mention not only readings of Hegel coming recently out of the Pittsburgh School, as they seem to resist the naturalistic main current of American pragmatism.[24] More to the point is, in my view, the move away from a linguistic framework – "foundational" in its own way – and the calling into question of the primacy of sociality and inter-subjectivity.

I think precisely of renewed efforts in metaphysics of subjectivity departing from the idea of self-consciousness, as e. g. in M. Frank's and especially D. Henrich's work. There one can find a model to construe reason as a dynamics akin to the finiteness and infinitude of both lived and reflected religion. But also as a reminder to the practical consequences of enlisting a broader concept of "reason as a mediator between religions and cultures" in the sense we have been depicting. By working at the level of subjectivity and thus of basic attitudes towards, reason may help to prevent dangerous developments of a suppression of the relativity- and contingency-side at the root of those primary levels of (religious) subjectivity.[25]

Reason and religion converge somewhat precisely as lived-out. But the convergence may move farther. For they may soon be elevated, in the same religious individuals, into forms of thought which are lively and living, delving into their practical and metaphysical presuppositions by the way of self-exploration. If this thought happens – and among many other things it may happen in religion, too[26] –, then the movement of finite yet striding subjectivity is triggered off. It may be even completed as ultimate thoughts (*letzte Gedanken*) to which reason refers back and forth in the very performance of life.

(eds.): *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, London 1999, pp. 21–37. – not only to this paper but to the larger issue – maybe found in Gordon E. Michalson: 'Re-reading the post-Kantian tradition with Milbank', in: *Journal of Religious Ethics* 32 (2004), pp. 357–83. Eventually, much hinges on showing (also Kant's *modern*) rationalism its legitimate and due place, like many a writer, to some extent also Paulsen (see n. 22 above) suggested.

24 See Jana Elisa Falkenroth; Attila Karakus; David P. Schweikard: 'Comparing Brandom's critical reading and Hegel's systematic enterprise', in: Prien, Bernd; Schweikard, David P. (ed.): *Robert Brandom: analytic pragmatist (= Münster lectures on philosophy 10)*, Frankfurt/ New Brunswick 2008, pp. 101–114.; also Michael Pohl; Raja Rosenhagen; Arne M. Weber: 'Realist and idealist interpretations of Brandom's account of objectivity', in: Bernd Prien and David P. Schweikard (eds.): *Robert Brandom: analytic pragmatist (= Münster lectures on philosophy 10)*, Frankfurt/ New Brunswick 2008, pp. 89–100.

25 One example of such forgetfulness may be seen in the fateful combination of instrumental reason – as embodied in a range of technological and informational possibilities – and (arrogant) religious fundamentalism.

26 Though not with the logical necessity it unfolds in (methodic, systematic) philosophy as a dynamics of reason developed to its possible limits.

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As such, reason may reach out towards its ground as subjectivity and conceives of a totality in which that very ground can be adequately explained. The infinite totality may be then supposed to be of a kind in which finite subjectivity can rest in the middle of the conflicting tendencies of life,[27] and even of cultural and religious disagreement or discord. What is more: the assurance of primary religious lived-experience in a religion may unveil the very same structure it does in other religions and in forms of thought basically free from the norms of positive, traditional religions. This structure is no universal religion, neither is it detrimental to the truth character accorded by religious individuals to their own positive religion and their specific doctrinal forms of expression.

By this detour one does not move too far from the main point. Reason moving back and forth from limited, through arrogant, to regenerate conditions depicts the very internal divisiveness of the human situation. Now this "divided" situation could be easily illuminated from various perspectives, ranging from philosophical anthropology to psychology[28] and possibly beyond, provided they do not eliminate subjectivity as such. But according to the theological framework I am drawing upon, this situation certainly takes place before God: after the Fall and before the vision of Glory, but at any rate already upon receiving justification.

This implies, however, that the structure of a reason existentially rooted in subjectivity is thoroughly social, too. The structure can be found to be true as much in theological anthropology as in a theological philosophy of religion – broadly understood here as the attempt at defining the essence of a collectively, inter-subjectively shared, historical type of religion. The main point being, all the while, that there is no easy or straight progress here. On the contrary, reason is also affected by the quandaries of subjectivity generally and permanently seeks for orientation. These quandaries, by the way, are not simply related to the will as the defining anthropological trait. Sin affects reason, at the very least by forcing limits upon it. But it does not simply kill it, providing for it ethical uses.

At this point the question arises whether reason, even if rooted in subjectivity, may be uncoupled from will and personal existence. Is there at all a possibility for religion or religions to abstract, if only for the sake of distinction and analysis, between background metaphysical assumptions and ethical norms or demands?

In search for an answer, let us look again at our religious object of choice. Luther scholarship has in more than a representative identified the tenor of Luther's position as integrally "ethico-religious". There is seemingly no neat way

27 Dieter Henrich: 'Philosophy and the Conflict between Tendencies of Life', in: Shuxian Liu and Robert E.Allison (eds.): *Harmony and strife: contemporary perspectives*, East & West Hong Kong 1989, pp. 21–31.

28 In psychology, though focusing on the extreme and pathological aspects, see Laing, R. D.: *The divided self. An existential study in sanity and madness*, London/ New York 1960/1990.

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to abstract theoretical and practical perspectives. This was a remark made already by K. Holl, an author of the so-called *Luther Renaissance* and a contemporary to the crisis period of 20th century philosophy between two World Wars.

Readings like that by Holl may contribute to pinpoint three aspects of Luther's thought which might prove congenial to any current possible concept of reason as possible mediator between religions and cultures. As a general reminder, one has to understand that here we have to do with a concept of reason as subjectivity which is internal to the religious stance – and definitely not one which is externally harmonized with it, or else taken as normative because neutral, e. g. as both a secular and universal concept. One also would have accept de emphasis on the importance of the religious-existential and ethical levels of the concept of subjectivity both in their peculiar, indestructible wholeness; and internal divisiveness, or better, opposite moving tendencies or contra-rotating dynamics.

Of the three aspects of Luther's thought, the most important is: Luther calls attention to what was called, a while ago, the existential rootedness of reason itself. In now old polemics this has at times been distorted, e. g. by Jacques Maritain, as the modern "anthropocentric principle" inaugurated religiously by Luther, and consistently followed in other areas by both Descartes and Rousseau.[29] In our own estimate, there is no subjectivism or anthropocentrism at all. Luther's is a clear emphasis on subjective appropriation which does indeed lead to a rethinking of the scope and breadth of reason. By the same token, however, that emphasis makes room for the differentiation of the religious and ethical dimensions – together with a differentiation of their epistemic ways of justification, as would later be seen in Kant's work.

All this becomes evident as from the main, first aspect of an existential rootedness of reason, two other now stem, both of which stand for specifications. One of them can be related to an issue we may address as the problem of "cosmic security". It is the problem which for Luther ultimately constitutes the core of the religious problem: the problem of assurance. Now this problem goes far beyond the practical, to be sure instinctual problem, of animal self-preservation. It also is of a different nature than the theoretical problem of the rational resolution of skeptical challenges in the area of epistemology, notwithstanding the fact that it by far surpasses it as it engages humans in their wholeness.

In the final resort, the need for assurance and stability relates to the issue of whether some kind of "ultimate reliance" is at all possible in the world, of whether there may be something lastingly worth of confidence.[30] As a theological solution – hence in a way posed simultaneously with the problem – it is the now

29 Jacques Maritain: *Trois reformateurs: Luther, Descartes, Rousseau*, Paris 1995.

30 Put in a neat didactic way in EKD (ed.): Kirche der Freiheit. Perspektiven für die evangelische Kirche im 21. Jahrhundert, Hannover 2006, p. 32.

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old understanding of faith as fiduciary, and not as a purely intellectual or moral resolution, or as a free act of assent generally. Faith does not arise or evolve automatically from a habitual, quasi-natural universal quality[31], but is grounded in a relation to a ground which illuminates, even if somewhat dimly, a total context. Neither can faith be conceived as technically a bet, or still a calculus on external probabilities to be confirmed in a distant future.

The second aspect was already mentioned in passing. It goes back to the philosophical problem of the weakness of the will, and is framed theologically in the axiom of the utter seriousness of sin and the accompanying ambiguity, not only insufficiency, of human freedom as a sound power of becoming effective. Now this aspect can be, and certainly has been, secularized by contemporary formulations of the metaphysics of subjectivity. As such it coalesces with the first one, and emerges as the self-reflection of self-conscious life extrapolating in opposite ways both to a ground and a whole. Consider the following quote by Henrich in which, in spite of the absence of the agonistics of sin in Luther's sense, a similar structure can be found:

> In a most fundamental way it may be said that wherever subjectivity comes to unfold, two aspects are at work: a distance to oneself *and* a tendency to close off this distance through some self-description in which self-conscious life assures itself of its background circumstances and reasons. From the antagonism and interplay of both emerge the type and the high degree of agitated mobility of the conscious life, in virtue of which subjectivity should not be understood as a condition or state, but as a process.[32]

In this quote from Henrich I believe an analogy can be found with the structure of Luther's thought. From it we could find a model common not only to major trends of Christian and possibly other religious traditions, but also compatible to a reinterpretation of reason out of the general structure of conscious life. Of course there is a fundamental difference here. For the "distance to oneself" is, for Henrich, part and parcel of the presupposition-less dynamics of conscious life itself. This dynamics comes full circle by extrapolating, that is, as it embarks in thoughtful self-interpretation that spontaneously completes itself in the sense of metaphysics of subjectivity. For Luther, on the other hand, distance of oneself is

31 This "quality", if at all, might be termed "religion". It must not be described as present and constant, and in this sense as a "universal" anthropological trait, but as a psychological/anthropological capacity to be also entertained by independent rational analysis.

32 Dieter Henrich: *Die Zukunft der Subjektivität*, in: Idem.: *Die Philosophie im Prozess der Kultur*, Frankfurt a. M. 2006, p. 191: "Ganz grundsätzlich läßt sich sagen, daß wo immer Subjektivität zur Entfaltung kommt, eine Distanz zu sich *und* eine Tendenz zur Schließung dieser Distanz durch eine Selbstbeschreibung in Wirkung sind, in der sich das bewußte Leben seiner Bewandtnis versichert. Aus dem Widerspiel und Zusammenspiel der beiden gehen die Art und der hohe Grad der Bewegtheit des bewußten Lebens hervor, derentwegen Subjektivität nicht als Zustand, sondern als ein Prozess verstanden werden muss."

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first possible not by thoughtful abstraction from personhood, but by a deepening of the notion of conscience or *synderesis*.[33] All the same, this is the lived-experience of the sublimity of a law which always surpasses reason and thought with its demands, calling for a paradoxical resolution through grace. Hence, in justified man distance to oneself is made concrete in a whole conscience accepted by God. Thus renewed, conscience is faithful and brings forth unmerited works of love. This is a new state and dynamics which, in principle at least, simultaneously signifies the closing off the distance to one's true self in God in spite of the continuation of sin.

In Henrich's quote, there also emerges an ongoing tendency towards re-description of the self in which the closing off of the distance (as re-appropriation of one's ground) issues in a form of reassured subjectivity, which we could perhaps label as "faith" generally conceived, indeed as confidence about the meaning and sense of one's life. A form or reassurance which is able to face, whether in the short or longer span, the conflicts and depersonalizing threats to conscious life, and to provide a basis even to its personal, moral struggles.

Now it is true that in Luther's theology faith only arises at God's incitement and through His own action. It emerges as the response to the natural man's challenge *of* attaining what we called "cosmic security" – a challenge which after the fact of justification is viewed as sin or a challenge *to* God. Indeed, this is the point of saying that faith comes from hearing, being a creature of God's own action. And as in a good tree, in justified man faith creates good fruits or good works.[34]

Now while reason, at any rate in the sense of "arrogant reason", may have a hard time understanding all of this, many a religion, and many a culture shaped by religious traditions – as they somehow still are –, have in their respective treasure boxes resources reminding of the limited and regenerate conditions of reason and of their respective capacities. But what is most amazing is the fact that

33 For Luther, too, natural man or humans generally are always already endowed with conscience, a sense of higher obligation and "an original aspiration after God" (Holl, Karl (1977): What did Luther understand by religion?, p. 70). The difference to scholasticism is that Luther did not conceive this either as a neutral part of the self nor as a higher instance "untouched by other impulses of the soul". Ultimately, the completion of this process of distancing of oneself can only be due to God's action; and the demands of *synderesis* cannot be fulfilled neither by man himself, nor through the help to (or cohercion of) conscience by the church as God's representative.

34 For the whole Martin Luther: 'Concerning Christian liberty', in: Eliot, Charles W. (ed.): *The Harvard Classics*, vol. 36. [transl. by S. Grignon], New York 1910, pp. 336–378. Worth of comparison is the excellentcommentary by Dietrich Korsch: 'Freiheit als Summe. Über die Gestalt christlichen Lebens nach Martin Luther', in: Danz, Christian (ed.): *Martin Luther*, Darmstadt 2015, pp. 193–211.; it sheds light both on the specific Lutheran reading of human (non-dualistic) "divisiveness" (cf. above) and on the viability of understanding Luther and at least (some) Christian religion along the lines of a theory of subjectivity of conscious life.

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subjectivity, whether religious or not, seems to display everywhere a similar structure when it duly explores itself. According to Henrich,

> Religions, too, constitute attempts to gain assurance concerning this origin and those powers which allow life to be endowed with significance and protective strength. The effective praxis of self-communication and self-understanding therein always comes to pass, at the same time, for the sake of the attainment of emotional balance, as well as a deepening and increase of life in the face of human destinies which are in many respects unfathomable. But religion is in its core thinking. There is no myth and no religion which fail to take advantage and make use of precisely that thinking which is rooted in the process of subjectivity.[35]

It goes without saying that, from the point of view of many a religion, Henrich's is still an external description. Perhaps it describes religion generally in a "natural state", before assumptions of any revelation whatsoever. Still, and on the basis of his insights, *even after revelation religion remains thinking* and cannot simply be deemed irrational through old or new presuppositions about the (too long or too short) "range of reason". Suffice it to say that the limits of reason are acknowledged at the very end of its possible stretching. Thus the analysis, while unable to produce any reconciliation or closure, may offer a basis for different people of different cultures and traditions to walk a long way together on practical, concrete issues– a way that, short of the end, may just prove long enough.

Much has been said, either in favor or against, either in a polemic or more detached way, and from the point of view of many intellectual disciplines, about the relationship between Luther's thought, on the one hand; and both the Christian tradition and the modern times, processes and self-interpretations, on the other.

In the last analysis, what this paper attempted to do was to draw attention to the enduring value of certain structures of Luther's thought which, even from a distance, are compatible with, and arguably analogous with, later modern and late modern concepts of reason – especially as they are rooted in the deeper dynamics of subjectivity.

This dynamics, far from being self-encircled, anthropocentric, Promethean, is only adequately grasped through its relationship to conceptions of a ground and of a larger whole, in the context, at the very least, of a reason which has learned to know about its limitations. Again, it must be said here that this fragility of reason does not authorize anyone to impinge on it some new burden from the outside, from the repository of any dogmatic tradition, whatever it may be and however bluntly or surreptitiously it may happen.

But limited reason is also extrapolating reason. If it takes this hard look at itself in its condition of being rooted in life, it may display a worthy humbleness.

35 Henrich: *Denken und Selbstsein*, p. 252.

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As such, if it looks hard enough, it may find interesting parallels in various tradition- and religions-bound concepts, even if mixed with conceptions of regenerate life which often enough are quite dangerous in that they lose sight of finitude and relativity, becoming arrogant before every and any outside reality.

Reason may thus be a reminder of the shared fragility and questionability across different cultures and religions. And while it is very unlikely that a use and concept of reason devoid of all sense for religion may successfully claim to be an external mediator between religions, cultures, and late modern intellectual science and erudition as a whole, some other hope might still be entertained. It may emerge once religions do more to reflect often and openly about the fragile thought that ultimately thrives also in their midst.

In this sense, religions have accomplished, or are always on the verge of accomplishing, their own internal critique as self-discernment. And while this kind of reflection will not endanger their own value, inasmuch as they ultimately do not gain the assurance by which to live primarily out of the resources of that thought, it may help to contribute a new humbleness to religions before or even while they abandon themselves to action. An action growing from below, and probably not from a real convergence as to ultimate convictions – in religions, by the way, always positively and symbolically mediated. Finally, an action which has as its starting point the always specific moral and political challenges of the respective surroundings.

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The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science and Religious Diversity: a Dialogue with Naturalism

Introduction

In this text, I address the notion of modern science's metaphysical foundations and its relationship with the problem of religious diversity. I start with a brief history of the relationship between philosophy and the empirical sciences since the revolution in Western thought concerning the physical world that occurred in 16th and 17th centuries. Initially, the idea is that one can, in spite of the increasing autonomy of sciences from philosophy observed in the last centuries, still talk about fundamental (or at least more general) concepts presupposed by scientific enquiry, which lie beyond the scope of the scientific method.

The next step is to analyze ontological naturalism as an important – and, in contemporary philosophy, even hegemonic – candidate for providing those metaphysical foundations. Naturalism in the sense developed here has two main aspects: scientism and opposition to religion. After briefly presenting these two elements, I develop three arguments against naturalism in the current debate. I argue, together with Alvin Plantinga and others, that naturalism is a basic methodological assumption, but that it cannot be accepted as an adequate metaphysical foundation for scientific enquiry.

At the end, and as a contribution to the debate regarding theism's suitability to provide those most general theoretical foundations, I deal with the problem of religious diversity[1]. I begin with one of the arguments put forward by Hume against the belief in miracles and discuss the extent to which the existence of many religions is a reason for discrediting the religious comprehension of reality. I reinforce Hume's arguments, but argue that his objections can be answered and that, even in an exclusivist conception of religious diversity (the worst case scenario), it is still possible and very reasonable to defend the religious worldview

1 This proposal of a theistic metaphysics for natural sciences is certainly not original and I am only trying to add something to it. For a major contribution to this debate see Alvin Plantinga: *Where the Conflict Really Lies*, Oxford 2011.

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(especially the monotheistic one) as providing, on the whole, an adequate, general metaphysical basis for natural science.

1 Modern Science and Metaphysics

Although some earlier developments certainly contributed to its occurrence, we can say that the history of modern science began with the revolutions in Western thought concerning the physical world that occurred in Europe during the 16th and 17th centuries. Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler and Newton are the major figures of the scientific revolution that changed the way we acquire knowledge about nature and the way we started conceiving reality from that point on.

In contrast with medieval 'physics', based on Aristotle's ideas, modern science has set itself apart from philosophy since the scientific revolution. Its method replaces logic and natural expression with mathematics and a formal, specialized language; it replaces conceptual speculation and the appeal to authority with the use of systematic observation as a way of testing assertions about the world; and it substitutes a useful knowledge – aimed at solving material human problems – for the disinterested love of wisdom.

Slowly, natural sciences established themselves as reliable and prestigious knowledge. It owes this prestige is part to its formal rigor and its employment of experience as a critical resource and in part to its technological consequences. Natural sciences became more and more complex as a whole, while its questions became increasingly smaller and detailed. So minute were the questions, that the famous US philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn called them 'puzzle-solving problems',[2] normally of interest to the specialized scientific community alone.

However, in contrast with grand, general philosophical questions of widespread interest, scientific problems have the virtue of being answerable in empirical terms. In other words, scientific questions might be responded in less controversial manners, since they could count on the possibility of an empirical decision and criticism for theoretical assertions. The fact that scientific questions are restricted to very narrow and apparently uninteresting fields of reality would not be a vice, but a virtue.

This distinction between scientific and philosophic reasoning had already been recognized by David Hume, one of the main philosophers of the 18th century, who provided invaluable contributions to modern theory of knowledge. Speaking about philosophical attempts to argue for the existence of God, Hume criticized the search for a rational argument to ground belief in God because belief in God was an area where reason lacked the support of experience to assess

2 Cf. Thomas Kuhn: *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago 1996, p. 35ff.

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which of the hypotheses was more probable than the other. In cases like this, one has a fertile field for unlimited lucubration. Thus, in the *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion* (1779), Philo – generally taken as Hume's spokesman – asserts:

> What you ascribe to the fertility of my invention, replied *Philo*, is entirely owing to the nature of the subject. In subjects, adapted to the narrow compass of human reason, there is commonly but one determination, which carries probability and conviction with it; and to a man of sound judgment, all other suppositions but that one, appear entirely absurd and chimerical.[3]

The problem with this kind of subject is that its content is far beyond the reach of experience, since

> And where is the difficulty, replied *Philo*, of that supposition? Every event, before experience, is equally difficult and incomprehensible; and every event, after experience, is equally easy and intelligible.[4]

In other words, since this matter is utterly outside the scope of immediate experience, the best rational option in this case is suspending judgement about issues like the existence of God. That is why Hume proposed, at the very end of his *Inquiry concerning Human Knowledge* (1748), that books on theology and metaphysics should be committed to the flames: they contained no knowledge at all, since nothing in these areas could be criticized empirically.

The gradual detachment of natural sciences from philosophy from the 18th century onwards is remarkable. While the book in which Newton introduced the fundamental laws of classical mechanics included 'philosophy' in its title (*Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* (1687)), by the end of the 19th century this terminology has disappeared. In addition, two centuries after the publication of Newton's book, many believed that scientific experimental method would be able to answer, in a much more precise and rigorous way, questions to which philosophy could respond only in a general and flimsy fashion.

Comte's positivism and the Vienna Circle's logical empiricism are two expressive examples of the idea that empirical sciences are left to the task, with the help of mathematics and logic, of saying what reality is like and how it is organized. These are also important instances of modern criticism of metaphysics, whether, as Comte saw it, as the outmoded past of intellectual history or, as some members of the Vienna Circle saw it, the result of a poor application of language to non-verifiable objects which thus generates meaningless propositions. It does not take much to see this negative evaluation of metaphysics as a continuation of

3 Cf. David Hume: *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion* 1779, London 1990, pp. 86–92.
4 Ibid., 86–92.

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Hume's incendiary suggestion mentioned above, or of Kant's project in *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1787) to put metaphysics in 'the right track of sciences'.

Yet, what does 'metaphysics' mean in this debate? Like almost anything interesting in philosophy, this is not a consensual matter. To avoid being dragged into a long and incomplete exposition, I suggest narrowing the concept of metaphysics down to two main aspects: metaphysics as theology and metaphysics as ontology.

Metaphysics as theology understands that beings – the objects one can say something about – only exist as they depend on the Being who is the ground and sustainer of these beings. There is a subordination of beings to the Being. Beings are contingent and limited by a defined essence, while the Being is necessary, in the sense that the latter is characterized only by the fact of being. This conception of metaphysics is called theology because this necessary being is associated with God, though this is also a controversial notion. In part for historical reasons, in part because it has shown itself to be a fertile resolution of theoretical problems, for a long time in Western philosophy, theological metaphysics became predominantly identified with monotheism. The Being that is the foundation and supporter of beings was identified with the conception of the divine shared by the Semitic religions, referred to an incorporeal, omnipotent, omniscient, totally free, eternal, infinitely perfect person worthy of religious worship.

This synthesis of the religious experience of a 'living God' of Judaism, Christianity and Islam and theoretical, rational speculation of Greek philosophy proved itself to be a lasting solution for the ultimate question about reality (something like 'what is there after all?'), which is the question that moves metaphysical thinking. It allows us to understand why there is a world (because of the creative intention of a personal God), why this world is ordered (because God is infinitely perfect, powerful and wise) and why we can know the world (because we are similar to God, although in a very limited way, as regards to cognitive and operative power).

I borrow the concept of religion supposed in this idea of synthesis between the traditions of argumentative reason and religious experience from William James in his *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902). According to James, religion has three main characteristics:

- that the visible world is part of a more spiritual universe from which it draws its chief significance;
- that union or harmonious relation with that higher universe is our true end;
- that prayer or inner communion with the spirit thereof – be that spirit 'God' or 'law' – is a process wherein work is really done and into which spiritual energy

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> flows and produces effects, psychological or material, within the phenomenal world.[5]

It is very probable that historians and anthropologists will be able to show us exceptions to this concept. Even so, I think it is broad and, at same time, defined enough to give us a good idea of what we are talking about when we use the term 'religion'.

However, the 16th century, in which the modern scientific revolution started, was also a century in which the credibility of religion was strongly shaken in Europe. The so-called 'wars of religion' swept across the continent and Christianity started to be seen no longer as an ally of rationality, but as a source of fanaticism and superstition. The attempt to offer arguments for the existence of God was seen as unsatisfactory – the premises did not necessarily imply the conclusion – and internal conceptual problems of theism (the relationship among the different aspects of God's nature) were seen as a reason for pursuing metaphysical alternatives that have now become popular in current philosophy.

Here, then, we have the other main way in which metaphysics is understood: as ontology, i. e. as a 'general theory of objects', which aims to speak about general features of beings without resorting to the notion of a necessary, personal, intelligent Being. Metaphysics as ontology also has many formulations and degrees of generality, but I would like to focus on one that has a special importance for the relationship between science and religion regarding the problem of an ultimate framework of reality: ontological naturalism.

Ontological naturalism will be understood here as the thesis according to which there are only natural processes and substances. 'Natural' is intended as a quality of physical objects and the properties that can be studied by empirical sciences. Put differently, for ontological naturalism, there is no 'spiritual' dimension of reality distinct from the visible one, as postulated by religion and theistic metaphysics in the way they were defined above.

Now, the form in which ontological naturalism was defined in the previous paragraph indicates an apparently simple and direct link between itself and scientific activity. If we understand 'natural' as something that is either studied or can be studied by empirical sciences, then one would have to conclude that ontological naturalism is all metaphysical foundation as such, not only that needed by science, but also that which proceeds from science. In other words, the development of modern sciences itself would have given the content to that which we can understand as the ultimate characteristics of reality in general. In doing so, ontological naturalism would avoid the potentially unsolvable complications

5 Cf. William James: *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, London 1902, p. 485.

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of theological metaphysics (and the troubles caused by religion) and would be more in tune with scientific rationality.

However, the problem is that ontological naturalism may not be as acceptable as it seems, at least according to a set of arguments levelled against it, which will be expounded in the next section.

2 Arguments against Ontological Naturalism

For those who think this is an important piece of information – and perhaps it really is important – the arguments I will briefly present were developed in the Western cultural context between the end of the 2nd World War and the beginning of the 21st century. These are moments in which the somewhat triumphalist belief in the exclusive capacity of technological science to solve all human problems was thrown into question.

Independent from these historical factors, the following arguments aim to show not only that ontological naturalism is devoid of content, but that it is also self-defeating. Regarding the idea that it is vague and without a defined meaning, we can argue with Michael Rea (2002) that:[6]

1. In order to be a metaphysical theory with a defined meaning, the content of ontological naturalism must not change all the time.
2. Ontological naturalism claims to be a metaphysical theory based on the content of empirical sciences.
3. The content of scientific theories changes over time, for it is always open to new discoveries and theoretical criticisms.
4. So, ontological naturalism cannot be a metaphysical theory with a defined meaning.

The general upshot of the argument above is so far as it concerns us is that, if having a definite meaning is a condition for a theory to be a proper metaphysical foundation of modern science, ontological naturalism cannot fill this role.

Now, a possible response to this first argument could be that it distorts what naturalism says. Ontological naturalism does not assert that there are only natural objects and processes, but that only these can be studied by natural sciences. Stated in another way, its commitment is not to any special content, but with what can be the scientific method's subject of inquired in the public domain.

However, even if it is true in the natural sciences that the scientific method requires a hypothesis be empirically and publicly testable – and I agree that it

6 Cf. Michael Rea: *World Without Design: The Ontological Consequences of Naturalism*, Oxford 2002, p. 56.

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should, in principle, be so – this does not imply an ontological barrier against religion's assertion of a transcendent spiritual dimension, but rather only a statement about the limits of scientific research. In other words, a restriction of natural science to the limits of what is publicly testable and empirically accessible is methodological, not ontological, since it is clear that not only scientific hypotheses were worthy of rational acceptance. And why are scientific hypotheses not the only ones worthy of rational acceptance? Because it is also possible to argue for non-empirically testable theses as well, as is the case in mathematics, logic and even metaphysics. If this were not the case, it would not be possible to rationally defend ontological naturalism itself, since it is not an empirically testable hypothesis, but a metaphysical thesis. As a result, either naturalism is vague or it does not actually discard the idea of a transcendent spiritual dimension of reality. It is not, that is to say, naturalism in the exclusive sense described above.

A second argument against ontological naturalism is similar to the one originally put forward by C. S. Lewis (1947) and elaborated by Reppert (2003).[7] It can be formulated with the idea that natural processes involve causality, in the sense we use when speaking of a stone that causes a window to break when it hits it or of a billiard ball that causes the movement of another one when it strikes the latter. If nature (including human culture and society) is the only reality there is, then there are only causal relations among objects. The reason for this limitation comes from the empiricist idea of what is 'natural' as something that must, ultimately, be accessible to the senses, as well as from the thesis that explanations of natural phenomena must relate empirically accessible occurrences.

Reasoning, however, like deducing the idea that there is no spiritual reality if ontological naturalism is true, is not a causal relationship, but a logical one. Logical relations are not the same as causal relations in the sense that the premises of an argument do not cause the truth of a conclusion, but rather imply it no matter what happens in the world. And, if naturalism really is committed only to things that happen in the world and thus only to causal relations, then it can no longer argue for the truth of its own thesis, since this argument would be the statement of logical relations between premises and conclusion, instead of a causal connection. In other words, if the argument above is correct, we would have no reason to accept ontological naturalism since we would have no place for reasons in our system of thinking at all.

Again, the naturalist could protest and say that this argument distorts his or her view, since naturalism does not postulate that there are no logical relationships apart from causal ones. Fair enough, but in this case naturalism will have to

7 Cf. C. S. Lewis: *Miracles – a Preliminary Study* 1947, London 2002, pp. 22ff.; Victor Reppert: *C.S. Lewis's Dangerous Idea,* Downers Grove (IL) 2003, p. 80.

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weaken its contention that there are only natural things in the sense of objects and processes that happen in space and time, for logical relations are independent of both. This wider, more inclusive type of naturalism is obviously possible, but it risks being harmless to religion in the way mentioned above.

The third argument against ontological naturalism I am going to put forward also aims to show that this metaphysical theory is unacceptable because it is self-defeating. Instead of dealing with the difference between reasons and causes, this reasoning intends to show that naturalism leaves us with no reason to trust human cognitive capabilities. Its most famous form was established by Alvin Plantinga (2011) and proceeds from the association in evolutionary biology between naturalism and the Neo-Darwinist theory of evolution by natural selection.

According to evolutionary biology, evolution by natural selection ends up giving to organisms instruments for adapting to their environment, i. e. tools to increase its chances of survival and reproduction. Leaving behind progeny and postponing death as long as possible are clearly practical goals, that is, they essentially have to do with accomplishable actions and not so much with true beliefs. To put it another way, practical aims may well be achieved with means that have very little or nothing to do with truth and justification. A lie or a disguise may be even more useful than positive epistemological credentials (truth, justification, warrant) for practical success.

Now, the problem with associating evolution theory and ontological naturalism is that the latter does not add anything to the former that could justify our trust in its cognitive capacity. If the aims searched for by biological entities only have to do with epistemological credentials in an accidental way, evolution by natural selection alone cannot give us a reason for believing that our cognitive means can lead us to knowledge.

If this is so, naturalism ends up preventing itself from being an acceptable proposition altogether, since no claim will be reliable, if we only associate the scientific theory of evolution by natural selection with ontological naturalism. As a consequence, according to this argument, the metaphysical foundation with which naturalism provides the natural sciences does not allow us to accept the truth, not only of biological theories or any natural sciences, but also of ontological naturalism itself.

To conclude this section, there are at least three arguments showing that, despite its appearance, naturalism is not a good metaphysical basis for natural sciences, since it is either vague or self-defeating.

Let us move on to the third and last section of this text, dedicated to the analysis of an important argument against theism and the possibility of founding in theological metaphysics the most general ideas in which modern empirical sciences may be framed.

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3 Religious Diversity and the Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science

Even if ontological naturalism is problematic, would it not be better than theism as a conceptual basis for modern natural sciences? More specifically, given the fact of religious diversity, regarding which ontological naturalism and theism oppose one another, would it not be a reason for discrediting the latter as an option for fulfilling this function?

To deal with this question, I take as my starting point one of David Hume's arguments against the rationality of belief in miracles, expounded in the second part of Section X of the *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*. According to him, "in matters of religion, whatever is different is contrary" (Hume, 2010 [1748], p. 178).

From a logical point of view, two contrary propositions may be both false, but not both true. It is in the sense of the traditional square of logical oppositions, well known to a 18th century philosopher, that Hume criticizes all religions in their pretension of founding religious beliefs in events allegedly extraordinary and directly caused by the divine. In other words, in the field of religion, any difference among religions implies an opposition that nullifies the legitimacy claim of all of them.

Unfortunately, Hume does not provide any argument for the idea that difference in religious belief implies opposition. But, before we discard this idea too quickly and in the hope of digging deeper in the relationship between religious diversity and the metaphysics of science, I will attempt to formulate some arguments for Hume's thesis, which may be summarized as follows:

> Different religions try to attract the same set of faithful, or to seize political power at the same places (a practical reason for opposition).
>
> All religions postulate themselves as the only bearers of absolute truth (a theoretical reason for opposition).
>
> All religions are irreconcilable (a general reason for opposition).

Let us formulate and examine each of these reasons one at a time to see whether they really are good arguments.

'Different religions try to attract the same set of faithful, or to seize political power at the same places' would be a good reason for Hume's thesis because, aiming at the same set of potential followers or at the political power at the same place, religions would run into conflict due to this rivalry. However, although religion may frequently be pointed out as an important factor in political conflicts, it is at least controversial whether it is really an essentially religious issue or whether religion is not more of an instrument used by those interested in grabbing

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a share of political power. Furthermore, if religion may be a means to this end, it can also be a means for other ends, such as peace and mutual understanding.

On the other hand, the dispute for new adherents, as one can see in the relationship among different Christian churches in Brazil today, does not mean they are only opposed to each other. Certainly, there is an element of opposition in the effort to stand out and be attractive in the eyes of others, but it does not mean they do not have much in common. On the contrary, they make an effort to look different because they are very close and this is why they are all called 'Christians'.

So, even if there were a high probability of conflicts motivated by religious claims today (assuming the controversial assumption that this really was the main causal factor in past events), this does not imply differences in matters of religion only mean opposition. The reason for this is that, even if they clash with each other over territories, power or people's adhesion, different religions must have something in common, or else there would be no reason to call them by the same name. Consequently, the argument advanced above does not seem sufficient to ground the impossibility of collaboration among religions, if this is what we should expect from the counter-position asserted by Hume.

The second argument in favor of Hume's above-mentioned thesis begins with the premise that 'every religion postulates itself as the bearer of the only truth'. This would be a justification for the link between religious diversity and opposition because, if religions are different, but there is only one truth in these matters, then all others except for the true religion are false. To put it differently, the pretension of possessing the only absolute truth leads to opposition because all religions would compete for this exclusive position. However, from a propositional point of view, that is, in terms of the truth content of the postulated belief, religions are systems of ideas – a set of interconnected assertions – rather than sole isolated statements. This means that it is possible for some ideas to be shared by different doctrines. If this is the case, then, even if religions compete with one another for the position of exclusive truth, this religious rivalry may refer to only some elements of their system, while they may be in agreement upon others.

This brings us to the question of the different ways in which the philosophy of religion answers the challenge of religious diversity. Normally, this question is divided into three stances towards the way religions may relate to each other: pluralism, inclusivism and exclusivism[8]. According to pluralism, every religion is true and legitimate in its own right and there is no point in ranking them. Although this may seem to be the most politically-correct position, the problem with this solution is that it is ethically and epistemologically relativistic and is

8 Cf., for example, Chad Meister: *Introducing Philosophy of Religion*, London 2009, p. 26.

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unacceptable for most religious believers. Inclusivism claims that all religions speak in an imperfect way of the only true doctrine, so that all religions may be included in one common set of postulates. Despite not being relativistic and the fact that many people agree with it, inclusivism is hard to reconcile with the evidence of religious diversity. In other words, in spite of some common grounds, some religious contentions are not only opposite, they are contradictory in the sense that, if one is true, the other must be false. How could such a diverse set of claims be included in one single credo? Exclusivism is the thesis that is most prone to link difference and opposition like in Hume's thesis, since for the exclusivist there is only one religion whose doctrine is true and whose practice is ethically correct. The advantage of exclusivism is that it appears to be a more adequate expression of what concrete religions are really like, as they generally do not attempt to include others nor to admit that other religions are also true (which would bring with it the undesirable consequences of relativism).

But, now, how to connect this brief classification of philosophical positions about religious diversity with Hume's thesis on differences in religious matters? My suggestion is that, if we can connect the exclusivist position with the idea of collaboration, we might have an answer to Hume without supposing an artificial (or at least a too positive) image of interreligious relationships. In other words, if religious doctrines and practices have various elements and if some of these elements are shared, then, even if religions are exclusivist regarding certain points in their respective creeds, they can nonetheless collaborate in light of a common basis involving other aspects. This seems to be a clear possibility for religions in general and, in particular, for the theistic religions. I am going to justify and develop this contention a little further later in this text, after I present an argument related to the third statement in favor of Hume presented above. For my current purposes in this part, it is enough to say that even in the worst case scenario in the debate about religious diversity, the exclusivist one, in which each religion claims to be the only right one, this difference does not imply opposition in a sense incompatible with collaboration.

The third and last argument I would like to present to defend Hume's idea that differences in religious matters imply opposition is that this is so because all religious messages are irreconcilable, such it is sufficient for them to be different in order to establish their opposition. Religious diversity, in other words, necessarily implies conflict among religions because there is no possible collaboration among irreconcilable positions.

Yet, this is not really a reason for Hume's thesis of opposition, but merely the same assertion in other words, i. e. this purported argument begs the question, since it tries to take as a premise exactly what is at stake. Put in another way, what is being disputed is whether religious creeds are in any way reconcilable. If so, then it is not true that differences in religious matters imply contradiction, since

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the differences may come with shared ideas and practices (however different they may be) and this may allow them to both enter into dialogue and to work towards a common goal[9].

In summary, considering the arguments above, the thesis of opposition implied by the difference among religions does not appear to be well founded. On the contrary, it seems reasonable to say that the phenomenon of religious diversity is compatible with the idea that different religions may have something in common and work towards a common goal, at least in some aspects regarding certain subjects. I will elaborate on this in the next and last section of this text.

Final Remarks

Theism – the metaphysical thesis and the common conceptual core of monotheistic religions – not only made possible the rise of natural science in historical terms, it also does not suffer from the serious conceptual problems of naturalism. Historically, Judaism, Islam and especially Christianity formed the cultural medium in which modern natural sciences arose. It was in Christian Europe of the 16th and 17th centuries that a scientific revolution occurred, led by devout Christians like Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler and Newton, of which contemporary science is nothing but a continuation. And it did not happen there and then in spite of Christianity, but, at least to a great extent, because of Christianity. One does not begin an investigation aimed at discovering patterns in the world through a method of empirical criticism of hypotheses, unless one presupposes that the physical universe has an order that is accessible to human cognitive capacity. These metaphysical assumptions on which scientific activity is based cannot be established by science itself, since they are theses that lie beyond the reach of the scientific method. Once those ideas are assumed, scientific research may start to reveal the material and natural components of this universe and the order of the laws that relate these components, thus allowing the explanation and prediction of processes and states of being in the empirically accessible world.

This is exactly what theism does. Its doctrine that the natural universe was created by an incorporeal person, who is infinitely intelligent, good and powerful, provided the grounds for the thesis that the world may be known by means of rational, empirical investigation. In addition, the idea that the human being was made in the image and after the likeness of God, even if in a limited and imperfect

9 A way of saving Hume's thesis would be to say that it refers only to miracles that are purportedly evidence of central tenets of each religion, i. e. exactly the ones which are irreconcilable. This restriction would make the idea much more acceptable, but Hume's proposal has much more the tone of a general premise, which is the aspect I am exploring here.

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way, gives basis to the belief that scientific activity is possible in the first place. In other words, not only is the world orderly, we can know its natural objects and processes (among other things) to the extent our human capability and the scope of the scientific method permits. It is no coincidence that the modern natural sciences arose in this cultural context.

On the other hand, the success of the scientific method has made some authors think that the limits of the scientific method should be the boundaries of all human knowledge. Moreover, the success of the natural sciences seems to have led them to think that reality is only constituted by that which can be scientifically investigated – a metaphysical position we have called ontological naturalism. In section two above, we looked at some arguments to the effect that this contention is not only insufficient but also self-defeating. Although extremely important, the explanation provided by the natural sciences is only one level of the explanatory process. Not only are there other approaches to natural reality, but there are also dimensions of reality other than that grasped by natural sciences. One of these dimensions is fundamental to science, namely, its metaphysical foundations. In other words, natural sciences need a general concept of reality wider than the one ontological naturalism provides, or it will lack meaning in its self-understanding, room for expanding and the healthy possibility of being criticized by other forms of knowledge such as philosophy and common sense.

It is said that when Albert the Great was sent to teach at the nascent University of Cologne in the 13th century, he taught initially three courses: one on the Letter of Paul to the Romans, another on Aristotle's ethics and a third one on anatomy and animal physiology, with experimental dissection classes[10]. This little example shows not only that religion, science and philosophy *might* be related to each other, but also that they were once related *in fact*. It is a pity this multidimensional, inter-related vision of knowledge has been lost in our time. Does it mean scientists should start talking more about God and religious matters? Would that imply that the natural sciences should consider God's action as part of their explanation? Of course not, as long as this is beyond the limits of the scientific method. It is certainly possible (and desirable) to study human behavior regarding God and religious matters scientifically, but this must be confined to what can be open to logical, semantical and empirical criticism by the research community. For the same reason, scientists may not take into consideration any force outside the natural realm in their explanation of reality. But, as long as we do not take the natural sciences to be the only legitimate form of knowledge or even the fundamental one, it does not matter, if our metaphysics permits consideration of God's action in the world in ultimate terms. The fact that Albert the

10 Cf. Michael Tkaczs: 'Faith, Science, and the Error of Fideism', in: *Logos: Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* May (2002), pp. 139–155.

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Great believed that nature was not all that could possibly exist did not prevent him from leading the natural sciences of his time or from explaining natural occurrences in natural terms. On the contrary, his theistic metaphysics was enormously beneficial and motivational for his science.

Providing science with a theistic metaphysical foundation may be fruitful in other senses as well. According to contemporary Muslin philosopher Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1993), all traditional peoples have developed some knowledge about what the world is like (i. e. in terms of its regularity and efficient causation), but only modern Western civilization separated this knowledge from the experience of a spiritual, sacred reality. According to Nasr, this experience and the corresponding belief is not only reconcilable with modern natural science and technology, but also an important aid when correcting some of its dangerous deviations, like the overexploitation of natural resources and the fallacy that turns competent physicists into respected metaphysicians[11]. And it is precisely the latter which seems to be the main mistake of ontological naturalism: confusing the levels of physics and metaphysics[12].

In closing, I would like to develop a further link between religious diversity and the problem of metaphysical foundations for natural sciences. As I mentioned earlier, the idea that the religious thought may be an adequate metaphysical foundation for scientific activity can be an interesting opportunity for collaboration and dialogue among different religions, especially the monotheistic ones. As I stated at the beginning, following William James, religions may be characterized by the postulation of a spiritual dimension of reality beyond its physical dimension and by their belief that this spiritual dimension is the most important one, as it gives real meaning to nature. In this sense, all religions are distinguished from ontological naturalism. And it is exactly by means of their conjoined dialogue with the latter that they can more clearly see what they have in common. Put differently, the debate with naturalism may mean a good opportunity for cooperation among religions and, especially, those which came together historically and gave rise to modern science. To do so, we need not resort to an approach to religious diversity that either distorts religions' messages or falls into a relativism no religion can accept.

Dialogue among religions does not imply reducing them to one another, nor does it mean postulating an artificial concept of religion within the limits of simple reason. It is possible as a collaborative work, which respects the particular identity of each one. Religion's relationship with the natural sciences and ontological naturalism may be a good example of this.

11 Cf. Seyyed Hossein Nasr: *The Need for a Sacred Science*, Richmond 1993, p. 76.

12 I do not deny that there are important and fruitful paths for dialogue and mutual influence between science and philosophy.

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The unknown self – Fichte's philosophy of religion in his early *Science of Knowledge*

In his early *Science of Knowledge* Fichte designed a theory of non-knowledge which refers to the principle of sufficient reason. Therefore Fichte aims to show that there is a foundation, a so-called original unity which draws a distinction between subject and object, between the self and its other. Following Leibniz, Fichte calls the relationship (between subject and object) also *copula*; it represents the being as such, or the ground: God. There is an X (i. e. ground, *copula*) and this X is subject on the one hand and on the other hand it is the predicates of the subject (object). In other terms the ground is the nameless indifferent, the *unknown I* which produces difference without being different itself. Hence the *unknown I* strives to know itself in order to realize its full essence. But there is always an indivisible remainder which makes self-knowledge impossible. And this is exactly the moment where religion enters the scene, where religion meets philosophy, because at such crucial points where the intellect is not able to resolve any kind of dualism or contradiction there can be no more reasoning for the philosopher. We are necessarily forced to a halt: this is the very moment of belief – the mediator between differences that means different cultures and religions. Fichte calls this mediator in a more philosophical sense the *absolute I* which is to him the highest religion – the complete *science of knowledge*. But what exactly does that mean?

I

Philosophy is in its very nature the science of knowledge. It alone lets the science of knowledge exist: the knowing of knowledge. Therefore Philosophy, according to Fichte, lays down a *Grundsatz* (a foundational principle), which not only justifies all knowledge but in turn cannot be further justified itself. This foundational principle expresses as a *Grund-Satz* (a bottom tenet, a first clause) that "Act which does not and cannot appear among the empirical states of consciousness, but rather lies at the basis of all consciousness and alone makes it

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possible." Furthermore this foundation principle should be, as a science, according to Fichte in his earlier treatise *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre oder der sogenannten Philosophie*, "something unified and whole."[1] Just this unified whole already creates the precondition, that something, whatever it is, comes out of something, indeed really exists. If then there is this unified whole, the absolute proposition, which exists with complete certainty, then we can assume with the highest possible probability, that all the other propositions which stem from it, are also certain. If one proposition alone is certain, then another too is certain; if on the other hand this one proposition is uncertain, then so is the other. Thus all propositions obtain their certainty, their very reality, from this one proposition, but it itself "cannot derive its certainty merely from its connection with the other propositions", according to Fichte, but "has to be certain and established in advance of all connection with other propositions."[2] Consequently it is here a question of a proposition, which on the one hand is attributed the strength and capacity to connect and unite something with something else; but on the other hand this one proposition seems to enjoy a total independence in its relationship to other propositions, which in turn go back themselves to its absolute certainty: "If its certainty is independent then it remains certain even if the others are not."[3] According to this the product of the *Grund-Satz* is an accidental one: that means, the propositions, which are deduced from the absolute principle, are indeed such as they are, but they could always have been different. Not, however, the principle. That is with absolute certainty that, which it is; it is, because it is – without the possibility of being able to be different.

The foundational principle (Grundsatz) is for Fichte also always the Grund. The word *Grund* is highly polysemic in German. The *Grund* is thus more or less the base or the floor, on which something is built. But it can also be further along in this direction the floor of a vessel of liquid, or of a body of water. In this context one can often hear: 'he emptied his glass right to the *Grund* [bottom]' or 'The ship sunk to the *Grund* [bottom of the sea]'. And if things go awry – *geht jemand sogar zugrunde* "somebody goes to the *Grund* or *jemand oder etwas wird zugrunde gerichtet*" – somebody or something is destroyed. And lastly there is a further meaning of the word *Grund*, which seems especially important in this context: The *Grund* as the innermost part of a thing, indeed a kind of last bottom, an endpoint, which so to speak explains everything; one goes to the *Grund* of the thing, because, so they say, everything has its own *Grund.* Thus for Fichte the *Grund* is first and foremost the ground, the firmness on which the house of

1 Johann Gottlieb Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings, [ed. and transl. by Daniel Breazeale], Ithaca (NY) 1988 p. 102.
2 Ibid, p. 103.
3 Fichte: *Early Philosophical Writings*, p.103.

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science rests: "But [as] one cannot live in a mere foundation [Grund], which by itself provides protection against neither the willful attack of the enemy nor the unwilled attacks of the weather; so one adds side walls and a roof above them."[4] The accidental putting together of individual parts in this way does not only bring to light the image of the house, but this also forms the whole of science, which specifically is not borne by the individual parts and propositions, but from the ground [Grund], from the foundational principle [Grundsatz] alone. In this way science is borne by the foundational principle, which, as Fichte believes, exists with absolute certainty. But this certainty is still a certainty that is true to its "inner content", a certainty *in itself*, which is however not *for us*, not determined by the *form*.[5] The *Grundsatz* does indeed have a certain content, which also makes it the *Grundsatz*, but the method by which it is conveyed, the portrayal of its content and with that itself is not transparent for us. In other words – in a more contemporary language expressed: how can we think these sense structures, the very structures which even let us think, speak and act at all? How can we, therefore, think thinking?

This question seems to be the central axis of research of every *philosophy of religion:* the search for lost thinking, the question of the foundation [Grund] of our knowledge and of our existence. And what is more: the experience of the loss of thinking is not something which really precedes philosophy, but rather has its own way of functioning. Thus philosophy of religion does not express itself just as the search for the thinking that has been lost, for the inscrutable, but also expresses itself as the actual destruction of thinking. When we question thinking and look for it, we have already destroyed it. Nevertheless the ambivalent relationship between the search for thinking, and the loss of it, does not belong simply to the nature of philosophy of religion; it rather is something truly human, an affair of the subject. For man is, in his being, in his existence even, completely philosophical. He has to be thus, for being a human does not just mean existing in thinking and knowledge, but at the same time the surpassing of knowledge and thinking: the limits of reasoning. We are always already across the borders of knowledge and thinking, across the given circumstances, when we stop to think back to them. Yet knowledge is the requisite precondition of our search for knowledge and thus for ourselves. Therefore the *Grund-Satz* is also always – as Heidegger would say – the "ground of the ground"[6], for Fichte the knowledge of knowledge, the science of science. Or to put the question in a different way: What are the conditions of the conditions of the possibility of knowledge at all? Phrased even more radically: Could there even be a kind of *non-knowledge?*

4 Fichte: *Early Philosophical Writings*, p. 104.
5 Ibid., p. 117.
6 Martin Heidegger: *Vom Wesen des Grundes*, Frankfurt a. M. 1995, p. 53.

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II

In his ingenious book *Beuysianismus* Wolfram Hogrebe deals with the forms and paths of the modern period.[7] He counts among the typical features of this epoch a decision to abandon the theory of knowledge in favour of a theory of non-knowledge; indeed the evolution, to delve further, of identity to non-identity, of difference to indifference. Above all it is Baruch de Spinoza who is taken as one of the most interesting and *central Jewish thinkers of modernity*. Spinoza, with his substance monism, did away with the Cartesian dualism that divided nature and spirit, body and soul, favouring an original and indifferent unity or substance. This substance alone is for Spinoza true, the epitome of knowledge, which serves at the same time as a shelter for all possible forms of non-knowledge. Furthermore this non-knowledge, the non-identity, is for Spinoza a requisite precondition of our existence, as he writes in his *Ethics*. Thus for Spinoza the non-knowing man is "[he who is] troubled in many ways by external causes, and unable ever to possess true peace of mind, but he also lives as if he knew neither himself, nor God, nor things; and as soon as he ceases to be acted on, he ceases to be."[8] Is Fichte himself not in fact one of these suffering non-knowers, who indeed recognises the lack of foundation of knowledge in several attempts and variants, but never accepted it? And in this context we should go further and ask ourselves: is Fichte himself not more or less radically Spinozian, even if in a roundabout fashion, as we could perhaps infer from the *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre?* In response to this we could look at the following passage in Fichte:

> So established, his system is perfectly consistent and irrefutable, since he takes his stand in a territory where reason can no longer follow him; but it is also groundless; for what right did he have to go beyond the pure consciousness given in empirical consciousness? – I further observe, that if we go beyond the I am, we necessarily arrive at Spinozism.[9]

7 Wolfram Hogrebe: Beuysianismus. Expressive Strukturen der Moderne, Munich 2011, p. 31–36.

8 Baruch de Spinoza: *Ethics*, [ed. and transl. by Edwin Curley], New Jersey 1994, p. II 308; see also Gilles Deleuze: *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, [transl. by Robert Hurley], San Francisco 1988, p. 129: "Writers, poets, musicians, filmmakers – painters too, even chance readers – may find that they are Spinozists; indeed, such a thing is more likely for them than for professional philosophers. It is a matter of one's practical conception of the 'plan.' It is not that one may be a Spinozist without knowing it. Rather, there is a strange privilege that Spinoza enjoys, something that seems to have been accomplished by him and no one else. He is a philosopher who commands an extraordinary conceptual apparatus, one that is highly developed, systematic, and scholarly; and yet he is the quintessential object of an immediate, unprepared encounter, such that a nonphilosopher, or even someone without any formal education, can receive a sudden illumination from him, a 'flash.' Then it is as if one discovers that one is a Spinozist; one arrives in the middle of Spinoza, one is sucked up, drawn into the system or the composition."

9 Fichte: *Science of Knowledge,* p. 102.

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It seems here, as if both Spinoza's and Fichte's approach concern a question of perspective or position. Whoever gets past the *I am*, lands necessarily on the *It is*, whoever states that something is, also knows, that he himself is. The relationship between the *I am* and the *It is*, indeed the transition from one position to the other is revealed to be far more difficult and non transparent than the clarification of the positions. For positions are positions on something, they can change, they are in movement and have a relationship to each other. If there is a position, then there is always also another position. Something is only really something, because it is different from something, which it is not. How then can the mediation between the inner content of the foundational principle [Grundsatz] with its form be described? How can the *in itself* hold together with the *for us?* Or in other words: How is science – which is nothing else than *religion* to Fichte – even possible? Fichte already gave us the answer: science is always the science of science – the religion of religion. And exactly here is expressed Fichte's theory of non-knowledge, namely in the moving of one position to the other. As science as a matter of principle cannot realise itself, it needs something else, which it portrays, that means science does not appear *within science* itself, but always in something else. Science is always recognised by something else and pointed out, for it does not see itself, does not indeed know itself. A *science of science* would be as a result *a science of the science of science* and so forth ad infinitum: *a religion that never becomes fully religion.* As a consequence there is not *one* science, not *one* religion, not the unified whole which, as Fichte demands, should hold it all together. As soon as one part exists, then another also exists. Yet all the same there is something, whatever this something is, that in the original meaning of the word *existence – rising out, coming out,* does not exist; a kind of "last foil out of which is delivered form and figure in the form of an ultimatum" and "which cannot be contrasted anymore to a further background."[10] The problem, which lies before us here, is the following: How can something exist, which at the same time does not exist? How can there be a science, in which all sciences unite, separate from each other and relate to each other: a science of sciences – *a religion of all religions?* Fichte took up this problem in § 3 of the *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* in the third foundational principle, indeed the principle of sufficient reason.

10 Wolfram Hogrebe: *Wirklichkeit des Denkens*, Heidelberg 2006, p. 40.

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III

As is well known Fichte names that function, which expresses the Grundsatz as a Grund-Satz, the action: *I am I (Ich bin Ich)* or *I am (Ich bin).* A closer definition of the action we could formulate thus, as Fichte writes: "The *I/self posits itself*, and by virtue of this mere self-assertion it *exists*; conversely, the self *exists* and *posits* its own existence by virtue of merely existing."[11] Now the *Grund* as a *Grund-Satz* has its own structure of drive, out of which the other, indeed precisely *my other* is brought forth, which we know better as the non-self. Here it is a question of a type of facing up of the other, *my other*, which expresses the second Grundsatz as a *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*. The self faces the *non-self*, because it only ever sees itself in something else, it recognises itself only in its radical otherness, in what it is not. Therefore the self and its other, subject and object, face each other *without mediation* in between. Consequently Fichte introduces in conclusion a third *Grundsatz*, which *reconciles* the self with the other, by differentiating the self from the non-self, connecting them together and finally uniting them. The third *Grundsatz* comes into play when it is no longer possible for there to be mediation between the two positions, when an obvious contradiction exists.

Fichte fundamentally divides all judgements into those that exist and those that stand opposed to them, into positions and negations, which should be united in one common point. In this context Fichte also speaks of one *Grund*, of a relation and difference *Grund*, in which the self and the non-self are both connected to each other and differentiated. The third *Grund-Satz* tries to unite the "I am I" and the "I am non-I" in a certain point, indeed in a *Grund.* The point of unity lies singly and alone in their divisibility (Teilbarkeit).[12] *The principle of sufficient reason* (der Grundsatz der Teilbarkeit) attains in this way the character of an identity judgement, which connects two part judgements together. The first part judgement reads self (Ich) = X, the other non-self (Nicht-Ich) =X. The individual parts self and non-self come together in X itself, i. e. the Copula, or the bond doubles to two individual judgements. X is therefore the Grund, which in the one case differentiates the *Ego* from the *non-Ego*, but nonetheless in the other connects them together. Fichte's idea of the *doubling* of the bond depends, as we

11 Fichte: *Science of Knowledge,* p. 97.

12 Following Fichte it has been above all Frege who saw in divisibility an essential characteristic of unity. In this context Frege introduced the relation term, which merely expresses an alternative to Fichte's *Grundsatz der Teilbarkeit.*

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will see in the following, on Leibniz' definition of identity, of a *predicative identity theory*, which suggests a *Trinitarian reading* of the copula judgement.[13]

Leibniz identifies in the copula a *Grund*, which the subject and predicate of a proposition *fall back on* – and into which they both *collapse*, i. e. in every copulative proposition the subject always implies the predicate; according to Leibniz every predicative definition needs an identity of subject and predicate. This identity however does not at all connote that they are *equal* to each other or *identical*, but rather that there is a *unity* of two parts of a proposition, which differentiate themselves in the copula and are at the same time united. An identity founded on truth always presupposes, according to Leibniz, the existence of the predicate in the subject term. Thus different terms are indeed differentiated from each other, but the difference always already implies the initial *connectedness* of the different terms in one and the same being, namely in the *bond*. Consequently a proposition such as "Fichte is Spinoza" is to be read in the following way: somebody, whoever they may be, maintains that they are in one way "Fichte" and in the other "Spinoza". Thus "Fichte" and "Spinoza" are indeed different from each other, but in their being they conform to a united whole, they are connected in an essential unity. Fichteism and Spinozism are in this way only different sides of the same coin, of a philosophy, *of a science of knowledge*.

Leibniz too understands a connection between two individual parts of a proposition as a doubling (*reduplicatio*), which Fichte later labels a *self-doubling*. The proposition as an identical unity divides itself through an arbitrary doubling into a necessary unidentical unity of subject and predicate. Only through this process can the proposition arrive at a point where it can be expressed. Predication is therefore for Leibniz simply the expression of separate parts of a proposition in their connectedness. And according to this logic the being of the whole and of the individual consists in its individual parts being expressed in their connectedness. In a proposition such as "spirit is nature" there appears an essential element, indeed something glimmers through, whatever it may be, which in one way is "spirit", and is embodied by the spirit, and in the other way, however, is manifestly "nature". Therefore the proposition "spirit is nature" means that there is something, which splits the spirit from nature, but on the other hand this something unites the two individual parts in one point, i. e. what is different and what is the same are here expressed in a unity. This is the non-identical, which makes everything identical even possible: the only true identity.

Following Leibniz' thoughts concerning the philosophy of religion from a linguistic point of view Fichte introduces in the third *Grundsatz* of the *Wissen-*

13 Vgl. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: *Philosophische Schriften, first part: 1663–1672*, [ed. by Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften], Darmstadt 1930, pp. 518–530. See also: Manfred Frank: *Auswege aus dem Deutschen Idealismus*, Frankfurt a. M. 2007, pp. 375–414.

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schaftslehre an *identity theory*, which in the true sense of the word inquires into the meaning of the copula in the judgement. Fichte's identity theory attains an ontological importance in the being of the judgement itself. The copula is that which doubles itself into a self and a non-self, without however maintaining a relationship to both. By virtue of its non-identical position *in difference* the copula permits an identity relationship to exist. Fichte has in mind here an unseparateness of the subject and predicate, which very clearly differentiates the subject from the predicate; however, *in reality* they have not come apart from each other, but fall back on a common *Grund:* on the copula. That does not mean though that the subject is as such a predicate, nor the reverse. Rather the copula reveals the identity of subject and predicate to be in such a relationship. The copula, which functions to combine and create unity, unites the self with the non-self; on top of this it is the being itself, which in the first judgement (*Ur-Teilung*) splits its being into two individual beings and in this way realises itself in the other. The copula exposes in this way the conditions for the possibility of existence in itself: *the self does actually exist and this is a non-self.*

This does not mean, however, that the *self* and the *non-self* are the same, rather the point here it to show that something, whatever it is, could always also be something else; however I label something, I can always label it as something else. Whatever something is can be its *otherness.* Consequently when something exists, this something is in one way the *self* and in another the *non-self*; whatever self is – it is always also that, what the *non-self* is. So in the judgment, or better put in the judging, the *self* is precisely not *it* itself, but rather there is something, which presents the *self* as the self; it acts in exactly the same way as with the *non-self:* there is something which presents the *non-self. Something*, whatever it is, precedes the *self* and the non-*self.* That, which precedes the *self* and the *non-self*, is something, which, however, does not let itself be defined as something concrete, because it *does not exist – not yet.* And because it itself does not exist, it exists through something else. It shows itself in a judgement *as* something that defines and *as* something defined. The entire antithetical nature emerges from the copula, every being has its *Grund* in something, which at the time it is not. The copula can however only be a copula, and rise to being, when it frees itself from its undefinedness and indifference and establishes a definedness, i. e. transforms itself on the one hand into a subject and on the other into a predicate. Finding itself in the balance the Copula endures the ontological tension between subject and object: *the copula is itself this tension.* Its nature is completely creative. As the nature of each judgement the copula transforms itself into the *self* and also into the *non-self* of the proposition, i. e. it puts itself in relation *to something as something.* The essential act of its transformation is by its very nature an arbitrary one; and therein it attains its necessity.

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IV

The act of transformation seems to be obsessed with an arbitrariness, which in the logic of Fichte tries to plant something, namely the *beginning of thinking*. Yet the search for that which precedes thinking contradicts thinking itself, as Fichte explains:

> […] one certainly hears the question proposed: What was I, then, before I came to self-consciousness? The natural reply is: *I* did not exist at all; for I was not a self. The self exists only insofar as it is conscious of itself. […] You cannot think at all without subjoining in thought your self, as conscious of itself; from your self-consciousness you can never abstract; hence all questions of the above type call for no answer, for real understanding of oneself would preclude their being asked.[14]

The beginning of thinking, we now assume necessarily, occurs arbitrarily. This is not too far-fetched, because before thinking one could not know what it means to think. Consequently the possibility no longer exists to decide oneself for or against thinking. Whoever thinks is always already in thinking. By thinking one cannot think oneself out of thinking, in order to come before this very thinking. Therefore the thinking of thinking always comes too late. The result is that thinking itself is the necessary precondition of our search for thinking, and thus for ourselves. The question of what I was, before I came to consciousness always comes too late. And it is precisely in this inability to realise oneself that Fichte's definition of the drive, of the striving, exactly put of *Sehnen* (longing) manifests itself, which expresses the original action.

With *Sehnen* it is question of an activity which "*has no object whatever*, but is nonetheless *irresistibly driven out towards one*, and is merely felt."[15] Consequently the self now feels inside itself a lack, indeed a need for completion. This feeling that something is lacking, the longing, for Fichte, is a "drive towards something totally unknown, which reveals itself only through a *need*, a *discomfort*, a *void*, which seeks satisfaction; but does not say from whence. – The self feels a longing in itself; it feels itself in want."[16] Because the longing always acts as a longing for the unknown, for the undefined, it is according to its very being an *indefinite* longing, which differentiates itself from all other forms of finite longing. In our day to day world we mostly understand finite longing as scenes of separation, i. e. lovers long for their beloved; those who have left their homes long for certain places, others on the other hand are nostalgic and long for certain situations, for example they long for a certain ambience, which they know from their own past. In contrast to infinite longing, finite longing has a concrete object.

14 Fichte: *Science of Knowledge,* p. 98.
15 Ibid., p. 265.
16 Ibid.

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And yet at the point where Fichte talks about longing, he has no object in mind, rather "an undefined longing floats in front of him, a longing for something, which to a certain extent supplies the schema of longing for all defined longings."[17] And it is this longing which is important, as Fichte writes in the *Science of Knowledge*, "not only for the practical, but for the entire Science of Knowledge. Only thereby is the self *in itself* – driven *out of itself*; only thereby is an *external world* revealed *within it.*"[18]

Longing here does not just express the undefinedness of the object, but also that of the self. Thus it is question of a kind of original longing, which makes the difference between something and something else, between the self and the non-self, possible. For this reason longing always has its own feeling of limitation, indeed of its own force. When the force turns to the simple question of one's own ability to reflect, then longing aims for the ideal spontaneity, the construction of an object which remains unreal, which goes outside the borders of reality: God. The limiting and the striving are two essential moments, which in the self are both divided and related back together again, for they make the world, as Fichte explains:

> *In a manner valid for itself* […] the self cannot direct itself *outwards* without first having limited itself; for till then there is, for it, neither inside nor outside. This self-limitation took place through the *self-feeling* that we have deduced. Thereafter it is equally incapable of directing itself outwards unless the external world reveals itself somehow to the self *within that self.* This, however, first occurs through longing.[19]

As a consequence the founding of an outside world can only succeed when we establish *the opposition of the inner world and the outer world in the inner world*, indeed in a world of the self itself.[20] However a differentiation of the outside from the inside only succeeds, when the self limits itself for itself. This is also the precondition for the self to feel a longing for the outside, which it is really itself. Thus not only the world, but also "the feeling of our self […] [is based] on a self limitation (inner world) which itself is transcended at the same time through longing (outer world)."[21] At the same time this feeling of self is the real action, which expresses our freedom, because the self through the limitation sets free its

17 Hogrebe: *Sehnsucht und Erkenntnis*, in: ibid. (ed.): *Fichtes Wissenschaftslehre von 1794*, Frankfurt a. M. 1995, p. 58.

18 Fichte: *Science of Knowledge*, p. 266.

19 Ibid., p. 268.

20 Hogrebe: *Sehnsucht und Erkenntnis*, p. 59. Fichte understands the feeling of self as the *self which feels.* In line with this meaning Fichte also used *Selbstgefühl.* Both the limited and the limiting self are synthetically united through absolute spontaneity, put together as the same self: this is deduced here, and therefore a feeling, a feeling of self, an inner unity of doing and suffering in one situation come into being for the self.

21 Hogrebe: *Sehnsucht und Erkenntnis*, p. 59.

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own being. And that which is free, is free not through others but is determined only through itself, thus it determines itself. Furthermore the function of this self limitation is the longing for the unknown, for that, which we ourselves are. And it is this self, which Fichte labels as the ideal or matter, that is open to us for determining or modifying. Longing precisely understood is not just about the bringing forth of the self, but rather about an unending defining, about an eternal transformation: Creation as transformation, transformation as creation. And this longing self is the self which gives rise to the world in "two stages."[22]

The first stage is the *past,* that which the self has already created. The second stage is the *future*, which is what is left to be created. The world, as we find and see it, is that which is already created, the already acted upon of the action itself.[23] And it is only because the self, which creates the world, "forgot" its action (the very creation of the world), that this world order appears to us as a given and that we do not known how it could come to existence.[24] Its creation of the world (present) up to this point remains an act which is unconscious to the self. Precisely the unconscious act of creation of the self is the motor for the self to realise itself, for the eternal actualisation of the self. The unknown past is therefore the realising of the future; it is the realisation of the ideal, the complete transformation of the being and of the self, which is still in process; it looks for what is true to itself, as it is expressed by Hegel, who is close to Fichte here:

> The True is the whole. But the whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development. Of the Absolute it must be said that it is essentially a *result*, that only in the *end* is it what it truly is; and that precisely in this consists its nature, viz. to be actual, subject, the spontaneous becoming of itself. Though it may seem contradictory that the Absolute should be conceived essentially as a result, it needs little pondering to set this show of contradiction in its true light. The beginning, the principle, or the Absolute, as at first immediately enunciated, is only the universal.[25]

The realisation of the self – its longing – is therefore always a longing for the whole, for everything and nothing, for the universal that is not given to us. If the universal or the whole as such is not given, then it is about making it transparent, and in the last instance lending it the form, to transform it so that something as something can become at all discernible. The universal (or let us call it the *reality of the self*) is absent out of principle, for it cannot be *objectified.* The absence of reality is therefore the unportrayable self itself, which at the same time creates the precondition of the conditionless condition of the longing for the whole, for that

22 Odo Marquard: *Theodizeemotive in Fichtes früher Wissenschaftslehre*, in: *Fichtes Wissenschaftslehre von 1794*, ed. by Wolfram Hogrebe, Frankfurt a. M. 1995, p. 232.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
25 Georg W. F. Hegel: *Phenomenology of Spirit*, [transl. by A.V. Miller], Oxford 1977, p. 11.

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which is true, for the whole true picture or *face* of the self. And it is this true face of the self which is the idea of itself. For the term *idéa*, inherited from the Greek, means nothing other than *form, appearance, look* or even *face.* And this *face* is, as the third Fichtean principle expresses, one that can be divided, indeed an already divided face, which always resists *something unified or whole.* The unified whole can only be grasped as a divided being: that is the only way to measure and determine it. But still there remains something, which cannot be solved. How exactly should one imagine this remainder? It is certainly not correct to understand this remaining part, which makes counting and measuring possible in the first place, as something which is itself countable or measurable. It rather is a constant figure, which represents the impossibility of the whole as a whole, the impossibility of identifying of the whole with itself: it prevents the whole from being the whole. And this causes, as Fichte saw very early on, a feeling of emptiness; the knowledge of non-knowledge of the whole which is nothing else than a *belief.*

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Hermann Cohen's Project of a "Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism"

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Jewish intellectual life in Germany was remarkably rich and flourishing, and Jewish philosophical thought in particular reached a peak that has often been compared to the "Golden Age" of Jewish Philosophy in the high Middle Ages when Maimonides tried to bring about a synthesis of Jewish thought and Aristotelian philosophy. With regard to 19th and early 20th century Germany one only needs to mention the names of Hermann Cohen, Franz Rosenzweig, Martin Buber and Ernst Cassirer to become immediately aware of the extraordinary achievements of Jewish philosophers at that time. In addition, one may point to the fact that thinkers like Leo Strauss, Hans Jonas and Hannah Arendt, who all left Germany in the 1930s, spent their formative periods and produced their first scholarly works in the years before 1933 when this flourishing Jewish intellectual life – and not only the intellectual life – came to a sudden and terrible end with the rise of National-Socialism and finally with the Shoa.[1]

Probably the most important and undoubtedly the most influential of the Jewish thinkers of this "Second Golden Age of Jewish Philosophy" was the Neo-Kantian philosopher Hermann Cohen, whose last book on "Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism" appeared in 1919, just one year after Cohen's death in 1918. This work became *a* – and many would say: *the* classic work of modern Jewish philosophy. In any case, it had an enormous impact on thinkers such as Rosenzweig, Buber and many others. In this work, Cohen aimed at bringing about a synthesis of Jewish thought and the philosophy of Immanuel Kant which, after the downfall of the philosophy of Hegel that had dominated the first half of the 19th century, saw a new rise in late 19th century Germany with the

1 For Cohen's place in 19th century German Judaism, see the excellent survey in Michael A. Meyer: *Response to Modernity. A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism*, New York 1988, esp. p. 205ff.

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advent of the so-called "Neo-Kantianism" of which Cohen was a leading representative.[2]

In this paper I will try to give an idea of Cohen's attempt at a synthesis of Judaism and Kantianism and of the place of human reason in this project hoping that this might be a useful contribution to our workshop on "Philosophy of Religion in Latin America and Europe" with the subtitle "Reason as a Mediator between Religions and Cultures" – the latter is an issue which leads directly into the core of Hermann Cohen's later philosophy of religion and which will accordingly be an appropriate and highly promising object of study in our context. With his attempt at a synthesis of Kantian philosophy and Jewish thought Cohen himself in his last and most achieved work took a decisive step beyond his earlier views on this issue by stressing the distinctiveness of religion with regard to systematic philosophy in general and to philosophical ethics in particular without, however, thereby questioning the completeness of philosophical ethics. At the same time Cohen argued that Judaism and Jewish monotheism were the original sources of a religion of reason which was then spread further by the other two monotheistic religions that derive from it, viz. Christianity and Islam.

The basic idea behind Cohen's project roughly is the following.[3] The point of departure for a "Religion of Reason" is the search for the place that religion could occupy with regard to ethics in a "System of Philosophy" conceived of by Cohen in the spirit of Kant. In fact, Cohen noticed that Kant's philosophical ethics necessarily neglects certain aspects of our moral life as individual human beings such as moral failure and guilt, but also the experiences of suffering and compassion. By particularly taking these latter into account, religion allows us to discover another human being as a "Thou" thereby enabling us to become truly an "I" ourselves. In the context of suffering and compassion Cohen introduces the term of "fellowman" ("Mitmensch" in German) to replace the older notion of "the next man" ("Nebenmensch") in philosophical discourse. If we strive for moral improvement, we establish a "correlation" between the individual human being who has become guilty of moral failures and thus is a sinner, and God who

2 On Neo-Kantianism and Cohen's role in the Kantian revival in late 19th century Germany, see Ulrich Sieg: *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Marburger Neukantianismus. Die Geschichte einer philosophischen Schulgemeinschaft*, Würzburg 1994.

3 Out of the growing number of secondary literature on Cohen's laterphilosophy of religion, I only mention three monographs in German here that are particularly helpful in studying the "Religion of Reason", viz. Karl Löwith: *Philosophie der Vernunft und Religion der Offenbarung in H. Cohens Religionsphilosophie*, Heidelberg 1968; Hans Ludwig Ollig: *Religion und Freiheitsglaube. Zur Problematik von Hermann Cohens später Religionsphilosophie*, Königstein/Taunus 1979, pp. 230–352, and Beate Ulrike La Sala: *Hermann Cohens Spinoza-Rezeption*, Freiburg i. Br. 2012, who, contrary to what the title suggests, gives a comprehensive survey of Cohen's doctrines and a critical discussion of Cohen's approach to the Jewish tradition in this context.

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is the forgiver of sin. It is this correlation, which enables man to become a truly individual human being, God's most appropriate function and achievement turns out to be the forgiving of sins.

1 Some Remarks on Hermann Cohen' Life and His Writings

First of all, a few words on Hermann Cohen may be in order here.[4] Cohen was born in 1848 in Coswig in the Eastern Germany province. His father was a synagogue cantor, and Cohen grew up in a devout Jewish family. In 1857 he enrolled in the recently founded Jewish Theological Seminary in Breslau in order to become a Rabbi, and there he acquired a profound knowledge of the Jewish tradition. Four years later, however, he decided against becoming a rabbi and attended the universities of Breslau and Berlin. After receiving his Ph.D. and his Habilitation, he finally got a full professorship at the University of Marburg in 1876, a position which in Germany at that time was only in very rare cases granted to Jews that had not converted to Christianity. In Marburg, Cohen became one of the leading representative of "Neo-Kantianism" and the undisputed head of the "The Marburg School", one of the two centers of Neo-Kantian Philosophy in Germany – the other being the "South-West-German-School".

Cohen was a successful teacher, one of his students in Marburg being Ernst Cassirer whose later fame should overshadow that of his teacher. Cohen stayed at the University of Marburg until his retirement in 1912, when he moved to Berlin to teach at the famous Rabbinical seminary there until his death in 1918.

Besides his activities as a scholar and as a philosopher, Cohen was the pre-eminent German-Jewish public intellectual of his generation. He was involved in several public debates and struggles on antisemitism which was gaining strength in Imperial Germany from the 1870s onwards, and he defended the Jewish case against antisemitic attacks by the famous historian Heinrich von Treitschke and others. With regard to the ensuing debates within the German Jewish community, Cohen sided with those who pleaded for an assimilation of the Jews to German culture and who regarded themselves as German citizens of Jewish belief or confession, thereby openly opposing the growing number of those Jews who opted for Zionism, for an independent Jewish state and thus, as a final consequence, for an emigration to Palestine. In fact, until the end of his life Cohen believed in the idea of a symbiosis of Judaism and German, predominantly

4 The following account is based on Scott Edgar *Hermann Cohen*, in: Zalta, Edward N. (ed.): *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2012 Edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/cohen/, and Sieg: *Aufstieg und Niedergang des Marburger Neukantianismus*, pp. 134–158.

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Protestant culture that he regarded as in many ways very close to basic notions and ideas of the Jewish tradition.

Cohen's philosophical works can roughly be divided into three groups corresponding to three periods of his philosophical productivity. His early texts, written in the 1870s and 1880s, are mainly in he form of commentaries on Kant, such as "Kant's Theory of Experience" or "Kants Foundations of Ethics". In the second period, Cohen presented his philosophical views in a more systematic fashion, without, however completely turning away from his historical orientation, and clearly began to deviate in some respects from Kant's doctrines at least as theoretical philosophy is concerned. The works of Cohen's second period culminated in his multi-volume project of a "System of Philosophy" comprising the "Logic of Pure Knowledge", the "Ethics of Pure Will", and the "Aesthetics of Pure Feeling". The third and final period of Cohen's philosophical output is characterized by a return to questions of religion and roughly coincides with the period of his teaching at the Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin. Besides the "Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism", mention must be made here of his "The Concept of Religion in the System of Philosophy" which appeared in 1915 and in which a development in Cohen's views on religion with regard to his Kantian beginnings is already discernible.

2 The Kantian Background to Cohen's Philosophy of Religion

As the philosophy of Immanuel Kant constitutes the overall background of Cohen's philosophy and its main point of departure, a few a reminders on Kant's practical philosophy, that is on his ethics and his philosophy of religion may be necessary here, thereby omitting the important and huge field of theoretical philosophy and Cohen's contributions to it.

As is well known, Kant is usually credited with or, depending on one's point of view, accused of having destroyed traditional metaphysics and its notion of God. This characterization, however, requires some qualification and needs to be described more precisely. Even though Kant claimed to have shown that theoretical reason cannot go beyond the realm of possible experience and hence cannot prove the existence of God, the immortality of the soul and the temporal beginning of the world, which means that theoretical reason cannot deal with the traditional issues of metaphysics that had occupied the minds of philosophers since Greek antiquity, this was not Kant's final word on these issues. In fact, Kant shifted the metaphysical ideas of God and immortality from the realm of theoretical reason to that of practical reason and ethics – and one should not forget that he actually wrote a book on metaphysics himself, namely the "Metaphysics of Morals". According to Kant, practical reason ("die praktische Vernunft") ac-

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tually has to presuppose the existence of God, the immortality of the soul and the freedom of the will as postulates, if we want to make sense of our duties that are prescribed by the moral law, otherwise these moral duties would become meaningless.[5] So, for him, the content that we can give to our idea of God is a moral one, and religion consists in and amounts to reducing our moral duties to divine prescripts which means that we have to regard them as divine commands, as Kant says in a famous dictum in his "Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason"[6]. Thus he reduced Christian religion mainly to a system of ethics in full accordance with the prevailing attitude towards religion in the age of enlightenment. We may note in this context – and here we find one of the reasons why Cohen and others saw such astonishing parallels between Kant's philosophy and Judaism – that Kant's notion of God actually comes very close to the prophetic model of a judge and a law-giver and is thus very far away from the idea of God as a first cause or as a first mover as traditional metaphysics had conceived of God. Indeed, the Prophets in the Old Testament did not embark on speculations about the causes and principles of the world like the Greek philosophers, but focused instead on the moral message they taught thus making Judaism a basically ethical system of belief and religious practice, as Cohen emphasized time and again in "The Religion of Reason"[7]: "There is no distinction in the Jewish consciousness between religion and morals" (p. 33), and, a few lines later: "Religion itself is moral teaching or it is not religion" (p. 33).

3 Cohen's Point of Departure for a Jewish Philosophy of Religion: What is the Place of Religion in his "System of Philosophy"?

Kant's attempt to reduce or to transform religion to a merely ethical doctrine – as God cannot be an issue for theoretical philosophy any more – becomes the point of departure for Cohen in his search for a "Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism". He first notices that "since religion has been defined as religion of

5 Kant's doctrine of postulates is dealt with in his *Critique of Practical Reason*, Book II: "The dialectics of pure practical reason". For an exposition of this doctrine, see, e. g., Wood, Allen W.: *Kant's Moral Religion*, Ithaca, NY 1970.

6 "Religion ist (subjectiv betrachtet) das Erkenntniß aller unserer Pflichten als göttlicher Gebote", in: Kant's Gesammelte Schriften. Akademieausgabe. Vol. VI, Berlin 1914, p. 153.

7 In the following, I have used Simon Kaplan's translation: Hermann Cohen: *Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism*, [transl., with an Introduction by Simon Kaplan], Atlanta (GA) 1995. All page numbers in brackets in the text refer to this translation. For the German text I have used a photostatic reprint of the second, revised edition edited by Bruno Strauss in 1929: Hermann Cohen: *Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums*, Dreieich 1978.

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reason, *man* is established as its sphere as well as its content" (p. 11). But if one looks at a system of philosophy as it is developed in the wake of Kant such as Cohen's own "System of philosophy" which comprises the three realms of theoretical knowledge, ethics and aesthetics, it seems that this system is already complete and has no gaps because it seems to contain everything that is accessible to human scientific knowledge: "It may seem – Cohen writes – as if all the contributions that are comprised under the scientific knowledge of man have already been exhausted. If we disregard […] the bodily side of the organism and […] the domain of historical anthropology, we are still confronted with *ethics*, which, as a branch of the system of philosophy, claims to govern all human affairs. Ethics, consequently, must deny a similar share in the knowledge of man to any other kind of knowledge, including religion, insofar as it claims to be knowledge" (p. 11f.). This means, Cohen goes on, that Religion "could have no sphere of its own in a teaching about man, for insofar as this sphere is determined by the concept of man, it would fall under the domain of ethics" (p. 12). But how does ethics deal with man, what is its specific approach to arrive at a concept of man? How does ethics proceed methodologically with regard to man? Cohen says: "Ethics, in its systematic opposition to everything sensual and everything empirical in man, arrives at the great consequence that it must first tear away from man the *individuality* of his I" (p. 13). This means, in other words, that ethics considers man only insofar as he or she is the addressee and "receiver" of the universal moral law – one may think of Kant's categorical imperative here –, and this in turn means: "In ethics *the I of man becomes the I of humanity*" (in German: "Das Ich des Menschen wird ihr zum Ich der Menschheit"), because "only in humanity is that true objectivization ("Objektivierung") of man achieved which can secure the ethical concept of the human subject" (p. 13). In other words: Man, from the point of view of Kantian ethics, is seen only as a representative of the human species and insofar as he is a rational being that may recognize the moral law because of his share in reason. Thus even "as an individual man he can only be a representative carrier of humanity" (p. 13). But this is obviously a serious defect, as the single human being in his or her individuality is not taken into account by ethics. Thus, it seems that ethics needs to be complemented by something else, and this can only be religion. To make this point clear, Cohen points to a "historical model for the necessity of supplementing ethics by religion" (p. 16), namely the Stoics and their relation to the suffering of man. In fact, suffering was an issue excluded by them from their ethics as the Stoics considered it to be something indifferent (*adiaphoron*). But, as Cohen insists, "suffering is in no way an indifferent element for the I", as nobody can be indifferent to another man's suffering, therefore "there arises the question of whether it is not precisely through the observation of the other man's suffering that the other *is changed from the He to the Thou*" (p. 16f.). And indeed, an

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affirmative answer to this question would bring "to light the specific power of religion" without in any way affecting the methodological completeness of ethics. Cohen even goes a step further when he draws the following consequences from this idea: "If now, however, through suffering and compassion, the Thou in man is discovered, then the I may reappear liberated from the shadow of selfishness" (p. 19), which means: Also the true I of man can emerge as a consequence of the discovery of the other human being as a "thou", as a person who in some way is closely related to me. It may be interesting to note that the roots of Martin Buber' dialogical philosophy of the I and the Thou may be found here in Cohen.

But it is not only compassion and it is not only the experience of suffering which are so closely connected to the I that are neglected by ethics, it is also the widely held experience of moral frailty and moral failure, in particular the feeling of guilt and the phenomenon of sin that are of utmost importance for Cohen in this regard. In fact, "the discovery of man through *sin* is the source from which every religious development flows", he says, a discovery which marks the difference between real religion and mythology where – again in Cohen's words – "man is not yet the originator of his own sin but merely the heir of his ancestors and their guilt" (p. 20). Cohen places these two aspects in a wider horizon by reminding us of a long tradition that can be traced back both to the ancient Greeks, e.g. Socrates, and to the Hebrew prophets, e.g. Ezekiel, namely that "religion has its deepest basis in man's self-knowledge" (p. 20). This actually is the contribution of religion and the complement it may provide for ethics: the discovery of the, one might say, unalienable individuality of the I as it becomes apparent in the experiences of suffering and compassion and of individual guilt and sin. Thus "religion itself becomes a particular branch ("eine Eigenart") within the moral teaching" and it "has discovered objective insights and derived them from its own principles […] which remained closed to the method of ethics" and which "establish the peculiarity of religion" (p. 23) whereas, at the same time, "the authority of ethics remains unshaken" as "the new supplement does not contradict the unity of its method" (p. 16).

4 The Discovery of Man as Fellowman

Having seen how Cohen conceives of religion as a complement ("Ergänzung") in regard to ethics, as ethics only knows moral man, namely man as a representative of humanity as such, but not individual man, we may now have a closer look at Cohen's idea of the discovery of man as fellowman. He traces this discovery through several stages in Jewish history, more precisely in the written sources of the Jewish tradition, which will finally lead to a much richer concept of the individual. "Up to now – Cohen starts his discussion of this topic in the im-

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portant Chapter VIII of the "Philosophy of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism" – we have come to know man […] only as a being of moral reason. In this concept man is only an abstraction of religion based on its share in reason, in morality" (p. 113). But, as experience shows, man appears in various problematic shapes ("Problemgestalten"), he exists not only as an individual, but as a plurality as well, namely together with other man, "as a unit in a series, one man next to other men, just *the next man* ("Nebenmensch")" (p. 114), as Cohen explains in his somewhat clumsy and idiosyncratic language. From this simple and unrelated juxtaposition of men "one next to the other" a serious problem for ethics arises, namely how to get from this concept of a "next man" which signifies man as being unrelated to others to a concept expressing that man somehow stands in a closer relationship to his fellow human beings. In Cohen's words: "It is therefore necessary that there be a conceptual knowledge that expedites the development of the next man into the fellowman" (p. 114), that, in a certain way, extends or supplements the concept of the "next man" to that of the "fellowman" (in German: "der Mitmensch"). Cohen was actually the first to introduce this term which is nowadays a very common one into the German philosophical language. The fellowman is the other man to whom I am connected or related in some closer way. Cohen's argument why it is necessary to supplement the concept of "next man" to that of "fellowman" draws on the notion of correlation which appears as a fundamental concept not only in his philosophy of religion. Cohen expresses his argument as follows: "If […] the fundamental correlation between God and man is the fundamental equation of religion, then *man* in this correlation must first of all be thought of as fellowman" (p. 114). Cohen's notion of correlation poses some problems of interpretation for the reader: does correlation (and Cohen mainly speaks of a correlation between God and man) simply mean a logical relation in the sense that two concepts are mutually required *for logical reasons*, as, for example, the notion of a sinful individual requires the concept of God as the forgiver of sins, or does correlation mean something more, namely a kind of dialogue, a dialogical relation?[8] In any case, Cohen thinks that "the correlation of man and God cannot be actualized if the correlation of man and man is not first included. The correlation of man and God is in the first place that of man, as fellowman, to God" (p. 114). For Cohen, then, ethics is only possible if it is based on the concept of "fellowman" and not only on that of the "next man" – indeed "ethics and religion depend, with regard to the concept of man, on the concept of the fellowman" (p. 115).

8 On Cohen's concept of correlation, see Francesca Albertini: *Das Verständnis des Seins bei Hermann Cohen. Vom Neukantianismus zu einer jüdischen Religionsphilosophie*, Würzburg 2003, pp. 164–187, and Andrea Poma: *Die Korrelation in der Religionsphilosophie Cohens: eine Methode, mehr als eine Methode*, in: *Neukantianismus. Perspektiven und Probleme*, [ed. by Ernst Wolfgang Orth /Helmut Holzhey], Würzburg 1994, pp. 343–365.

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This becomes evident when Cohen introduces the concept of love. He does this first in connection with pity or compassion ("Mitleid"), which for Cohen becomes most apparent in material poverty, and then with regard to the fellow man: "The pity of man for man is also of primary origin, and in it the correlation of man to man proves its fundamental power"; and this "pity is aroused as the new original form of humanity, as love. When a human being begins in pity to love another human being, this implies a transition from the notion of just the next man to the fellowman. Religion achieves what morality fails to achieve. Love for man is brought forth" (p. 146).

God, on the other hand, loves man: "God loves the stranger, he loves the poor man" (p. 148). God's love for Israel does not contradict God's universal love for mankind. In fact, "Israel is in its history the prototype of suffering, a symbol of human suffering", hence, Cohen concludes, "God's love for Israel, no less than God's love for the poor, expresses God's love for the human race" (p. 149).

Thus we get three correlations in all with regard to love (which might be visualized in the form of a triangle) which are: the love of man for man, God's love for man, and man's love for God. The commandment to love God follows immediately after the "Hear, O Israel" (that is, the basic Jewish payer "Schma Israel") in the Deuteronomium, thus it has a very prominent place in Judaism. And this love of man for God "is the love of the moral ideal. Only the ideal can I love, and I can grasp the ideal in no other way than by loving it. The ideal is the archetype ("Urbild") of morality" (p. 161).

So we have finally come to a full circle or, more precisely, to a triangle. The three correlations of love are closely interrelated: "The love of God, which corresponds to God's love, must have its basis in social love for the fellowman" (p. 161).

But in which way did the concept of "fellowman" actually arise and how did it develop out of the concept of "next man"? Where do we find the historical origins of this process? To answer this question Cohen turns to the "sources of Judaism", and he finds two origins of the concept of "fellowman" in the Jewish tradition. I shall mention only shortly the second of these factors mentioned by Cohen, namely "the legal and political conditions of the native", among which "the social differentiation between poor and rich poses the most difficult question for the concept of man", which "brought about the intervention of the prophets" (p. 128) and which finally led to the development of the notion of fellowman. Instead, I shall focus on the other and, in our context, certainly more telling and more important approach to arrive at a full notion of "fellowman", namely how Cohen describes the historical development of the way Jews treated those or behaved towards those who were not Jews.

Cohen begins by considering some antinomies that occur "in the human part of the correlation" (p. 115) between man and God: "If the correlation between

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God and man is the fundamental equation of religion, then *man* in this correlation must first of all be thought of as fellowman" (p. 114). But – and here coms up a first antinomy – "the experiences of man as the next man contradict the demands of the fellowman that the correlation of man and God makes" (p. 115). What in particular does Cohen have in mind here? "The national consciousness calls first upon the Israelite". But the concept of the Israelite contains an ambiguity "as it signifies not only a difference of religion but also a political distinction" (115) and thus leads to the distinction between the Israelite, who is the native, and the foreigner (נכרי), who is not a member of the people of Israel. "This antinomy between the Israelites and the foreigner […] is resolved ("geschlichtet") through the concept of the *stranger* (גר)" (p. 116), or, more precisely, of the "stranger-sojourner" (תושב גר) (p. 121), as Cohen says a few pages later. This notion of a stranger has some similarity with the Greek concept of the "guest-friend" (*xenos*), but it is more comprehensive than the Greek notion. The stranger lives among the Israelites and shares with the native Israelites the community of prayer and "thus the foreigner becomes fellowman through the community of prayer" (p. 120). This development, however, presupposes Messianism, as Cohen writes referring to Jesaia 56,7: "For mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples" and other passages from the Hebrew Bible. This means a decisive step indeed insofar as Monotheism here corrects its own teachings with regard to the commandment to fight idolatry and to destroy idolatrous people. In fact, the concept of stranger implies "that man is also recognized in the *non-Israelite*, and this recognition is also confirmed by a political acknowledgement of him" (p. 121). This is the first step in the genesis of the full notion of "fellowman".

But there is another ambiguity in the concept of the Israelite, as the Israelite is both a son of Adam, who is the ancestor of all human beings, and a son of Abraham, who is the ancestor of the Israelite only. Here again this antinomy is resolved by a mediating concept, that of the "Noachite", the Son of Noah, a notion that appears only later in rabbinical thought. The concept of the "Son of Noah" is based on the covenant between God and Noah before the great flood and expresses the idea that "God places himself into an unceasing, a conceptual, correlation with nature and with the human race within nature, with man as fellowman" (p. 117) and, consequently, "according to the covenant with Noah, every man is already the brother of every other" (p. 118). The "Son of Noah" is a borderline-concept between religion and morality insofar as it actually separates and frees morality from religion. What does this mean? According to the Rabbinic or Talmudic tradition, the "Son of Noah" is not bound to the law of Moses, that is to the Jewish religious law, but he is committed to observe seven moral precepts which prohibit the blasphemy of God and idol worship, incest, murder, robbery, eating of a limb of a living creature etc. Thus the precepts required by the "Son of Noah" or the Noachide have a strictly moral character and do not require

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the belief in the Jewish God. "In the acceptance of the law the Noachide acknowledges morality, while the acknowledgement of religion is not imputed to him" (p. 122f.). Conceived in this way, the concept of the Noachide is the foundation for natural law in Cohen's opinion, as "Noah has received no other revelation yet but that of man as a living creature" and thus the "Noachide is the *forerunner of natural law* for the state and also for freedom of conscience" and accordingly, as someone who is a citizen (in the land of Israel) but not a believer, he is the "evidence for the true meaning of the theocratic constitution: that it is not built on the unity of state and religion, but on the unity of state and morality" (p. 123). The concept of the "Son of Noah" or "Noachide" thus forms the second step for Cohen in the genesis of the full notion of "fellowman".

But after the stranger-sojourner in the Hebrew Bible and the "Son of Noah" in talmudic times a third and final step is taken within in the Jewish tradition contributing to the "fellowman" in the full sense of the term, namely by the concept of "the pious of the peoples of the world" (חסידי אומות העולם), a notion that goes back to Maimonides and "relates to the peoples outside of Israel, and therefore abstracts from Israel's religion and still acknowledges piety in these people" (p. 122). "The pious of the peoples of the world" designates those who are not Jews but show justice and virtue to a very high degree. "And these virtuous people have a share in bliss, in eternal life, which is the religious expression of morality" (p. 123), as the Talmud and Maimonides' comment upon these passages make clear, at least as Cohen understands them. This is the third and final step towards the full notion of "fellowman".

Cohen concludes: "These developments prove unambiguously the true meaning of the commandment of so-called *neighborly love*", because "if the neighbor originally had had the basic meaning of fellow countryman, then the concept of the Noachide, not to mention the purely theoretical concept of the 'Virtuous of the Peoples of the World' could not have developed out of the stranger". But, Cohen adds, the ultimate source of this development is monotheism itself. "Out of the unique God, the creator of man, originated also the stranger as fellowman" (p. 124).

5 The Discovery of the "Individual as the I" through Sin, Atonement and Redemption

Up to now Cohen has considered man as a reasonable and thus as a moral creature, namely as someone who is the addressee of the moral law. Furthermore, man has emerged as a fellowman, as someone who is more than just "the next man". And in this context that we have considered the correlation between the I

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and the Thou. But "the fellowman is not yet an individual who could be determined as an I", Cohen says, as we have not yet determined "what the I might mean as related exclusively to itself" (p. 165). In fact, "the problem of the fellowman has to be supplemented by that of the I as individual" (p. 166). But where do we find this supplement in moral action, and which concern is it "which assigns to man in his correlation with God an isolation and an absoluteness through which he is distinguished from the previous concepts of man?" (p. 166). This is an important problem for Cohen, as "the peculiar character of religion" will only then become apparent "when the correlation of God and man assumes a more intimate significance for man as an individual and as an I" and when problems of moral action are considered "which are beyond the problems of ethics and with which ethics, due to the limitations of its method, cannot deal"; it happens just at this point that "religion elevates itself beyond ethics" (p. 166).

These problems of moral action Cohen is now looking for do appear in the question of human guilt. This question cannot be dealt with and cannot be solved in criminal law alone. The judgment of the judge has to be distinguished from the judgment about human guilt. Man cannot get rid of his human guilt by the judgment of the judge and the punishment. "Here lies the boundary of ethics", here "ethics borders on religion" (p. 167), Cohen says. "If man is not permitted to lay aside the consciousness of his guilt then it is ethics itself which refers man to religion, to the correlation with God" (p. 168). "Man looks into the eyes of man; only God looks into the heart" (p. 168). Confronted with his guilt, the "individual […] thinks himself isolated and therefore absolute", and in his isolation man is lost and cannot get along unless he could absolve himself from his guilt. "If at this point the correlation to God did not come into force, he would be absolutely lost to the moral world" (p. 168). Thus it is exactly in religion and not in myth or mysticism that the individual is generated and comes into being by means of the notion of guilt. For in myth, Cohen stresses, man is not considered as in individual with regard to guilt. "In mythological guilt, man is not an individual, but rather the offspring of his ancestors" (p. 169). So if man is released and freed from guilt in myth, he is released from his *inherited* guilt, not from his personal or individual guilt, as even a superficial look at the Greek myths such as Orestes, to which Cohen dedicates several pages of analysis, clearly show.

But how does man get rid of his guilt with the help of religion? Cohen devotes a long chapter to the notion of "atonement" ("Versöhnung"), namely Chapter XI. He credits the prophet Ezechiel with the discovery of individual moral responsibility as opposed to a mythical understanding of guilt. Ezechiel articulates and summarizes this new religious conception of guilt in his statement "the soul sins" (p. 190), where the notion of soul is the expression for the individual here. And from this idea important consequences follow which eventually lead to the result that "the sin before God leads us to man as I" (p. 189). This process is accom-

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plished in several steps, as Cohen explains with reference to Ezechiel: "The sin before God leads us to the redemption by God", and this redemption, in turn, "leads us in the last instance to the reconciliation of the I with God", and finally "it is only the reconciliation with God which brings the individual to his maturity as the I" (p. 189). "Thus the new man is born, in this way the individual becomes the I" (p. 193). This shows that turning away from sin, that a self-transformation is actually possible for man so that Cohen can finally summarize: "In the recognition of his own sin, man became an individual" (p. 194).

This process of man's turning-away from sin consists of several steps and is analyzed by Cohen in some detail. He emphasizes the active role, even the sole responsibility of man in this process: "The bringing about of redemption is man's independent ("selbständige") action" in the sense that man has to bring about redemption without the help of God (p. 203). Remorse ("Reue") is the first step, then repentance ("Buße)" has to follow, where remorse "is only a negative precondition for the abandonment of the old way of life" (p. 203). After knowledge follows confession, which is the first step toward action "which in turn proceeds in two steps: in the casting away ("Abwälzung") and in the new creation ("Neuschaffung")". Thus "repentance provides man with this new life, which, to be sure can last only in the bliss of a moment. But this moment can and should repeat itself unceasingly" (p. 204). Cohen describes repentance as "self-sanctification" which brings all this together, namely "remorse, turning into the depths of the self and examining the entire way of life and finally, the turning away and the returning and creating of a new way of life", thus "sanctification is the goal; self sanctification is the only means" (p. 205).

Turning now from considering man to looking at the role God has in this process, Cohen stresses time and again that God is not a collaborator, but the *goal* of self-sanctification. "Only man himself can actualize self-sanctification; no God can help him in this" (p. 205). But what does God do then? "God pardons, forgives, he 'bears' the sin", Cohen says claiming to follow the prophet Ezechiel here. "Man himself must cast off his sins", but whether he succeeds in this, he does not know: "He is deprived of the knowledge of the result and the success of his action" (p. 206). But man's "self-sanctification must arrive at its infinite conclusion in the *forgiveness* of sin by God" (p. 207). Thus we finally arrive at a new meaning of the correlation between God and man which consists in the "meaning of God as the redeemer from sin" (p. 207). So we finally are confronted with Cohen's notion of God as the forgiver of sins: "God's being could not be conceived as understandable in his perfection, if the forgiveness of sin were not his proper achievement" (p. 208). "God as the Good One must therefore accomplish a kind of personal achievement of goodness" (p. 208) so that "the forgiveness of sins becomes the special and most appropriate function of God's goodness" (p. 209).

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6 Conclusion

As we have seen, by starting with man and taking human reason as his point of departure, Cohen has finally arrived at the notion of God as the forgiver of sins.

But this is only one line of thought in Cohen's later philosophy of religion. Indeed, his huge "Philosophy of Religion Out of the Sources of Judaism" contains much more interesting and important contributions to the philosophy of religion which could not have been dealt with here. Let me just mention his fascinating discussions of liturgy and prayer or his peculiar and influential thoughts on messianism.

Another issue that had to be neglected here is, of course, the peculiar way Cohen refers to the Jewish tradition, both to the Hebrew Bible and to the Talmud. As his overall view is a rationalistic and a very optimistic one as far as the potentials of human reason and human history are concerned, his interpretation of the Jewish tradition in the light of these attitudes often becomes quite idiosyncratic and sometimes even one-sided.[9]

Nevertheless, I hope that it has become apparent that Cohen offers a fascinating account of a Kantian philosophy of religion from a Jewish point of view which contains many ideas that still need to be explored further and, in fact, are investigated and discussed further as the growing number of studies devoted to Cohen's philosophy in recent years convincingly demonstrates.

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9 See La Sala: *Hermann Cohens Spinoza-Rezeption*, *passim*, for examples of Cohen's unconventional interpretation of Jewish traditional documents and doctrines.

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Recasting a Reformed, Judeo-Christian Humanism: Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutic Phenomenology of Revelation

> Die europäischen Nationen sind krank, Europa selbst ist, sagt man, in einer Krisis. An so etwas wie Naturheilkundigen fehlt es hier durchaus nicht. Wir werden ja geradezu überschwemmt von einer Flut naiver und überschwenglicher Reformvorschläge. Aber warum versagen die so reich entwickelten Geisteswissenschaften hier den Dienst, den die Naturwissenschaften in ihrer Sphäre vortrefflich üben?
> (E. Husserl, *Krisis*, 3. 10. 1935)

1 Introduction

In a highly polemical book on the "French philosophy of the 1968 period," Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut denounced what they described as the French hyperbolic repetition of German thought, especially in the supposedly radical antihumanism of Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, Pierre Bourdieu, and Jacques Derrida's respective appropriations of Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx, and Martin Heidegger. The celebrated "masters of suspicion" (*maîtres du soupçon*) often refer to a 1964 paper read by Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Freud, Marx," and is regarded by many postmodernists as their solemn manifesto. Ricoeur speaks also of the masters of the "hermeneutics of suspicion" (*herméneutique du soupçon*) in his 1965 book on Freud, *De l'interprétation.* However, Ricoeur used both terms as early as 1963, in a paper read for the "Première Rencontre romande d'universitaires protestants,"[1] prior to both Foucault and poststructuralist enemies of humanism.

Ferry and Renaut identify the themes of the end of philosophy, the hermeneutic paradigm of genealogy, the disintegration of the idea of truth, and the historicizing of categories as tortuous paths ultimately leading to the annihilation

1 Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut: *La pensée 68: Essai sur l'anti-humanisme contemporain*, Paris 1985. Cf. Michel Foucault: 'Nietzsche, Freud, Marx', in: *Nietzsche – Cahiers de Royaumont,* Paris 1967, pp. 183–200; Paul Ricoeur : 'La critique de la religion', in : *Bulletin du Centre Protestant d'Études* no. 16 (1964), pp. 5–16.

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of universals and, above all, to the oft-celebrated death of the subject. Interestingly enough, the authors strategically decided to spare other French thinkers who were also very influential in the sixties, such as Emmanuel Levinas, Raymond Aron, Jean Beaufret, Jacques Bouveresse, Louis Althusser, and Paul Ricoeur, precisely because they either did not succumb to the politically irresponsible interpretations of May 1968 or did subscribe to some form of humanism – that was especially the case of Jean-Paul Sartre. To be sure, postmodernists and poststructuralists have also come under attack by heralds of modernity on the other side of the Rhine, such as Jürgen Habermas and Karl-Otto Apel, just to mention two of the most prominent German philosophers of our days. *Grosso modo*, the problem of modern reason and the emancipatory ideals of self-knowledge and freedom were the main targets for the self-proclaimed heirs to the *maîtres du soupçon* in the sixties. In effect, the Cartesian dream of subjectivity *cum* unity, identity, and reflexivity is said to have come to an end with the Nietzschean critique of German idealism, the Freudian-Marxian unmasking of conscious representations, and the Wittgensteinian critique of consciousness, although Hegel's critique of Kant's transcendental idealism may be regarded as the beginning of the ongoing crisis of modern paradigms of subjectivity. Following Martin Heidegger's "destruction of metaphysics," Foucault and Derrida spoke thus of "detranscendentalizing the subject" and "deconstructing subjectivity" in their independent criticisms of Husserl's rehabilitation of transcendental philosophy. It is my contention here that Ricoeur's hermeneutic phenomenology responds to the genealogical and deconstructive charges against the philosophical discourse of modernity without falling prey to an antihumanist nihilism or privileging linguistic paradigms to the detriment of the classical and modern paradigms of ontology and subjectivity. Furthermore, Ricoeur succeeds in avoiding the aestheticist temptation found in both Foucault and Derrida, as he maintains the epistemic specificity of his hermeneutics of praxis and of his metaphorics of poiesis, allowing for a normative recasting of Judeo-Christian humanism within a liberal, Reformed standpoint that embraces social justice and human liberation. Although I cannot elaborate on this assumption here, it is my contention that Ricoeur's hermeneutic phenomenology of freedom turns out to favor a radical, biblical hermeneutics of liberation as a new way of doing theology out of the liberating praxis that reconciles the social gospel of holistic freedom with a political activism to counter institutionalized oppression, injustice, and violence.

The name of French philosopher Paul Ricoeur has been often associated with the existential phenomenology of the 1950s and with the hermeneutical philosophies of the 1960s and 70s. Ricoeur's transition from transcendental phenomenology to philosophical hermeneutics, in continual dialogue with a myriad of different disciplines such as psychoanalysis, structural anthropology, history,

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theology, social sciences and linguistics, has very often been regarded as an eclectic philosophizing. In point of fact, Ricoeur's *répertoire* is very broad and his compositions very intricate and nuanced. His (non-Hegelian) dialectical way of reconciling both ancient and modern thinkers, analytical and continental traditions, and the architectonic structure of his writings and lectures, as Henri Blocher has put it, characterizes Ricoeur as "l'homme des nuances, dites avec un charme discret," the Jaspersian maestro of a veritable *Symphilosophieren.*[2] And yet Ricoeur has been careful enough to repudiate constant charges of "eclecticism," which he dismisses as "la caricature de la dialectique."[3] Whether his dialectic can really account for the metaphilosophical itinerary of his philosophy of language remains, however, an open question. In a broad sense, this question has to do with Ricoeur's work as a historian of philosophy *and* as a philosopher who questions everything, but in particular the very meaning of questioning itself or problematizing – "*philosopher c'est problématiser*," to evoke Piguet's felicitous formula.[4] In effect, Ricoeur, Piguet, Jean Brun, Jacques Ellul, and Pierre Thévanaz were among the French-speaking Protestant thinkers who followed Marcel's Christian approach to philosophy, in an attempt that sought to rationally account for faith and the existential experience of the mystery of Being, without reducing philosophy to theology, and vice versa. Within an established Cartesian tradition, the Cogito explores the world and the subject's alienation from it. Following Husserl and his *maître à penser* Gabriel Marcel, Ricoeur questions the Cogito's insertion within the world, at once as consciousness of being-in-the-world and as finitude in her/his appropriation of it, by intending, yet undergoing the experience of the world. The question of transcendental subjectivity and the very meaning of positing the I-world opposition, co-constitution and correlation arise thus at the heart of Ricoeur's phenomenological explorations. Now, in a more specific, existential sense, the hermeneutical question arises out of religious symbolism: "*Le symbole donne à penser*" ("the symbol sets us thinking.") Kant, Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, and biblical hermeneutics lead Ricoeur to think the religious anew, to reflect upon the nature of the language of faith. The classic problematic of "faith and reason" acquires then a decisive hermeneutical orientation, in that the Cogito doubts, suspects, and believes. We can no longer take "consciousness" for granted – including our innermost religious convictions and feelings –, since there is also a "false consciousness," as "consciousness, far from

2 Henri Blocher: 'L'herméneutique selon Paul Ricoeur', in : *Hokhma* no. 3 (1977), p. 12.

3 Paul Ricoeur : *Le Conflit des interprétations*, Paris 1969, p. 119. Cf. also pp. 58, 176, 330, 450; Henry Duméry: 'La disgrace éclectique est-elle évitée?', in: *Regards sur la philosophie contemporaine*, Tournai-Paris 1957, p. 150.

4 Jean-Claude Piguet: 'Qu'est-ce qu'un philosophe?', in: *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie* no. 118 (1986), p. 1–9. Cf. Paul Ricoeur : *Gabriel Marcel et Karl Jaspers: Philosophie du mystère et philosophie du paradoxe*, Paris 1948.

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being transparent to itself, is at the same time what *reveals* and what *conceals*," and this very dialectic calls for a *hermeneutics*.[5] The "ethical" lies, therefore, at the bottom of Ricoeur's hermeneutic, insofar as it seeks "to distinguish the true sense from the apparent sense," and as "a proper manner of *uncovering* what was covered, of *unveiling* what was veiled, of removing the mask."[6] Following Heidegger, Ricoeur seeks to think the unveiling thrust of language prior to the experience of subjectivity and consciousness, as language itself reveals the existential structure of human openness to the world. Like Hegel and Heidegger, Ricoeur attempts at rethinking "revelation" (*Offenbarung*) in the very becoming of self-consciousness, so as to highlight the transcending of coming into being. Unlike Hegel and Heidegger, however, Ricoeur does not believe that the Judeo-Christian paradoxical conception of an eternal God who intervenes in temporal history is in need of a totalizing metaphysics or has become an obsolete onto-theological paradigm. As we shall see, Ricoeur's wager is that the revelatory nature of metaphors, especially in mythical and poetical accounts, can actually be very helpful to rescue the radicalness of a hermeneutics of alterity, a hermeneutics that resists systemic closure (including the temptation of reducing alterity to the otherness of the Other) and that refers to the complex, existential situations of our human reality, including natural languages, mythologies, literature, and the cultural products of civilizations.[7] Ricoeur poses thus the hermeneutic problem in metaphilosophical terms, say, analogous to Tarski's convention T: "p" is true in L, iff p, where "p" is the sentence stating a certain proposition in a certain object language L and p is the translation of that sentence into the metalanguage. In contrast with Tarski's theory of truth, which deals with languages that are not semantically closed, Ricoeur's hermeneutic phenomenology follows Heidegger's attempt to account also for nonpropositional language so that the hermeneutical transformation of phenomenology is itself intertwined with methodological and conceptual enlargements of signification that are reflected in the very conception of metaphors and metaphoricity: '*p*' means that *p*, insofar as *p* refers not only to a state of affairs in the world, but also to the self-understanding and transposition of meanings presupposed in narratives and nonpropositional accounts. As it was shown elsewhere, I think that Ricoeur has correctly spotted the hermeneutic transformation of phenomenology in Husserl's *Logical Investigations* and his shift from *Ideas I* to the generative phenomenology of the *Lebenswelt* and in the earlier Heidegger's interest in a phe-

5 Paul Ricoeur: 'The Critique of Religion', in: C. Reagan and D. Stewart (eds.): *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: An Anthology of His Work*, Boston 1978, p. 215. My emphasis.
6 Ibid., 215.
7 Cf. Paul Ricoeur : *Soi-même comme un autre*, Paris 1990, p. 368.

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nomenology of formal indication (*formale Anzeige*).[8] As a Husserl scholar and translator, Ricoeur correctly grasped the *semper reformanda* thrust of the former's shift towards a self-understanding (*Selbstverstehen*) of the European crisis with an *ad fontes* return (Hebrew *teshuvah*, Greek *metanoia*) to the spiritual sense of the Judeo-Christian humanist *arche* and *telos*. I recast thus the Ricoeurian problematic in the following terms: to what extent does Ricoeur's metaphilosophizing unveil some kind of *revealing* language? And what is, after all, the nature of such a language of revelation? What is the revelatory function of the hermeneutical circle? These questions and problems will underlie my hermeneutical investigation throughout this essay. The main purpose of this modest meditation is to elucidate the *topos* of Ricoeur's conception of "revelation" as the correlate of alterity in both "divinity" and "humanity," within his hermeneutical philosophy, especially in the earlier writings leading to his own alternative variant of a post-Heideggerian phenomenological hermeneutics. In order to situate Ricoeur's conception of revelation within the hermeneutical development of his philosophy, I shall recapitulate his thinking along the *chronological* order of publication of his main writings, especially the earlier ones dealing with his philosophy of language and hermeneutic philosophy, so as to reexamine his methodological shift from an existential, perceptualist phenomenology towards a linguistic phenomenology, that is, how an implicit hermeneutics of finitude gradually evolved into an explicit hermeneutics of suspicion. This first part of the essay will cover three main stages in the evolution of Ricoeur's hermeneutical reflection (namely, *l'eidétique, la symbolique et l'herméneutique*). That will provide the necessary background to articulate theological and philosophical hermeneutics within the much broader framework of hermeneutics *tout court*, in the second part, as the particular function of revelation calls for the *interpretation* of texts and contexts.

2 The Phenomenology of the Will

As David Klemm has pointed out, "only relatively lately has Ricoeur undertaken to write a comprehensive hermeneutical theory based on a philosophy of language."[9] However, as we approach Ricoeur's earlier writings within the broader perspective of his own phenomenology, it seems that the hermeneutical question has prevailed along the evolution of his thought, even before culminating in what

8 Cf. my 'Husserl, Heidegger, and the task of a phenomenology of justice', in: *Veritas* 53/1 (2008), pp. 123–144; 'Heidegger, Reification and Formal Indication', in: *Comparative and Continental Philosophy* Vol 4, No 1 (2012): pp. 46–65.

9 David Klemm: *The Hermeneutical Theory of Paul Ricoeur*, Lewisburg 1983, p. 45.

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has been saluted as a "*phénoménologie herméneutique*." Ricoeur confesses that he received "*le choc philosophique décisif*" from his Socratic master Gabriel Marcel, but it was the influence of the Husserlian method that guided his first attempt to construct a phenomenological "philosophy of the will" (*philosophie de la volonté*). As he himself would explain later in a famous collection of hermeneutical essays, *Le conflit des interprétations* (1969): "My purpose here is to explore the paths opened to contemporary philosophy by what could be called the graft of the hermeneutical problem onto the phenomenological method."[10] "*La greffe du problème herméneutique sur la méthode phénoménologique*" – a programmatic formula to be retained – translates indeed Ricoeur's mediation between the Heideggerian, hermeneutical ontology of *Existenz* and the modern hermeneutical theory which has been associated with Schleiermacher and Dilthey. The name of Husserl should appear then in between, as what has been described by Ricoeur himself as a "phenomenological detour." Beyond the Cartesian Cogito (*res cogitans*) and the Kantian judging consciousness (*transcendental ego*), Husserl sought to relocate the thinking and living ego in its own correlative milieu of consciousness, the *Lebenswelt* (*le monde vécu*), so that the transcendental Cogito remains "inserted and involved in the dense world of human life," which he called the *Welterfahrendesleben* ("life-experiencing-the-world").[11] The ultimate meaning of such a transcendental ego is to be found not in the material ego, *Mensch*, but in the ego qua *subject* to the world, "exterior" to the world yet "oriented" towards it. The objectivity of the world becomes thus a "transcendental intersubjectivity," in which the problem of the other will always point to the transcendental ego, that is, in a descriptive analysis which Husserl has called a "phenomenological reduction" (*epoché*), *Einklammerung* ("bracketing"). According to Husserl, in this reduction both the transcendental ego and the world-phenomenon intended by this consciousness (*Intentionalität*) reveal, as it were, the very meaning of their relationship (*ego-cogito-cogitatum*). Ricoeur's phenomenology attempts thus to articulate this signification (*Bedeutung*) in terms of being-in-the-world, however moving away from every transcendental founding on the part of the Cogito and yet always returning to a transcendental, reflexive attitude in its self-understanding. Thus Ricoeur will not forgive the Platonism of the early Husserl, although he will also regret that the later Husserl almost abandoned his original "phenomenology of signification" on his way to an idealistic "transcendental phenomenology." Commenting on Husserl's "analysis of signification" in the second volume of his *Investigations*, Ricoeur says:

10 Paul Ricoeur: *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, [transl. by D. Ihde], Evanston 1974, p. 3. Cf. Ricoeur: *Le Conflit des interprétations*, p. 7.

11 Emmanuel Levinas: *En découvrant l'existence avec Husserl et Heidegger*, Paris 1949, pp. 11ff.

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> It is important to notice that the first question of phenomenology is: What does signifying signify? Whatever the importance subsequently taken on by the description of perception, phenomenology begins not from what is most silent in the operation of consciousness but from its relationship to things mediated by signs as these are elaborated in a *spoken* culture. The first act of consciousness is designating or meaning (*Meinen).* To distinguish signification from signs, to separate it from the word, from the image, and to elucidate the diverse ways in which an empty signification comes to be fulfilled by an intuitive presence, whatever it may be, is to describe signification phenomenologically.[12]

In part, the importance of these remarks resides in the implicit critique Ricoeur was addressing against the existential phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, in defense of the eidetic description he had employed four years earlier to compose the first volume of his "*philosophie de la volonté*," *Le volontaire et l'involontaire* (1950). In the "Introduction" to his French translation of Husserl's *Ideen I* (1950), Ricoeur had already criticized Merleau-Ponty's existential use of phenomenology to reconquer the "facticité" of our "*être-au-monde*" (*In-der-Welt-sein*), whose world has always already been out there.[13] Since every consciousness is perceptual, Merleau-Ponty seems to assume too hastily that the *signifié* has already been appropriated as *signifiant* in the experience of consciousness as *corps vécu*, as though the finitude of the latter concurred with the cognition of the former. Ricoeur thinks that Merleau-Ponty absorbed from the later Husserl (notably Husserl's *Lebensphilosophie*, after the *Krisis*) an existential shift towards a "perceptual" phenomenology (*Phénoménologie de la perception*, 1945) in which perception becomes "the prerequisite and genetic origin of all thought processes":

> Reduction is no longer understood as the withdrawal of consciousness from the world but as the revelation of the true sense of the transcendence of the "thing" in relation to consciousness. Contrary to the Platonic and subsequently Galilean tradition, which holds that true reality is not what one perceives but what one measures and conceives, the thing perceived recovers its presence, its sparkle, its marvellous power of revelation. The transcendency of the thing is the relative transcendency of a *vis-à-vis* in which consciousness goes beyond itself. Consciousness, defined by its intentionality, bursts outwards, moves to where the things are. Correspondingly, the world is "world-for-my-life," the environment of the "living ego," and it has no sense apart from the "living present" in which the commitment of the vivid now, in all its presence, is constantly renewed.[14]

12 Paul Ricoeur: *Husserl: An Analysis of His Phenomenology*, [transl. by E. Ballard and L. Embree], Evanston 1967, pp. 5f.

13 Ibid., pp. 33 n. 34.

14 Paul Ricoeur: 'New Developments in Phenomenology in France: The Phenomenology of Language', in: *Social Research* 34 (1967), p. 6.

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Although Ricoeur would be forever indebted to Merleau-Ponty's holistic *circularité* between the "symbolism of the body" and "the play of intersignification," he thinks that Merleau-Ponty's "return to the speaking subject" does no justice to the co-constitutive character of language itself. Although he often speaks of the *impensé* (*das Ungedachte*, the unthought) in Husserl's phenomenology, and despite his recognition of the excess of the "signified" over the "signifying," Merleau-Ponty seems indeed to maintain the "sedimentation" and the "institution" of language as a corollary of his perceptual phenomenology.[15] On the other hand, Ricoeur's phenomenology of the will attempted to respond to the Husserlian challenge of intentionally representing (*vorstellen*) the noetic-noematic structure of consciousness, posited in the *Ideen.* According to Husserl, affection and volition appear as complex representations in the process of *Fundierung.* In order to understand these affective and volitive subjective processes, Ricoeur first applies the Husserlian method of description to the practical functions of consciousness, before arriving at the constitutive power of consciousness in *Vorstellungen*, and he finally denounces "as naive the pretensions of the subject to set himself [*sic*] up as the primitive or primordial being."[16] The project of the *Philosophie de la volonté* was originally conceived in three phases: in the first volume, *Le volontaire et l'involontaire* (in English translation, *Freedom and Nature)*, Ricoeur deals with the "eidetics of the will," while the second and third volumes would be respectively devoted to the "empirics" and the "poetics" of the will. Only the second volume of his ambitious project was published, in 1960, under the title *Finitude et culpabilité*, in two separate parts: *L'homme faillible* (ET: *Fallible Man*) and *La symbolique du mal* (ET: *The Symbolism of Evil).*

In the first volume, which he dedicated to Marcel, Ricoeur sets out to articulate some kind of dialectical *via media* between the Sartrean ontological dichotomy (*être-pour-soi* subject, *être-en-soi* object) and the "incarnation" (*être-au-monde*) of Marcel's existentialism. Without adhering to the Husserlian "Platonizing interpretation of essences" and its "idealism of the transcendental ego," Ricoeur applies Husserl's eidetic reduction to the domain of the will, which is unveiled as consciousness ("*vouloir comme conscience*"), as it diagnoses the nature of the involuntary:

> The initial situation revealed by description is the reciprocity of the involuntary and the voluntary.The involuntary has no meaning of its own. Only the relation of the voluntary

15 Cf. Ricoeur's preface to Gary B. Madison: *The Phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty*, Athens, OH 1981.

16 Paul Ricoeur: 'Methods and Tasks of a Phenomenology of the Will', in: *Husserl*, p. 214. I have left the inclusive language whenever it occurs in the original.

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> and the involuntary is intelligible. Description is understanding in terms of this relation.[17]

This *latent* hermeneutic must dig up the meaning-structure which underlies the prepredicative, prelinguistic "given," in an explorative movement that reminds of Husserl's process of *Rückfragen* ("backquestioning"), although Ricoeur also uses a Kantian delimitation to avoid falling back into "transcendentalism":

> Pure description, understood as an elucidation of meanings, has its limitations. The gushing reality of life can become shrouded in essences. But while it may finally be necessary to transcend the eidetic approach, we must first draw from it all that it can give us, especially delimiting of our principal concepts. The words decision, project, value, motive, and so on, have a meaning which we need to determine. Hence we shall first proceed to such analysis of meanings.[18]

Just like Husserl, who had used the term *eidos* to designate "the immediately given structures of experience" (hence the German *Wesenschau*, "idea-perception"), Ricoeur deploys an "*eidétique de la volonté*" to effect his phenomenological analysis of the essential structures of human being qua "*être-au-monde.*" Like Husserl, Ricoeur takes the Cartesian Cogito as the starting point of his phenomenology, proceeding from the "voluntary" to the "involuntary." The Husserlian notion of "intentionality" and his technique of "bracketing" inspire Ricoeur's "double abstraction" of the fault ("*la faute*") and transcendence: the autonomous "*je pense*" is left alone to its own freedom, motivated by an infinite drive, yet bound by a finite nature. Again, Kant's *limit-idea* defines the paradoxical character of Ricoeur's phenomenology. Contrary to Husserl in his tendency to reduce the world to the transcendental subject, Ricoeur thinks the dichotomy of the subject and the object to be real, although metaphysically inconclusive. As over against the objectifying empiricism of others, he maintains that, in order "to understand the relations between the involuntary and the voluntary we must constantly reconquer the Cogito grasped in the first person (*le Cogito en première personne*) from the natural standpoint."[19] Ricoeur affirms thus the "reciprocity of the voluntary and the involuntary," in the conciliation of nature (the "*corps propre*" which I am) with freedom (my appropriation of a meaningful world through incarnation), as an alternative to the paradoxical duality of the involuntary and the voluntary.[20] Of course, although he goes beyond the psychological dualism of the subject and the object, Ricoeur does not seek to overcome the duality of the involuntary and the voluntary. For in the

17 Paul Ricoeur: *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, [transl. by E. Kohak], Evanston 1966, pp. 4f.
18 Ricoeur: *Freedom and Nature*, p. 37.
19 Ibid., 9. See also Ricoeur's comparison between "Kant and Husserl", *Husserl*, pp. 175ff.
20 Paul Ricoeur: *Freedom and Nature*, p. 341.

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innermost center of the human will, Ricoeur concludes, remains the existential paradox of the "chosen" and the "undergone" (*le paradoxe de l'existence choisie et de l'existence subie*). Such is the Kierkegaardian accent of Ricoeur's dialectic of human freedom. Moreover, the human, rational boundaries implied in the Ricoeurian phenomenology of the will reflect the Lutheran heritage of his Kantian morality. After asserting that freedom is not a pure act but activity and receptivity, Ricoeur sets up the "limit concepts" of human freedom only to open its way to meaning and the Transcendence. The last words in this volume remind us of the ontological regionality of the human:

> A genuine transcendence is more than a limit concept: it is a presence which brings about a true revolution in the theory of subjectivity. It introduces into it a radically new dimension, the poetic dimension. At least such limit concepts complete the determination of a freedom which is human and not divine, of a freedom which does not posit itself absolutely because it is not Transcendence. To will is not to create.[21]

If Kant's *Kritik* meant to bring about a Copernican revolution by restoring to subjectivity its due (*der Mensch* qua the transcendental "I" as the center of a *gegenständlich* cosmos), Ricoeur seeks to perform "a second Copernican revolution which displaces being from the center, without however returning to the rule of the object."[22] In this sense, the Ricoeurian dialectic compels us to postpone any conclusive remarks about the nature-freedom paradox. In effect, Ricoeur maintains from the outset that "a paradoxical ontology is possible only if it is covertly reconciled."[23] Such a dialectical phenomenology is thus to be understood as "reconciliation," as an understanding reconcilement of the voluntary with the involuntary: "…comprendre le mystère comme réconciliation, c'est-à-dire, comme restauration …du pacte originel de la conscience confuse avec son corps et le monde."[24] Even though his first major work does not contain an explicit hermeneutics, it seems that Paul Ricoeur was already preparing the soil on which he should construct his "*empirique*" and "*symbolique*." In point of fact, as Blocher has remarked, the Ricoeurian "*eidétique*" prefigured somehow his future philosophy of interpretation not only in its "description" of the will, but also in the very phenomenological style – in French, "*caractère*" – of his writing. For the occurrence of expressions such as "*la parabole de l'être*," "*figure*," "*métaphore*," and "*analogie de la Transcendance*," serve to illustrate the hermeneutical concern which permeates the Ricoeurian phenomenology of the will. But it was only in the preface to the second volume, *Finitude et culpabilité*, that Paul Ricoeur employed the term "*herméneutique*" for the first time, as an en-

21 Paul Ricoeur: *Freedom and Nature*, p. 486.
22 Ibid., p. 32.
23 Ibid.
24 Paul Ricoeur: *Le volontaire et l'involontaire*, Paris 1950, p. 21.

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semble of deciphering rules applied to a world of symbols. Of course this interpretive exegesis of the symbol is to be understood against the mythico-symbolic background of the "*symbolique du mal*," which constitutes the second part of *Finitude et culpabilité*. If the eidetics of the will culminated in the "incarnate freedom" of the human essentially understood, an "empirics of the will," on the other hand, should complete our understanding of the actual conditions of human existence as reflected in consciousness and as we find them in non-reflected expressions such as myth and symbol.

Although *L'homme fallible*, the first part of this volume, remains within the framework of a "descriptive phenomenology," i. e. a work of pure reflection, it has been acclaimed, along with its sequel *La symbolique du mal* as the "most perfect" book ever written by Ricoeur.[25] In its first part, the problem of evil is thoroughly dealt with on the level of the "*imaginaire*," as existentially reflected in the human "*conscience*" (both "consciousness" and "awareness") of her/his finitude and fallibility, in her/his "*conscience de faute*." Ricoeur's perspective is that of an ethical world-view ("*vision éthique du monde*"), which presupposes the dialectical interdependence between freedom and evil:

> Trying to understand evil through freedom is a serious decision; it is the decision to enter into the problem of evil by the narrow door, taking evil, from the outset, for the "human, all too human" [*Menschliches,Allzumenschliches*] It is also necessary to understand the meaning of this decision, in order not to prematurely reject its legitimacy. This is in no way a decision on the radical origin of evil, but only the description of the place where evil appears and where it can be seen; it is very possible indeed that man is not the radical origin of evil, that he is not the absolute villain; but even if the damage was contemporaneous with the radical origin of things, it would remain only the way it affects human existence that makes it manifest. The decision to enter into the problem of evil by the narrow gate of the reality expresses only the selection of a center of perspective: even if evil came to man from another source that contaminated him, this other locus would not be accessible to us except for its relation to us, by this state of temptation, bewilderment, blindness, which affects us; man's humanity is, in any event, the space of manifestation of evil.[26]

According to such an ethical view, not only is freedom the reason for evil but the "confession of evil" ("*l'aveu du mal*") is also the condition for the consciousness of freedom. Thus the ethical view of evil leads inevitably to an interpretation of mythical significations, as in the "myth of the Fall": if it was the human being who has posited (*posé*) evil in the world, humans on the other hand posited evil only because they succumbed to an adversary, alien temptation. In other words, the positing of evil implies already the victimizing of freedom by an Other: "by

25 Michel Philibert: *Paul Ricoeur ou la liberté selon l'espérance*, Paris 1971, p. 64.
26 Paul Ricoeur: *L'homme faillible*, Paris 1960, p. 14.

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positing evil, freedom falls prey to an Other" (*en posant le mal, la liberté est en proie à un Autre*).[27] Such an ambiguous structure of myth requires an exegesis of the symbol, which inspires Ricoeur's hermeneutic phenomenology.

3 Phenomenology of the Symbol

Commenting on Ricoeur's transition from his eidetic phenomenology of the will to his hermeneutic symbolism of evil, Kohak evokes the Ricoeurian hermeneutical principle of *pars pro toto* symbolism (i. e. a two-layer structure of meaning, growing from the partial to the total representation of symbolic meaning) which, in *De l'interprétation*, would be applied to the interpretation of dreams qua symbols and fully developed into a veritable hermeneutics:

> The task of hermeneutic phenomenology is precisely to recognize the universal latent significance made manifest through the overt meaning of myth and symbol. Thus a hermeneutics must combine the attitude of trust with an attitude of suspicion, a willingness to listen to what is revealed through the symbol and a suspicion which would protect it from being misled by its overt meaning.[28]

The Ricoeurian project of building up a phenomenology of the will had to undergo a radical methodological change, in its transition from the eidetic analysis of *L'homme faillible* to the structural hermeneutic of *La symbolique du mal.* Ricoeur had already announced the boundaries of his phenomenological method in *Le volontaire et l'involontaire*, when he was forced to "bracket" (*mettre en parenthèses*) both the fault and the Transcendence in order to work out a "pure," eidetic description of the will. Now, as he moves from the "*eidétique*" to the "*empirique*," Ricoeur admits that humans' transition from a state of "innocence" to a "faulty" condition cannot be properly dealt with by any "empiric description" but requires what he calls a "*mythique concrète.*" The Ricoeurian project moves then in the direction of a philosophical reflection upon the myth. The concept of fallibility opens up the way to the symbolic language of the confession of faults, as humans are held in a dialectical mediation between the finite and the infinite, caught up between their language of analogies and their guilty conscience's language of enigmas. The enigmatic character of this "langage de l'homme faillible" requires, essentially and not accidentally, an *herméneutique* (i. e. "une exégèse du symbole qui appelle des règles de déchiffrement"). The Kantian aphorism, "the symbol gives raise to think," is then invoked to translate the hermeneutical project of Ricoeur's symbolism:

27 Ibid., p. 17.
28 Ricoeur: *Freedom and Nature*, p. xxxi.

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> This hermeneutic is not homogeneous in the reflective thinking that led to the concept of fallibility. It rather outlines the requirements for transposing the symbolism of evil [*la symbolique du mal*] into a new type of philosophical discourse in the last chapter of the second part, under the title: "the symbol gives raise to think" [*le symbole donne à penser*]. This text is the hub of the whole work; it shows how we can both respect the specificity of the symbolic mode of expression and think, not "behind" the symbol, but "from" the symbol.[29]

In his analysis of primary symbols such as "*souillure*" (stain), "*péché*" (sin), "*culpabilité*" (guilt), and of myths which systematize these symbols, Ricoeur seeks to depict the unity of the paradoxical relation of man as agent and patient, as act and fact, as voluntary and involuntary, as freedom and nature. In dialogue with the phenomenology of religions (Mircea Eliade, G. van der Leeuw et al.) and historical-critical theologies of our times (notably Gerhard von Rad's *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Theologie*), Ricoeur classifies the myths into four different types:

(i) those of the "original chaos," as in the Babylonian account of creation ("*Le drame de la création et la vision 'rituelle' du monde*");
(ii) the "tragic myth," and those of the evil god ("*Le dieu méchant et la vision tragique de l'existence*");
(iii) the "adamic myth," in Genesis ("*Le mythe 'adamique' et la vision 'eschatologique' de l'histoire*");
(iv) the myth of the "exiled soul," as in the Orphic gnosis ("*le mythe de l'âme exilée et le salut par la connaissance*").[30]

The twofold conception of myth as "*parole*" (as opposed to "*langage*") and "récit" ("*en lui le symbole prend la forme du récit*"), according to Ricoeur, implies a sequential relationship between symbols that refer to time and to a concrete mode of existence:

> Myth exerts its symbolic function specifically by means of the story [*récit*, narrative] because what it means is already drama. It is this original drama that opens and unveils the hidden meaning of human experience; by doing this, the myth recounts and assumes the irreplaceable function of the narrative.[31]

"Totalité du sens" and "drame cosmique," "genèse" and "structure," the structural themes of the Beginning and the End – these concepts characterize Ricoeur's dialectical theology of reconciliation, as he had already admitted vis-à-vis the mystery of the serfdom of will, "the enigma of the servile will, that is to say, of a free will that binds to and is always already linked, such is the ultimate theme

29 Ricoeur : *L'homme faillible*, p. 12.
30 Paul Ricoeur: *La symbolique du mal*, Paris 1960, p. 153.
31 Ibid., p. 161.

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suggested by the symbol" [*l'énigme du serf-arbitre, c'est-à-dire d'un libre arbitre qui se lie et se trouve toujours déjà lié, est le thème ultime que le symbole donne à penser*].[32] Thus the phenomenology of *La symbolique du mal* grounds its hermeneutics upon the double intentionality of myth and symbol: the Ricoeurian hermeneutics is then better defined as the task of deciphering double-meaning symbolic expressions. Now, I must recall that the Ricoeurian symbolism in question is not speculative but it remains dependant on our human experience and its reflection upon the myth. Ricoeur announces a third volume on the "philosophy of the fault" (in the awaited *Poétique de la voionté*), where he would deal with the so-called "*symboles spéculatifs.*"[33] In his introduction to the *Symbolism of Evil* he develops an entire "critériologie du symbole" in order to arrive at some definition of the symbol in question. In the first place, every authentic symbol comprises three dimensions: cosmic (i. e. it always refers to a place or an aspsct of the universe), oneiric (it is in the dream that one can bring out the passage from the cosmic function to a psychic-function in a symbol) and poetic ("*dans la poésie le symbole est surpris au moment où il est un surgissement du langage*"), and these three forms are structurally intercommunicative. Ricoeur goes on then to enumerate six approaches to what should be the essence of the symbol:

(1) The symbol is a sign: "ce sont des expressions qui communiquent un sens; ce sens est déclaré dans une intention de signifier véhiculée par la parole."
(2) Symbols are opaque: "à l'opposé des signes techniques parfaitement transparents qui ne disent que ce qu'ils veulent dire em posant le signifié, les signes symboliques sont opaques, parce que le sens premier littéral, patent, vise lui-même analogiquement un sens second qui n'est pas donné autrememt qu'en lui… Cette opacité fait la profondeur même du symbole, inépuisable comme on dira."
(3) The symbol is a primary intentionality which provides analogically a secondary sense: "à la différence d'une comparaison que nous considérons du dehors, le symbole est le mouvement du sens primaire qui nous fait participer au sens latent et ainsi nous assimile au symbolisé sans que nous puissions dominer intellectuellement la similitude."
(4) A symbol is not an allegory: "dans l'allégorie le signifié primaire, c'est-à-dire le sens littéral, est contingent et le signifié second, le sens symbolique lui-même, est suffisammemt extérieur pour être directement accessible …le symbole précède l'herméneutique; l'allégorie est déjà herméneutique; et cela parce que le symbole donne son sens en transparence d'une toute autre façon que par traduction; on dirait plutôt qu'il évoque, qu'il le suggère au

32 Ricoeur: *L'homme faillible*, p. 13.
33 Ricoeur: *La symbolique*, p. 17 n. 3.

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sens de l'*ainigma* grec (d'où procède le mot 'énigme'). Il le donne dans la transparence opaque de l'énigme et non par traduction."

(5) This "symbol" in question has nothing to do with that of the "symbolic logic," but the former is the very opposite of the latter: "la signification, par sa structure même (en même temps fonction de l'absence et fonction de la présence), rend possible à la fois la formalisation intégrale, c'est-à-dire la réduction du signe au 'caractère' (au sens leibnizien) et finalememt à un élément de calcul, et la restauration d'un langage plein, lourd d'intentionnalités impliquées et de renvois analogiques à autre chose, qu'il donne en énigme."

(6) How shall one draw the line between "symbol" and "myth"? "Je tiendrai le mythe pour une espèce de symbole, comme un symbole développé en forme de récit, et articulé dans un temps et un espace non coordonnables à ceux de l'histoire et de la géographie selon la méthode critique; par exemple, l'exil est un symbole primaire de l'aliénation humaine, mais l'histoire de l'expulsion d'Adam et d'Eve du Paradis est un récit mythique de second degré mettant em jeu des personages, des lieux, un temps, des épisodes fabuleux."[34]

In the conclusion to this volume, Ricoeur inscribes himself within the hermeneutical circle sketched by Schleiermacher and Dilthey, and reproduced in different domains by Leenhardt, Eliade and Bultmann. In effect, the Marburger theologian is evoked several times by Ricoeur throughout his later writings. Although Ricoeur shares the former's demythologizing program on the whole, the French philosopher rejects the Bultmannian confusion of "*démythisation*" with "*démythologisation.*" According to Ricoeur, Bultmann has rightly articulated the hermeneutical circle in terms of *Verstehen* and *Glauben*, in that one has to understand in order to believe insofar as one has also to believe in order to understand. Understanding and interpretation are certainly conditioned by our presuppositions, by our preunderstanding and by that which is "aimed at" in our approach (the Heideggerian *Woraufhin*). Therefore, belief is only made possible, for the postcritical subjectivity of "modernity," through the mediation of one's self-understanding. It is in this sense that understanding, from a hermeneutical standpoint, is mediation rather than reconstruction, revelation rather than objectification. Furthermore, I agree with Gary Madison in that "Ricoeur's reflexive philosophy is not a philosophy of consciousness, and the hermeneutical subject is not a metaphysical subject."[35] Thus, the intrinsic demythologizing character of

34 Ricoeur: *La symbolique*, pp. 21–25.

35 Gary B. Madison: 'Ricoeur and the Hermeneutics of the Subject', in: Lewis E. Hahn (ed.): *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, "The Library of Living Philosophers", Chicago and La Salle, Ill. 1996, p. 80.

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every critique effects the deconstructive thrust of Heidegger's *Abbau*, as Bultmann's *Entmythologisierung* recasts the *entformalisiert* sense of Dasein's facticity: "*Toute critique 'démythologise' en tant que critique: c'est-à-dire pousse toujours plus loin le départage de l'historique (selon les règles de la méthode critique) et du pseudo-historique.*"[36] In particular, the "*historisch-geschichtlich*" rupture entailed by Bultmann's neo-Kantian criticism has opened up the way for the liberation of the *logos* enclosed in the *mythos*. Nevertheless, such demythologization in the very pursuit of objective truth does not suppress the myth but rehabilitates it, in its symbolic dimension. As Ricoeur remarks,

> It is precisely in accelerating the movement of "demythologization," that modern hermeneutics reveals the magnitude of the symbol, as an original sign of the sacred; so it takes part in the revival of philosophy in contact with symbols; it is one of the ways of its rejuvenation. This paradox that "demythologizing" is also charging the thought in symbols is just a corollary of what we have called the circle of belief and understanding in hermeneutics.[37]

Hence we can speak of the Ricoeurian distinction between "*démythisation*" and "*démythologisation*" in the following terms: whereas the former means the radical suppression of the myth, the latter seeks to denounce the historical naiveté of the pre-critical belief in the myth. Ricoeur rejects the former, while Bultmann apparently confuses the two. In point of fact, the notion of "demythologization" as the "de-objectification" of myth is better understood if we compare Bultmann's definition of *Mythos* with that of Hans Jonas, whose work on Gnosticism inspired the former's demythologization project in the 1940's. According to Bultmann,

> The real purpose of myth is not to present an objective picture of the world as it is (*ein objektives Weltbild*), but to express man's understanding of himself in the world in which he lives. Myth should be interpreted not cosmologically, but anthropologically, or better still, existentially… The real purpose of myth is to speak of a transcendent power which controls the world and man, but that purpose is impeded and obscured by the terms in which it is experienced.[38]

Now, as we consider Jonas's identification between *entmythologisiert* ("demythologized') and *entmythisiert* ("demythed") to express the "logicized" language of human thought, as opposed to the "hypostasized" language of myth, it becomes evident that such an interpretation of mythology had to appeal to an existential terminology. Because the kerygma should not be eliminated (Bultmann), the demythologization should not be reduced to a mere suppression of

36 Ricoeur: *La symbolique du mal*, p. 328.
37 Ibidem. Cf. Martin Heidegger: *Sein und Zeit*, 7th. ed., § 7 C, 35, § 48, p. 241.
38 Rudolf Bultmann: *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*, ed. by H.-W. Bartsch, New York 1961, vol. 1, p. 10f.

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mythology but consisted in the interpretation of it (Jonas). In other words, Bultmann – just like Jonas – does not dispense with the mythological, but rather seeks to understand it in existential, self-appropriating terms. The myth, on the other hand, has itself to be sacrificed on the altar of reason so that the logos itself be resurrected, at the very level of our human existence. This re-appropriation of the logos by the understanding subject, vis-à-vis the symbolism of the myth, was the kernel of Jonas's approach to Gnostic mythology:

> We first turn to an anthropological, ethical sphere of concepts to show how the existential basic principle we have postulated, the "gnostic" principle…is here in a quite distinctive way drawn back out of the outward mythical objectification (*der äusseren mythischen Objektivation*) and transposed into inner concepts of Dasein (*in innere Daseinsbegriffe*) and into ethical practice, i. e. it appears so to speak "resubjectivized."[39]

It seems that Ricoeur's conception of "myth," originated from his "dialogue" with Jaspers, Berdyaev, Eliade, and Jung, is much broader and more adequate to be used in a philosophy of language than the Bultmannian one. As Ricoeur would point it out in his preface to the French edition of Bultmann's *Jesus* (1968), the "nonmythological" language of faith proposed by Bultmann does not solve the hermeneutical problem of objectifying the meaning of the *Dass* ("this event of encounter") which follows on the *Was* ("on general statements and on objectifying representations.")[40] Ricoeur is not taking so much a stand against Bultmann as he wants to go further in a linguistic direction overlooked by the latter. Accordirig to Ricoeur, "Bultmann seems to believe that a language which is no longer 'objectifying' is innocent. But in what sense is it still a language? And what does it signify?"[41] Like the "new hermeneutic" movemerit which would emerge out of the post-Bultmannian quest of the historical Jesus, Ricoeur re-invokes the object of this hermeneutical inquiry in order to radicalize the demythologizing program. Yet, unlike Ebeling and Fuchs, he critically avoids the Heideggerian identity between an existential hermeneutics and an ontology of understanding. In his search for a method which reconciles both the symbolic use of myth and the signification of faith, Ricoeur concludes that, in the last analysis, "kerygma can no longer be the origin of demythologization if it does not initiate thought, if it develops no understanding of faith." The question that arises then is whether the kerygma can still be understood as both event and meaning together, without falling into the "objectifying" aporia again:

> This question is at the center of post-Bultmannian hermeneutics. The opposition between explanation and understanding that came from Dilthey and the opposition between the objective and the existential that came from an overtly anthropological

39 Hans Jonas: *The Gnostic Religion*, Boston 1958, pp. 3f.
40 Cf. Ricoeur: *Le Conflit des interprétations*, p. 387.
41 Ricoeur: *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 396. *Le Conflit des interprétations*, p. 388.

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> reading of Heidegger were very useful in a first phase of the problem. But, once the intention is to grasp in its entirity the problem of the understanding of faith and the language appropriate to it, these oppositions prove to be ruinous. Doubtless it is necessary today to award less importance to *Verstehen* [understanding], which is too exclusively centered on existential decision, and to consider the problem of language and interpretation in all its breadth.[42]

It would be imprecise, however, to understand Ricoeur's criticism of Bultmann as an attempt to avoid the Heideggerian category of "historicality" (*Geschichtlichkeit*; in French, "historialité"). For Ricoeur agrees with Bultmann as to the existential appropriation of meaning in the *geschichtliche* decision; nevertheless, according to Ricoeur, this *geschichtliche* appropriation "is only the final stage, the last threshold of an understanding which has first uprooted and moved into another meaning." Ricoeur criticizes Bultmann for leaping over "the moment of meaning," which is "objective" and "ideal" (in the Husserlian conception of *Sinn*, which does not hold any place in reality, not even in psychic reality). Ricoeur wants thus to emphasize "the semantic moment" and "the objectivity of the text, understood as content – bearer of meaning and demand for meaning – that begins the existential movement of appropriation." He does follow Husserl and Frege in their distinction between sense/meaning and reference ("*Sinn*" and "*Bedeutung*"): "*Il faut alors distinguer deux seuils de la compréhension: le seuil "du sens" qui est ce qu'on vient de dire, et celui de la "signification" qui est le moment de la reprise du sens par le lecteur, de son effectuation dans l'existence. Le parcours entier de la compréhension va du sens idéal à la signification existentielle.*"[43] This should bring us back to the hermeneutic phenomenology developed in the *Symbolism of Evil.* In its conclusion, Ricoeur evaluates the postcritical impasse suscitated by the modern hermeneutical circle: on the one hand, the symbolic and mythic expressions of being have been defied by the critique towards an objectifying language, having human being as the center of meaning (transcendental Cogito); on the other hand, the first naiveté, that of belief in a divine-ordered cosmos, has been suppressed by demythologizing programs only to culminate in the metaphysical forgetfulness of Being. Just as Kant's *Kritiken* mark the end of pre-modern approaches to the metaphysics of representation and the beginning of anthropocentric conceptions of subjectivity that articulate the rational and the empirical realms of whatever becomes object of human cognition, Heidegger sought to rescue the fundamental ontological dimension that was lacking in transcendental subjectivity. Nevertheless, Heidegger's hermeneutical clue to account for the meaning of Being out of Dasein's

42 Ibidem: "Ces questions je ne formule pas contre Bultmann, mais afin de mieux penser ce qui reste impensé chez lui."

43 Ricoeur: *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 397; *Le Conflit des interprétations*, p. 389.

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factual existence is far from conclusive, as its historicality and linguisticality allow for open-ended interpretations. Hence Ricoeur goes on to confess:

> Does this mean that we can return to the first naiveté? Not at all. At any rate, something has been lost, irretrievably lost: the immediacy of belief. But if we can no longer live according to originary belief or the major symbolism of the sacred, we modern can and, by means of critique, tend towards a second naiveté. In short, it is by interpreting that we can hear again; so it is in hermeneutics that the givenness of sense is tied to the symbol and the intelligible initiative of deciphering.[44]

4 The Hermeneutics of Suspicion

As we have seen, according to Ricoeur, hermeneutics has emerged out of the passage from a "pre-philosophical," mythical naiveté ("*la première naiveté*") to a demythologizing, critical understanding of our human existence ("*la seconde naiveté*"). In this sense, Ricoeur's phenomenology of the will is a propaedeutic to his philosophical hermeneutics, and his philosophy can be properly called a "hermeneutic phenomenology."[45] For Ricoeur brings both ontology and epistemology together onto the level of his hermeneutics of human being. Not only the classical question "what is human being?" [*Qu'est-ce que l'être humain?*], but above all the hermeneutic question "what is the Being of human being?" [*Qu'est-ce que l'être de l'être-humain?*] runs through his explorations of meaning, in a dialectical philosophical anthropology which reluctantly gives way to an ontological hermeneutics vis-à-vis the problematic of speaking the language of Being. In effect, it seems indeed that this "*dialectique*" makes Ricoeur's critique of metaphysics stand closer to Kant's than to Heidegger's, in that its ethical dimension allows for the "symbolique" without any transgression of the truth of Being, aligning Ricoeur's "*éthique*" with Levinas's and Kierkegaard's primacy of the Other over the thinking of the Being of beings.[46] Furthermore, such an *ursprüngliche* ethical dimension constitutes the *humanist* character of Ricoeur's philosophical thought, which overtly assumes the Judeo-Christian presuppositions of his thinking in the form of a hermeneutic anthropology. Like Heidegger, Ricoeur believes that language is the house of Being and human being its shepherd; unlike the Messkirch philosopher, however, Ricoeur believes in a transcendental "signifier" which refers to our human finitude and fallibility as much as it does refer to our openness to the Other. Religion, according to Ricoeur

44 Ricoeur : *La symbolique du mal*, p. 326.

45 Cf. Don Ihde: *Hermeneutic Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, Evanston 1971.

46 Cf., for example, Ricoeur: *Le Conflit des interprétations*, pp. 338 ff.: "Je suivrai Kant deux fois: d'abord dans sa définition de la *fonction* éthique de la religion, ensuite dans sa définition du contenu *représentatif* de la religion…"

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and in full agreement with his Kantian conception of morality, translates thus the very hermeneutical circle which keeps us within the mystery of being, without any warrant of finding our way out. For religion, as the ultimate expression of a human desire to transcend oneself in encountering the Other, makes no pretension to overcoming the hermeneutic circles that take us from suspicion to belief. Religion reveals thus our human belonging together with the language of being. Therefore, a critical religious attitude leads us not to unbelief but to interpretation, even within the circle, so that our understanding of ourselves and our spiritual vocation may be fulfilled in a world where meaning comes into being. This is the "wager" ("*le pari*") of Ricoeur's hermeneutics of suspicion, the philosophical wager that, following "the indication of symbolic thought," "I shall have a better understanding of man and of the bond between the being of man and the being of all beings."[47] In this shift from a mythico-symbolic expression of human existence towards a critical, philosophical hermeneutics of being, Ricoeur has stressed the function of the consciousness of self which lies in the very transition from a precritical to a postcritical subjectivity. The first stage of subjectivity (the first naiveté) holds the primary symbol not as a "given" (*une donnée*) to human being but as a telos (and *Ursprung*) to be "aimed at" (*visée*) through mythic expression. The second stage of subjectivity can be portrayed by the Cartesian cogito but it was decisively won by the Kantian epistemological turn in his critique of dogmatic metaphysics: "How do I know what appears to me as it appears?" Such critical approach, in its destruction of the immediate, symbolic meaning, constitutes the preamble to the "hermeneutics of suspicion" which was practiced by Feuerbach, Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. The structure of selfhood is thus objectified in the conscious critique of subjectivity, and subsequently suspected and unmasked in its "false-conscious" pretensions to a full, self-transparent "consciousness." Finally, the third stage of subjectivity is attained with the emergence of a reflexive consciousness in a "restorative" hermeneutic that mediates the content of symbolic consciousness through the critical consciousness. Ricoeur employs here the Husserlian phenomenological method to return to the Kantian epistemology: the subject is no longer a transcendental ego, but a historical-existential "I" that synthesizes direct self-world relations. As Klemm has summed it up, "the second naiveté is grounded on the full appearance of reflexivity just because it exists where the naive meaning is mediated through the critical consciousness."[48] The development of the Ricoeurian hermeneutical reflection found its climactic point between 1965 and 1969, when were published, respectively, *De l'interprétation. Essai sur Freud*, and *Le conflit des interprétations. Essais d'herméneutique.* It is in *Freud and Philosophy* (ET, 1970) that

47 Paul Ricoeur: *The Symbolism of Evil*, [transl. by E. Buchanan], New York 1967, p. 355.
48 Klemm: *The Hermeneutical Theory of Paul Ricoeur*, p. 73.

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Ricoeur makes explicit the challenge of a "hermeneutics of suspicion," as opposed to a primitive naiveté-based "hermeneutics of recollection" which tries in vain to explain the symbolism of evil. First of all, in this book Ricoeur announces the challenges imposed by the complexity and vastness of the realm of language today:

> Language is the common meeting ground of Wittgenstein's investigations, the English linguistic philosophy, the phenomenology that stems from Husserl, Heidegger's investigations, the works of the Bultmannian school and other schools of New Testament exegesis, the works of comparative history of religion and of anthropology concerning myth, ritual, and unbelief – and finally, psychoanalysis.[49]

"Language's domain" [*Le domaine du langage*], says Ricoeur, "is an area today where all philosophical investigations cut across one another." In his penetrating analysis of Freud's hermeneutics of the self, Ricoeur marks off his own project of interpretation of signs by taking a "longue route" that differs from the "short cut" taken by Heidegger, in the latter's definition of Dasein as the being which has its being in understanding. Commenting on Heidegger's ontological hermeneutics, Ricoeur remarks that

> One does not enter (Heidegger's) ontology of understanding little by little: one does not reach it by degrees, deepening the methodological requirements of exegesis, history, or psychoanalysis: one is transported there by a sudden reversal of the question. Instead of asking: On what condition can a knowing subject understand a text or history? one asks: What kind of being is it whose being consists of understanding? The hermeneutic problem thus becomes a problem of the Analytic of this being, Dasein, which exists through understanding.[50]

Nevertheless, it would be a gross mistake to simply oppose Ricoeur's reflective hermeneutics to Heidegger's ontological hermeneutic as though the former were not following the *Denkweg* of the latter:

> I do not say that theology has to go through Heidegger. I just say that, if it goes through Heidegger, it is by then and until then that it must follow it. This path is the longest. This is the path of patience and not of haste and precipitation. On this path, the theologian should not be pressed whether Being, according to Heidegger, is God according to the Bible… All this remains to be thought. There is no shorter path to reach the neutral, existential anthropology, according to philosophy and the existential decision before God in the Bible. But there is a long way from the question of being and the belonging of saying to being.[51]

49 Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, [transl. by D. Savage], New Haven 1970, p.3; *De l'interprétation: Essai sur Freud*, Paris 1965, p. 13.
50 Ricoeur: *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 6; *Conflit*, p. 10.
51 Ricoeur: *Le Conflit des interprétations*, p. 392.

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This "*longue route*" typifies Ricoeur's hermeneutics as an "*herméneutique du détour*," in that his philosophy of the subject meets the long *détour* of signs, as it proceeds from the "I am" [*je suis*] to the "I think" [*je pense*]. For Ricoeur, following Jean Nabert, "reflection is the effort to recover the ego of the *ego cogito* in the mirror of its objects, of his works and finally of his actions" [*la réflexion est l'effort pour ressaisir l'Ego de l'Ego Cogito dans le miroir de ses objets, de ses oeuvres et finalement de ses actes*].[52] The hermeneutical detour compels the existing cogito to appropriate its own existential meaning not in a reflection objectified, as it were, "thought" outside its being, but in the very interpretation of those signs which anticipated its reflection upon existence. According to Ricoeur,

> The ultimate root of our problem lies in this primitive connection between the act of existing and the signs we deploy in our works; reflection must become interpretation because I cannot grasp the act of existing except in signs scattered in the world. That is why a reflective philosophy must include the results, methods, and presuppositions of all the sciences that try to decipher and interpret the signs of man.[53]

That leads Ricoeur to concentrate his hermeneutical project upon the textual approach: instead of reducing itself to an ontology of understanding, hermeneutics has to deal with the object of interpretation par excellence, the text, and its subject matter (*Sache*). The "*longue route du détour*" impels Ricoeur to immerse deeper and deeper into an existential-structural understanding of the sense, more precisely of the "double sense": "interpretation is understanding double meaning" [*l'interprétation c'est l'intelligence du double sens*].[54] As he thoroughly explores the Freudian theory of interpretation, he explains the scope of the "hermeneutical field" containing psychoanalysis (e.g., the interpretation of dreams as symbols) but inscribed within the broader sphere of a general science of signs:

> Thus, in the vast sphere of language, the place of psychoanalys is precise: it is both the place of symbols or double meanings and when the various ways of interpreting clash. This constituency which is broader than psychoanalysis, but narrower than the theory

52 Ricoeur: *De l'interprétation*, p. 51: "Une philosophie réflexive est le contraire d'une philosophie de l'immédiat…Nous pouvons dire, en un sens un peu paradoxal, qu'une philosophie de la réflexion n'est pas une philosophie de la conscience, si par conscience nous entendons la conscience immédiate de soi-même …La conscience, dirons-nous plus tard, est une t âche, mais elle est une tâche parce qu'elle n'est pas une donnée."

53 Ricoeur: *Freud and Philosophy*, p. 46.

54 Ricoeur: *De l'interprétation*, p. 18. "Existential" translates here the French "*existential*" (German, *existenzial*) – as opposed to the French "*existentiel*" (*existenziell*)-, just as "structural," in English, refers to the French "*structural*," as opposed to "*structurel*." Ricoeur's own conception of the "*existential*" ("*l'ontologique*") seeks to recuperate the "*existentiel*" (thus, "*l'ontique*") absorbed by Heidegger's "ontologization of the ontic" ("*Ontologisierung des Ontischen*," as Adorno has put it).

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> of total language that serves as a horizon, we now call the "hermeneutic field"; we always mean by hermeneutics a theory of rules governing exegesis, that is to say, the interpretation of a single text or of a set of signs that can be considered a text…[55]

Hermeneutics is thus the process of deciphering which goes from manifest content and meaning to latent or hidden meaning. The "text," object of interpretation, is to be taken here in a very broad sense: symbols as in a dream, myths and symbols of society (as in religious, cultural, and social contexts), literary texts, and so forth. Ricoeur goes on to assert, after Cassirer's conception of *das Symbolische*, that it is precisely because of the distinction between "*les expressions univoques*" and "*les expressions multivoques*" that the symbolic function makes hermeneutics possible and necessary: "to mean something other than what is said, that's the symbolic function" [*Vouloir dire autre chose que ce que l'on dit, voilà la fonction symbolique*].[56] In effect, the equivocal symbols (as opposed, say, to the univocal symbols of symbolic logic) constitute the true focus of hermeneutics. As he would define it in an article that has become a classic of hermeneutic theory ("Existence et herméneutique," 1965, reprinted in *Le conflit des interprétations*):

> I define "symbol" as structure of signification in which a direct, primary, literal meaning designates, in addition, another meaning which is indirect, secondary, and figurative and which can be apprehended only through the first.

And he adds,

> Interpretation, we will say, is the work of thought which consiste in deciphering the hidden meaning in the apparent meaning, in unfolding the levels of meaning implied in the literal meaning. In this way, I retain the initial reference to exegesis, that is, to the interpretation of hidden meanings. Symbol and interpretation thus become correlative concepts; there is interpretation wherever there is multiple meaning, and it is in interpretation that the plurality of meanings is made manifest.[57]

It is revealing that the Ricoeurian detour of semantics appears to be a hermeneutical, dialectical response to the Heideggerian ontological concentration. Ricoeur's epistemological concern here is to avoid the temptation of separating "vérité" and "méthode"[58] – as ironically implicated by Gadamer's *Wahrheit und Methode* (1960) – in order to properly articulate the existential, unveiling meaning of an ontological understanding:

55 Ricoeur: *De l'interprétation*, p. 18.
56 Ibid., p. 21.
57 Ricoeur: *The Conflict of Interpretations*, pp. 12f.; *Conflit*, pp. 16f.
58 Cf. Paul Ricoeur: 'Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology', in: J. B. Thompson (ed.): *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, New York 1981, pp. 63–100.

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> A purely semantic elucidation remains suspended until one shows that the understanding of multivocal or symbolic expressions is a moment of self-understanding; the semantic approach thus entails a reflective approach. But the subject that interprets himself while interpreting signs is no longer the cogito: rather, he is placed in being before he places and possesses himself. In this way, hermeneutics would discover a manner of existing which would remain from start to finish a being-interpreted. Reflection alone, by suppressing itself as reflection, can reach the ontological roots of understanding. Yet this is what always happens in language, and it occurs through the movement of reflection. Such is the arduous route we are going to follow.[59]

The Ricoeurian conception of symbol is, in the words of Richard Palmer, that of "a semantic unity which has a fully coherent surface meaning and at the same time a deeper significance."[60] "Semantics" is to be understood here as the linguistic study of the principles of discourse ("la linguistique du discours" as opposed to "la linguistique de la langue"), following de Saussure's distinction between "speech" (*parole*) and "language" (*langue).* The sentence, combining noun and verb, allows humans to say something about something (*ti kata tinos*): because it conveys a message, it can thus be considered the basic unity of the discourse ("l'unité de base du discours"). On the other hand, if one holds the sign (phonological or lexical) to be the basic unity of language (in the sense "*langue*"), one should speak instead of "semiotics" as opposed to "semantics". In point of fact, the noun-verb duality at the level of the sentence has been eclipsed by the duality of levels of language.[61] Ricoeur's hermeneutics has constituted itself a thorough critique of the semiotic monopoly, which has largely determined the success of structuralist and contemporary linguistic researches. What Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics seeks to unmask is any pretension to a "structural" dissolution of sense (including certain nihilistic forms of "deconstruction" and "dissemination") on the basis of objectified explanations of semiological mechanisms. Such is the role of "suspicion" reserved to Ricoeur's hermeneutics: like *les maîtres du soupçon* Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, the continual task of the hermeneutist is to suspect any given structure of "false consciousness," and to unmask the "ideological" pretensions to conclusive explanations of meaning.[62] This hermeneutics of suspicion is in fact the effective, ongoing *praxis* of our demythologizing task to continue progressing towards the second naiveté:

> Thus hermeneutics, an acquisition of "modernity," is one of the models by which that "modernity" transcends itself, insofar as it is forgetfulness of the sacred. I believe that being can still speak to me – no longer of course, under the precritical form of im-

59 Ricoeur: *The Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 11; *Conflit*, p. 15.
60 Richard Palmer: *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer,* Evanston 1969, p. 43.
61 Cf. Paul Ricoeur: 'La structure, le mot, l'événement', *Le Conflit des interprétations*, pp. 80–97.
62 Cf. the section "L'interprétation comme exercice du soupçon," *De l'interprétation*, pp. 40–44.

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> mediate belief, but as the second immediacy aimed at by hermeneutics. This second naiveté aims to be the postcritical equivalent of the precritical hierophany.[63]

Ricoeur's *Conflit des interprétations* is thus but the beginning of a new, fertile phase of his writings on hermeneutical theory. It would be misleading, however, to exaggerate the opposition of this "later" Ricoeur to an "early" one, for his entire philosophical work, since the "Philosophy of the Will," should be regarded as an "*oeuvre de maturité.*" The methodological shift should thus be understood as an evolution towards a more precise, enlarged definition of the hermeneutical field, as Ricoeur specifies the primacy of the text and, at the same time, maintains the open-ended extension of its textuality, for instance, in the hermeneutical dialogue with the social sciences.[64]

5 Conclusion: The Hermeneutics of Revelation

Ricoeur's post-Hegelian interpretation of Kant is the hermeneutic effect of a dialectical post-Hegelian *retour à Kant*, following the phenomenological detours of Heidegger's critique of the onto-theological. For the manifestation of the gift of Being, according to Heidegger, is not so much *Offenbarung* ("revelation" of transcendence) as *Offenbarkeit*, the "impersonal" unveiling of the Open (*das Offene)*, as an un-concealing dimension of Being in the "*es gibt*" (*il y a*) of all that is. The ethical is therefore subordinated to the ontological, as the unconditional primacy of Being over all other beings (including "God") is given in language itself, as the event of appropriation between Being and human Dasein, in that language *reveals* their belonging-together ("*das Zusammengehören von Mensch und Sein*").[65] Ricoeur reappropriates this "belonging-distanciation dialectic" in his hermeneutics of the idea of revelation, by means of yet another detour, "*le détour du texte.*"

Before anything, Ricoeur shows that the *détour* of the text is indeed a veritable *retour* to the text and its world. I shall confine myself to presenting three brief overviews of three main writings which will serve to highlight the main thesis of this paper, namely, that the evolution of Ricoeur's hermeneutics of suspicion translates the revelatory nature of his correlative conception of philosophical anthropology and philosophy of language. The first one is the article "*Qu'est-ce qu'un texte? Expliquer et comprendre*," published in 1970 in the collection *Hermeneutik und Dialektik: Aufsätze II*, edited by Bubner et al. (ET: "What is a Text?

63 Ricoeur: *Symbolism of Evil*, p. 352; *La symbolique du mal*, p. 483.
64 Cf. Ricoeur: *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, pp. 78ff.
65 Martin Heidegger: *Basic Writings*, ed. by J.G. Gray, New York 1977, p. 235. Cf. John Caputo: *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*, Athens, OH p. 1978, pp. 254–257.

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Explanation and Interpretation," in J. Thompson, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 1981). In "What is a Text?" Ricoeur deals with the "two basic attitudes which one can adopt in regard to a text," namely that of an "explanation" (*Erklärung*) and that of an "interpretation" (*Verständnis)*, following a Diltheyan terminology. Ricoeur believes that such dichotomy has nevertheless become obsolete in our days: if the structuralists, on the one hand, aim at "explanatory" methods (language as a system of signs which displays an objective structure), the "interpretative" attitude on the other hand (language as speech, whose sense signifies a referent) follows the sense of a text carried by its own structure. By stressing the nuances of such distinction, Ricoeur goes on to affirm that these attitudes are no longer in polar opposition ("*aux antipodes*") to each other, but they can still serve as a clue to what should be a hermeneutic "mediation" between *erklären* and *verstehen*.[66]

In order to arrive at this mediation we have to articulate both "explaining" and "interpreting" with that which a text is. For Ricoeur believes that hermeneutics proper springs from the problem of the text conceived as a work.[67] In this sense, Ricoeur asserts that "interpretation, before being the act of the exegete, is the act of the text."[68] The Ricoeurian notion of "text" includes, in effect, the multiple modes of "distanciation" associated not only with writings but with "the production of discourse as a work." In brief, Ricoeur assigns to the notion of text the same basic characteristics of discourse (the event-meaning dialectic and the sense-reference relationship): texts refer thus to an intended "world of the text" (*le monde du texte*) and to the self as well.[69] Surpassing Dilthey's Romantic conception of *Verständnis* as "appropriation," Ricoeur goes on to reconcile both the semantic, concrete level of discourse with the semiotic, abstract level of formal language at the same hermeneutical level of what has been called a "fusion of horizons" (*Horizontverschmelzung*) – to use Gadarner's felicitous formula:

> I shall therefore say: to explain is to bring about the structure, that is, the internal relations of dependence which constitute the statics of the text; to interpret is to follow the path of thought opened up by the text, to place oneself *en route* towards the *orient* of the text.[70]

Following this interpretation-explanation dialectic, both the hermeneutical "belonging" (*Zugehörigkeit*) and the critical, objectifying "distanciation" constitute together the appropriation of the "world of the text":

66 Ricoeur: *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, pp. 149ff.
67 Paul Ricoeur: 'The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation', in: Paul Ricoeur: *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, pp. 140ff.
68 Ibid., p. 162.
69 Ibid., pp. 140–142, 145–149.
70 Ibid., pp. 161f.

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> Ultimately, what I appropriate is a proposed world. The latter is not *behind* the text as a hidden intention would be, but *in front of* it, as that which the work unfolds, discovers, reveals. Henceforth, to understand is *to understand oneself in front of the text.* In this respect, it would be more correct to say that the *self* is constituted by the "matter" (*Sache*) of the text.[71]

The second writing to be mentioned here, *La métaphore vive* (1975; ET: *The Rule of Metaphor*, 1977), as Ricoeur himself would comment, "tackled the two problems of the emergence of new meanings in language and of the referential claims raised by such nondescriptive language as poetic discourse."[72] These two problems were somehow already implicit in Ricoeur's early inquiry into the symbolic forms of discourse, which would be later designated by "the complex problem of fiction and of productive imagination." The Ricoeurian conception of *métaphore* is to be framed within the wider framework of the *récit* (the narrative) to which he attributes "the power of reshaping human experience" more than any other "language games," as the self itself is mediated and constituted through first-person narratives in one's self-understanding. Because he maintains the distinction between the philosophic-speculative and poetic-religious realms of discourse, Ricoeur focuses on the latter in which figurative meaning outgrows literal meaning ("the metaphoric process"):

> Let us call any shift from literal to figurative sense a metaphor. If the general sweep of this definition is to be preserved, it is necessary, first, that the notion of change of meaning be not restricted to names, or even to words, but extended to all signs. Furthermore, one must dissociate the notion of literal meaning from that of proper meaning. Any lexical value whatsoever is a literal meaning; thus, the metaphorical meaning is nonlexical: it is a value created by the context …An implicitly discursive trait follows, which at the same time prepares for the entrance of resemblance: every metaphorical meaning is mediate, in the sense that the word is 'an immediate sign of its literal senses and a mediate sign of its figurative sense' (Michel Le Guern, *Sémantique de la métaphore et de la métonymie*, p.175). To speak by means of metaphor is to say something different 'through' some literal meaning.[73]

Finally, Temps et récit (3 vols., 1983–85) should be mentioned here as one of the most magnificent attempts to reconcile *praxis* and *poiesis* in a single hermeneutics of the human subject. According to Ricoeur, "the refiguring of time by narrative…is the joint work of historical and fictional narrative."[74] In *Histoire et vérité* (1955), the problematic tension between subject and object vis-à-vis the

71 Ibid., pp. 143f.
72 Paul Ricoeur: *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, ed. by L. Mudge, Philadelphia 1980, p. 41.
73 Paul Ricoeur: *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies in the Creation of Meaning in Language*, [transl. by R. Czerny], Toronto 1977, p. 188.
74 Paul Ricoeur: *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, [transl. by K. McLaughlin and D. Pellauer], Chicago 1985, p. 80.

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historical reality had already been submitted to the *krisis* of a "not-yet" Word: a Judeo-Christian conception of history seemed to constrain the philosopher to go beyond both existentialism and historicism, in an eschatological attitude of hope.[75] Now, complementing his metaphoric theory, Ricoeur takes the defense of "narrative time" against atemporal (and ahistorical), structuralist narratives. With Aristotle, Ricoeur maintains that temporal narrative represents human action in the world. Hence the term "récit" is to comprise reader and text are kept in a dialogue which culminates in the understanding of the text by the reader and the latter's self-understanding as being-in-the-world:

> To understand these (narrative) texts is to interpolate among the predicates of our situation all those sayings that, from a simple environment (*Umwelt*), makes world (*Welt*). Indeed we owe a large part of the enlarging of our horizon of existence to poetic works.[76]

It has become clear now that Ricoeur's return to the text reveals also an intriguing detour of ontology. In point of fact, Ricoeur's "reflective" philosophy opposes every "ontological" attempt to conclusively appropriate the un-thought meaning-structure of being: "the unthought always remains to be fully thought" [*l'impensé reste toujours à être entièrement pensé*], one will never exhaustively think the totality of the unthought. Certainly, this character of finitude in Ricoeur's hermeneutics betrays not only an eschatological return to Kant's limiting concept but also a proleptic detour towards the *transcendens*. Such is again the Ricoeurian debt to Hegel's metacritique of Kant's transcendental subjectivity. As Walter Lowe has convincingly shown, the "regional ontology" of Ricoeur's humanist "philosophy of presence" is coherent with the Reformed dictum *finitum non capax infiniti* ("the finite is not capable of the infinite"), so dear to Karl Barth and neo-Kantian theologians.[77] Furthermore, it seems that Ricoeur's mediating hermeneutics of metaphor seeks to respond to Heidegger's linguistic mysticism for the very insufficiency of the latter's appropriation of Luther's *finitum capax*. Thus, the elliptical shift from a "*symbolique*" towards a "*métaphorique*" is quite revealing of Ricoeur's ambitious *dépassement* of the later Heidegger, as we can infer from his magisterial study on "Métaphore et discours philosophique" (last one in *The Rule of Metaphor*):

> The price of this claim (Heidegger's) is the ambiguity of his later works, divided between the logic of continuity with speculative thought and the logic of their break with metaphysics. The first logic places *Ereignis* and *es gibt* in the line of thought constantly in the process of correcting itself, constantly in search of saying more appropriately than ordinary speech, a saying that would be a showing and letting be, of a thought, well, that

75 Paul Ricoeur: *History and Truth*, [transl. by C. Kaibley], Evanston 1967, pp. 11–14.
76 Ricoeur: *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, p. 80.
77 William Lowe: 'The Coherence of Paul Ricoeur', in: *Journal of Religion* 61 (1981), pp. 384–402.

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> never gives up on speech. The second logic leads to a series of erasures and abolitions, which precipitate thought into space, returning it back to the hermetic and preciousness, and renew etymological games up to the mystification of original meaning… On the one hand, poetry, in itself and by itself, suggests the tense outline of the truth … By this turn of utterance, poetry articulates and preserves in conjunction with other modes of discourse, the experience of belonging that includes man in speech and speech in being.[78]

It is, therefore, within the framework of a *métaphorique* that Ricoeur's *discours théologique* seeks to respond to Heidegger's *Destruktion der Onto-Theo-Logik:* "Through metaphor and narrative, the symbolic function of language is constantly producing meaning and revealing Being [*Sein*]" [*A travers métaphore et récit, la fonction symbolique du langage ne cesse de produire du sens et de révéler de l'être*].[79] As announced from the outset, I did not intend to explore Ricoeur's theological hermeneutics in this study but rather to articulate its "revelatory language" in terms of his hermeneutical reflection. I shall conclude thus this paper with Ricoeur's own account of such an "*herméneutique de la révélation.*"

In a lecture delivered for a "Symposium on the Idea of Revelation" at the Faculté Universitaire St. Louis in Brussels (1976), Paul Ricoeur avowed that "the question of revelation is a formidable question in the proper sense of the word."[80] It is not only the theological question *per se*, but the task of recovering the originary meaning of 'revelation' remains an immense one. Before proposing the response of a hermeneutical philosophy (*La réponse d'une philosophie herméneutique*), Ricoeur refuses both an authoritarian, opaque concept of revelation and the concept of a self-sufficient, transparent reason, by identifying the concrete modes of discourse in which the religious consciousness comes to stand (*Les expressions originaires de la Révélation*). Ricoeur emphasizes that one cannot separate the "confession of faith" from the "mode of discourse" in which it is embodied because of the "linguistic structure" associated with the world-text of the *written* confession. Following the literary-critical work of Old Testament scholars,[81] Ricoeur distinguishes five modes of discourse: the *prophetic* discourse, which "constitutes the originary nucleus of the traditional idea of reve-

78 Paul Ricoeur: *La métaphore vive*, Paris 1975, pp. 397–399.

79 Paul Ricoeur: 'Poétique et symbolique', in: Bernard Lauret and François Refoulé (eds.): *Initiation à la pratique da la théologie*, t. 1, Introduction, Paris: 1982), p. 61. Cf. "Le récit interprétatif", in: *Recherches des Sciences Religieuses* 73/1 (1985), pp. 17–38; *La métaphore vive*, pp. 344–356.

80 Paul Ricoeur: 'Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation', in: *Biblical Interpretation*,p. 73. The French original presents some slight variations: cf. 'Herméneutique de l'idée de révélation', in E. Levinas et al.: *La révélation*, Brussels 1977.

81 Cf., inter alii, Claus Westermann (ed.): *Essays on Old Testamet Hermeneutics*, transl. by J. L. Mays, Richmond, Va.: 1963); Wolfhart Pannenberg (ed.): *Revelation as History*, transl. by D. Granskou, New York: 1968.

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lation," that of revealing God behind the speech of a prophet; the *narrative* discourse, which names God (especially in the Pentateuch) as "the ultimate actor" in the third person; the *prescriptive* discourse, which names God as the Law-giver and adds the ethical side of revelation (not in the idea of "heteronomy," but by the very character of the Holy One, unveiling the sacredness of the Other); the *wisdom* discourse, which names the hiddenness of God (*deus absconditus*) in the *pathos* of suffering (e. g. Book of Job), binding together *ethos* and *kosmos*; and, finally, the *hymnic* discourse (Psalms) which names God as "You" in the second person (like in Martin Buber's *Ich-Du* correlation), the One who may respond to praise, supplication, and thanksgiving.[82] All these modes of discourse point to an originary preconceptual, poetic view of revelation, within a "language of a community of faith" (the hermeneutical foundation of *re-ligio* as the re-linking of the community-identity with their God). Moreover, those literary genres belong to specific "theologies," in that each *logos* reveals a particular message or character of God (*theos*). However, beyond the "theological" proper, Ricoeur wants to "arrive at a polysemic and polyphonic concept of revelation," much deeper than anything formulated in a creed or "body of truths": 'The God who reveals himself is a hidden God and hidden things belong to him.'[83]

The intrinsic dialectic of *deus revelatus / deus absconditus* accounts for the very idea of revelation, insofar as the Name of Yahweh cannot be pronounced: *ehyeh asher ehyeh* (literally, "I will be what I will be," Exodus 3,14). Ricoeur has rightly remarked that the Septuagint's translation of God's self-revelation ("I am who I am") "opened up an affirmative poetics of God's absolute being that could subsequently be transcribed into Neoplatonic and Augustinian ontology and then into Aristotelian and Thomistic metaphysics," including Arab thought.[84] As over against this metaphysical, onto-theological rationalization of biblical revelation, Ricoeur takes the Heideggerian "détour ontologique" but, instead of focusing on the "différence" (*Unterschied*), Ricoeur prefers to "defer" the ontological once again and appropriate the *écriture* through its "distanciation," in a revelatory, pragmatic process which he calls "la manifestation du monde par le texte et l'écriture" – and which we may as well call a "Gadamerian différance," reminiscent of the linguistic correlation of *Sprachlichkeit* and *Schriftlichkeit*. Ricoeur constructs his analysis of "the revelatory function of poetic discourse" upon three preparatory concepts: "l'autonomie par l'écriture," "l'extériorisation par l'oeuvre, and "la référence à un monde." The category of poetics ("la poétique") designates the totality of literary genres (introduced in the first part of his

82 Ricoeur: 'Hermeneutic of Revelation', pp. 75–90.
83 Ibid., p. 93.
84 Ibid., p. 94. Cf. Adrian Maqdici: 'L'ontologie kérygmatique de Paul Ricœur, approche arabe', in: Gary Madison (ed.): *Sens et existence. En hommage à Paul Ricœur,* Paris 1975.

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lecture), "as they exercise a referential function that differs from the descriptive referential function of ordinary language and above all of scientific discourse."[85] The Ricoeurian "poétique" will reveal, in effect, the interplay between the "symbolique" and the "métaphorique" as an event of appropriation of meaning in the text-world:

> My deepest conviction is that *poetic* language alone restores to us that participation-in or belonging-to (*appartenance*) an order of things which precedes our capacity to oppose ourselves to things taken as objects opposed to a subject. Hence the function of poetic discourse is to bring about this emergence of a depth-structure of belonging-to (*appartenance*) and the ruins of descriptive discourse. Fiction and redescription, then, go hand in hand. Or, to speak like Aristotle in his *Poetics*, the *mythos* is the way to true *poiesis*, which is not slavish imitation, or a copy, or mirror-image, but a transposition or metamorphosis – or as I suggest, a redescription. This conjunction of fiction and redescription, of *mythos* and *mimesis*, constitutes the referential fiction by means of which I would define the poetic dimension of language. In turn, this poetic function at once is a dimenision of revelation where revelation is to be understood in a non-religious, nontheistic, and nonbiblical sense of the word – but one capable of entering into resonance with one or the other of the aspects of biblical revelation.[86]

Ricoeur articulates this "*fonction révélante*" ("*révélante*," revelatory, is to be distinguished here from the current adjective "*révélatrice*," revealing, and its theological homologue "*révélationnelle*," revelational) with the "*fonction poétique*," which recapitulates in itself the three preparatory concepts of the autonomy of the text, the externality of the work, and the transcendence of the world of the text. Using a conception of "manifestation" which he obviously borrowed from Heidegger's binomial *Offenbarkeit als a-letheia* ("*laisser-être ce qui se montre*"), Ricoeur places his nonmetaphysical "*révélation*" at Dasein's horizon of encounter with manifested truth, coextensive with the poetic function of the *Sprachereignis:* "What is shown is a world whenever the proposal of a world like the on I can live in, for a project of my own possibility. It is in this sense that language in its poetic function, is the seat of revelation."[87] Revelation should not, therefore, be ever reduced to an authoritarian dogma or to a system of rationalized beliefs: "Revelation, in short, is a feature of the biblical world proposed by the text."[88] As over against the idea of an autonomous reason, Ricoeur goes on to establish a hermeneutical mediation between his philosophy of reflection and another "revelatory" correlate, the concept of testimony, which he elaborates in function of three other preparatory concepts – "*réflexion médiate*," "*l'apparte-*

85 Maqdici: 'L'ontologie kérygmatique de Paul Ricœur', p. 100. Cf. 'Poétique et Symbolique', p. 54.
86 Ricoeur: 'Hermeneutic of Revelation', pp. 101 f.
87 Ricoeur: *La révélation*, p. 41; *Biblical Interpretation*, p. 102.
88 Ricoeur: *Biblical Interpretation*, p. 104.

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nance," and "*l'appropriation.*" "Mediated reflection" refers to "the appropriation of our effort to exist and our desire to be" (Jean Nabert), in our interpretation of a universe of signs; the Gadamerian "belonging-to" corresponds to the Marcelian "second-order reflection," in opposition to Husserl's idealism, as the critical moment of "distanciation" which confers a *historical* character on this consciousness; and, finally, "appropriation" designates the act of self-understanding before the text, as a prolongation of the "appartenance-distanciation" dialectic. These preparatory concepts serve to support the hermeneutical idea of "revelation" as opposed to that of a self-constituted consciousness: "Where consciousness posits itself as the origin of meaning, hermeneutics brings about the abandonment (*dessaisissement*) of this pretension. This abandonment is the reverse of Feuerbach's critique of alienation."[89]

Testimony (*témoignage*) to the revealed implies a reflexive act of divestment (*dépouillement*), in that self-consciousness has to divest itself (*se dépouiller*) of what seemed to be "true" and "right," and appropriate the revealed anew. This second-order reflexivity is an important transcendental move that takes place after every detranscendentalizing, decentering and displacing critique that unmasks all pretensions to self-transparency and self-completion on the part of subjectivity. The witness/testimony role assigned to the phenomenological stream of consciousness attests itself to such a detranscendentalizing thrust in the deconstruction of traditional conceptions of hermeneutics. For Ricoeur's hermeneutics of testimony, like a "hermeneutics of suspicion," unmasks and renounces false consciousness in order to remain true to itself. Certainly, witnesses have died for suspicious causes: martyrdom is but a limit-situation. Nevertheless, "the witness of things seen," according to Ricoeur's dialectic of revelation, "at the limit becomes a martyr for truth." Not only because of our *obedience* to the voice of Being or even to the Word of God, but for the sake of the *poiesis* of Life itself that continually addresses our imagination and daily *praxis* of self-understanding and self-overcoming:

> What is the historical testimony that our reflection would like to internalize addressed to if not to our imagination? If to understand oneself is to understand oneself in front of the text, must we not *say* that the reader's understanding is suspended, derealized, made potential just as the world itself is metamorphosized by the poem? If this is true, we must say that the imagination is that part of ourselves that responds to the text as a Poem, and that alone can encounter revelation no longer as an unacceptable pretension, but a nonviolent appeal.[90]

By exploring Ricoeur's hermeneutics of revelation, we believe that we have come full circle in our response to the contemporary crisis of identity, as the Judeo-

89 Ibid., p. 109. See the article on 'The Hermeneutics of Testimony', pp. 119–154.
90 Ricoeur: 'Hermeneutic of Revelation', p. 117.

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Christian, humanist worldview points to new, pluralist horizons of social ontology, as the particularism of Judeo-Christian traditions unveils their universalist, revelational potential in world history. Thus, we must posit these questions anew: What is revelation all about? What does it mean to believe that God reveals himself / herself as the God of Israel or in Jesus Christ? How does divine revelation (*Offenbarung*) relate to Being (*Sein*), world (*Welt*), beings (*Seienden*) and human existence (*Dasein*)? Both the Hebrew Bible (*Tanakh*) and the Bible in Christian theology (Old and New Testaments) support a concept of divine revelation in history that is inseparable from the personal attributes of God and the correlation between the human person, the world, and the Wholly-Other, parallel to a correlation between revelation, creation and redemption (to evoke Rosenzweig's star-of-David triads). We can thus establish an interesting hermeneutic correlation between theological, biblical revelation and existential self-understanding (of ourselves, our communities and our traditions). Indeed, for Ricoeur, hermeneutics (very much like deconstruction, for Derrida) reveals multiple, stratified readings and reconfigurations according to different programs of interpretation – more or less orthodox, conservative, reformed or radical –, just as did the Jewish scribes, rabbis, Talmud and Kabbalistic scholars. Hence, both the Hebrew Bible and the Bible of Christian theology conceive of a historical unfolding of creation, redemption, and divine revelation which turns out to be inseparable from the personal attributes of a transcendent God, albeit correlate to human existence, to the world and to the Other, as God's revealing opens up immanent horizons of sense and existence. We can thus establish a hermeneutic correlation between the biblical-theological revelation and existential-phenomenological self (ourselves, our communities, and our various traditions). In Jewish theology, one can speak of a written law (*Torah*) and of an oral law (oral part of the *Halacha*, esp. the Talmud, composed of the *Mishnah* and *Gemara*). According to Christian theology, one can speak of a general or natural revelation (the natural law and the laws of nature) and of a special or direct revelation (the Divine Law that God had communicated to Moses, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, salvation, and the mysteries of faith). More or less orthodox positions in Judaism and Christianity deal differently with the problem of revelation in its presuppositions (esp. miracles, the supernatural, the nature of the divine) and its implications (historicity, the reception of the biblical writings, the relationship between reason and faith, knowledge and shared beliefs). Whether deconstruction is a "radical hermeneutics" (John Caputo) or "the hermeneutics of the death of God" (Mark Taylor), in any case the deconstruction of onto-theo-logical, essentialist, and substantialist concepts, esp. of the "God" of traditional metaphysics, reveals what remains on the horizon of post-Hegelian thinking: the very otherness of the Wholly-Other (*totaliter aliter, Tout-Autre, Ganz Andere*) which resists every conception of identity in our encounter with the Other, the neigh-

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bor, the poor, the stranger, the orphan, the widow. Whether the 613 *mitzvot* (prescriptions) of Judaism ought to be taken literally or whether they could be synthesized in 10 commandments (Moses) or 13 guiding principles (Maimonides), at any rate the Law of Love and the Golden Rule anticipated in the Shema could be fully articulated in the teachings of Hillel and Jesus: "That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow" and "One should treat others as one would like others to treat oneself." Universalism erupts in the particularism of the Torah, originally designed for the people of Israel. The divine covenant is thus revealed as being universal, as it unveils in the story of Noah the so-called Seven Laws, which boils down to prohibiting idolatry (not just false gods, but above all human pride, self-righteousness, and fundamentalism), murder, theft, immorality, slander, and abusive killings of animals, together with the promotion of honesty and justice. After all, what is proper to humans, as revelation unveils, could never be reducible to a civilizational, redeeming calculus of universal history. The otherness of our humanity means, in the last analysis, its inability to be rescued, once and for all, in the very codification of its universality.

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Philosophy of Religion within the Horizon of Contingency: Interreligious Considerations on the "*universale concretum*"

Introduction

"*sei deo sei deivae sacro, sacrae*" – "Whether to a god or goddess sacred". An altar with this inscription, dating from about 100 BC, stands on the Palatine Hill in Rome. The name of the god to whom this altar was devoted has either been forgotten or was, perhaps, never known. No one knows if this god is male or female. Do philosophers know the nature of this deity?

This altar recalls a similar altar discovered by the Apostle Paul in Athens with the inscription, "ΑΓΝΩΣΤΩ ΘΕΩ -TO AN UNKNOWN GOD" – (Act 17,23) – historically speaking, a plural form of the dedication is more probable: to unknown gods[1]. Greeks and Romans venerated unknown gods because they feared forgetting a god while imploring only specific gods for a grace or gift. Forgotten gods might take revenge for being ignored. St. Paul purports to know the identity of this god worshiped by the Athenians in their ignorance and puts forth philosophical arguments to make clear his argument: the unknown is known by their poets, represented by the Stoic Aratos (Acts 17:16–34). Paul's proclamation presupposes an intercultural and inter-religious philosophy of religion. In terms of the theology of religions, Paul seems to argue in favor of a so-called inclusivism: Jewish-Christian truth is found even in other religions, philosophies, and cultures, because God's saving action is universal. Anthropologically, Paul's philosophical consideration in Athens implies a natural human openness to a transcendent entity.

The apostle designates this transcendent entity with negative attributes such as its indeterminate nature, which is not spatially confined to temples, its lack of need for human service or assistance, and its transcendence of all material

1 Cf. Gerhard Schneider: *Die Apostelgeschichte, 2. Teil*, Freiburg/Basel/ Wien 1982, p. 238.

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representations of the divine and all idols[2]. Pre-Socratic Greek philosophy affirms this idea of a transcendent and rational God.

Problems arise not only when connecting the God of philosophy with human creation, but, as Paul does, when combining God's action with human contingency, the mortal body of humans, or death – proclaiming the resurrection of the flesh[3]. This marvelous presence of God in the radical contingency of death is not rational. Athens' enlightened minds burst out laughing; they ironically said to the Apostle: "We would like to hear you talk about this another time." (Act 17:32)

This article would like to provide evidence for the possibility of rationally combining the absolute, that is, God, with contingency and death. Philosophy of Religion justifies this possibility in its readiness for a *risus paschalis*. Moreover, if it cannot, philosophy of religion is ultimately unhelpful and its use of reason unable to serve as a mediator between concrete religions and cultures. But, interreligious and intercultural dialogue needs reason, philosophical arguments and logic to succeed. Therefore, there is a need for an inter-religious and intercultural philosophy of religion that respects the belief in the resurrection of the dead and justifies this idea of God's saving presence through radical contingency.

Firstly, we must expose philosophy's difficulty in dealing with concrete religion as constituted, actualized and vitalized by historical events, which take on the form of God's presence in an otherness for all that may be called a *universale concretum*. In the Christian context, the category universal concretum usually refers to the incarnated Logos; this incarnation happened once and forever and for all of humanity (Heb 1,1–2; 10,10). According to the Christian faith, this event of the Absolute cannot be pluralized because nothing more than the definitive and personal unity of God's Logos with the human being is possible. We, however, will use this term, firstly, in a plural form in order to illustrate that the figure of a human-divine mediation is crucial for many religions and that the idea of the one and unique mediation can include and give rise to further forms of mediation[4].

Secondly, the Latin-American approach to philosophy of religion developed by the Argentinian Jesuit Juan Carlos Scannone is presented because of its in-

2 Cf. Act 17: 24 The God who made the world and all things in it, since he is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; 25 nor is he served by human hands, as though He needed anything…

3 Act: 17: 31 He [God] has fixed a day when the whole world will be judged in uprightness by a man he has appointed. And God has publicly proved this by raising him from the dead.

4 See in reference to Christ's mediation of salvation the Vatican document *Dominus Iesus* (2000), n. 14: "The Second Vatican Council, in fact, has stated that: 'the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude, but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a participation in this one source'. (Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 62)."

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tercultural character. Thirdly, this article discusses the crucial prerequisite of Scannone's approach from an interreligious perspective: the personhood of the transcendent entity. Fourthly, we will explore the free character of the encounter between humans and the transcendent entity. Fifthly, we will discuss the debate surrounding the plurality and uniqueness of the universal concretum, through which religions are constituted. At the end of the article, we will reflect on the idea of a participated mediation (*mediatio participata*) and mutual inclusivism in order to explain a position that respects the truth claims of concrete religions within reciprocal inter-religious relations.

1 Enlightened and Pluralistic Philosophies of Religion

Sociological and philosophical descriptions of religion refer to its *function:* religions help humans to cope with the difficulty of limited human life, which is exposed to contingency in the form of indeterminable, unpredictable, uncontrollable, meaningless, and chaotic events in the form of suffering and death. Religions offer the existential possibility of living with the uncontrolled in a controlled manner[5] by postulating a transcendent entity that overcomes humans' general shortcomings, namely, their finitude and need of redemption[6]. Abstractly speaking, the absolute entity compensates and overcomes the human's lack of being. There is the religious hope that the transcendent reality can, by its presence, suffuse and fulfill contingency and all the deficits that it brings about. A complementary aspect is decisive: humans must enter into unity with the transcendent instance in which fulfillment and redemption is found. The realization of this unity demands of the human an act of self-dedication to this entity[7]. This historical encounter between the transcendent entity and human beings marks the beginning of fulfillment and redemption. But, this encounter is mediated by a contingent and historical event[8], be it the event of Christ, the Torah and Quran, descending avatars or illumination, or a bodhisattva. This idea of contingent

5 Cf. Ingolf U. Dalferth: 'Religion als Thema der Philosophie', in: Markus Enders et al. (eds.): *Phänomenologie der Religion. Zugänge und Grundfragen*, München 2004, pp. 27–47.

6 Cf. Markus Enders: 'Ist "Religion" wirklich undefinierbar? Überlegungen zu einem interreligiös verwendbaren Religionsbegriff', in: Markus Enders et al. (eds.): *Phänomenologie der Religion. Zugänge und Grundfragen*, München 2004, pp. 49–87; Markus Enders: '"Endlichkeit" und Einheit. Zum Verständnis von Religion im Anschluss an Hermann Schrödters Begriff von Religion', in: Tobias Müller and Thomas M. Schmidt (eds.): *Was ist Religion? Beiträge zur aktuellen Debatte um den Religionsbegriff*, Paderborn 2013, pp. 125–155.

7 Cf. Bernhard Uhde: '"Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum". Die Zurücknahme des menschlichen Willens als Prinzip der Weltreligionen. Ein philosophischer Entwurf', in: *Jahrbuch für Religionsphilosophie* 1 (2002), pp. 87–98.

8 I add the idea of mediation to Uhde's and Enders' general concept of religion.

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mediation reflects the conviction that the encounter between humans and the transcendent instance cannot be realized by humans alone due to the human's lack of being; the encounter is a gift, grace, call, invitation or illumination. Therefore, the human act of self-dedication to the transcendent instance is a human re-action, enabled by the prevenient contingent mediation.

This sociological and philosophical description of religion conflicts with the common philosophical relativization or vaporization of the contingent bases which constitute concrete religions and belong to their dogmatic and existential core – often in order to avoid religious conflicts. The following examples attest to philosophy's difficulty with concrete religion.

In his key text, *Christianity as Old as the Creation – or the Gospel a Republication of the Religion of Nature* (1731)[9], Matthew Tindal (1657–1733), the perhaps most important exponent of English deism, presents Christianity as natural religion which has always been present in human history, but must occasionally be purified by religious genius. Only the coexistence of Christianity with all of reality, including human history, preserves its claim to universal truth. The contingency of the appearance of Jesus and his Gospel is justified by its reduction to a general idea of religion. That happens even to other religions. The transcendent entity does not occur in history, wherein no historical *universale concretum* is to be found.

Even Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's (1729–1781) understanding of religions transcends historical religions. In his play from 1779, *Nathan the Wise,* he utilizes the parable of the three rings, each of which represents one of the three monotheistic religions. In the end, philosophical wisdom comes down to his advice to "let each one believe his ring to be the true one" and not tolerate "the tyranny of just one ring"[10]. This approach seeks to assist interreligious dialogue by relativizing religious truth-claims through the use of reason. Lessing uses the metaphor of an ugly ditch between universal truths of reason and relative truths of history in order to affirm that historical religions should be transformed into truths of reason that do not depend on history[11]. Otherwise, they cannot claim universal truth. Relative, historical truth can change and even disappear. This statement raises the question of whether even the transcendent entity is able to

9 Matthew Tindal: *Christianity as Old as the Creation, or the Gospel a Republication of the Religion of Nature,* London 2005).

10 Gotthold Ephraim Lessing: *Nathan the Wise, Minna von Barnhelm, and Other Plays and Writings*, [ed. by Peter Demetz], New York 2002, pp. 173–275, here 234.

11 Gotthold Ephraim Lessing: 'On the Proof of the Spirit and of Power', in: *Lessing's Theological Writings*, [selected and transl. by Henry Chadwick], Stanford (California) 1957, pp. 51–56, here 53: "*accidental truths of history can never become the proof of necessary truths of reason*". This "ugly, broad ditch" separates the two types of truth: "That, then, is the ugly, broad ditch which I cannot get across, however often and however earnestly I have tried to make the leap." (55).

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jump across this ditch in order to be present in history in such a way that humans can recognize it and believe in it. In fact, conceptually, Lessing concedes that revelations can help humankind develop more quickly morally than it would if left to itself[12], despite the fact that the belief in a definitive incarnation of God's word seems a logical impossibility.

The German philosopher Wolfram Hogrebe (born 1945) utilizes Lessing's approach as philosophical justification for both an interreligious relativism and an internal realism of religious truth-claims. But, the question is whether concrete – missionary – religions can agree to the idea of an internal realism. Furthermore, Hogrebe observes, there are mystic movements within the world religions which would confirm this possibility: mystics have vaporized ("*verdampfen*") religious traditions and pointed toward an absolute mystery beyond given concrete religions[13]. On the other hand, Hogrebe doubts that classic mysticism can really abandon tradition and merge with pure speculative thought regarding the absolute. Indeed, the Spanish mystics Theresa of Ávila (Teresa of Jesus, 1515–1582) and John of the Cross (1542–1591) did not "vaporize" Christ, the Christian *universale concretum*. One passes through the dark night (*noche oscura*) in which religious feelings are suspended and participates in the mystery of the Cross in order to arrive at the light of the risen Christ, the bridegroom of the human soul[14].

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) invented the philosophy of religion as a substitute for natural and philosophical theology, whose metaphysical terms he rejected in his *Critique of Pure Reason* in order to give rise to a practical justification of religion, based on moral reason[15]. Concrete, historical religions serve as paths to the religion founded on reason. According to Kant's approach, incarnation can neither be philosophically justified nor discredited. The incarnated Son of God can, however, be justified as an example for moral perfection. He is

12 Gotthold Ephraim Lessing: *The education of the human race*, London 1883, n. 4: 2–3: "Eduaction gives Man nothing which he might not educe out of himself… In the same way too, Revelation gives nothing to the human species, which the human reason left to itself might not attain; only it has given and still gives to it the most important of these things earlier."

13 Cf. Wolfram Hogrebe: 'Spekulative Identität und diskursive Differenz. Gelingensbedingungen des interkulturellen Dialogs in der Philosophie', in: Claudia Bickmann et. al. (eds.): *Tradition und Traditionsbruch zwischen Skepsis und Dogmatik – Interkulturelle philosophische Perspektiven*, Amsterdam/ New York 2006, pp. 249–263, here 252: "Im spekulativen Ziel verdampfen … alle historisch gegebenen Kontraste."

14 Cf. Johannes vom Kreuz: *Die dunkle Nacht und Die Gedichte*, [ed. by Hans Urs von Balthasar], Einsiedeln 1978, p. 164: En una noche oscura, / con ansias, en amores inflamada, / ¡oh dichosa ventura!, / Salí sin ser notada, / Estando ya mi casa sosegada. … ¡Oh noche, que guiaste! / ¡Oh noche que juntaste / Amado con amada, / Amada en el Amado transformada!

15 Cf. Markus Wirtz: *Religiöse Vernunft. Glauben und Wissen in interkultureller Perspektive*, Freiburg/München 2018, pp. 192–268.

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the *universale concretum* in a moral sense. Jesus' life and its moral terms correspond perfectly to the universality of reason-based ethics. The incarnated idea of morality serves to awaken the moral subjectivity of humans which autonomously fulfills (wherever possible) the moral duty which is a fact of human reason[16]. Among the various religions, Kant privileges an illustrated Christianity for its closeness to the religion of moral reason, to which however no concrete religion fully corresponds.

Kant's philosophy of religion affirms an inclusivist theory from a practical perspective. Relative truth of concrete religions depends on the degree to which they participate in the philosophically constructed religion of moral reason[17]. One could argue that Kant presupposes a philosophical core of religions, which he then highlights and explicates. From this perspective, Kant's philosophy of religion serves interreligious and intercultural dialogue. On the other hand, Kant's philosophy of religion is formulated entirely under the influence of Christianity, as when he, for example, de facto adopts and intuits the doctrine of original sin without offering a consistent philosophical reconstruction[18]. Kant, thus, by no means offers a neutral philosophy of religion that could rightly be used as a yardstick for every concrete religion. The moral-philosophical reduction of Christology, soteriology and trinitarian theology is all the more problematic. An interreligious dialogue initiated or accompanied by philosophy, which only allows the dogmatic core of every religion in a moral-philosophically reduced form, is of only limited interest. Philosophy of religion must take this core contents seriously and sound it out rationally in order to make it fruitful for interreligious dialogue[19].

The Protestant philosopher and theologian Johann Georg Hamman (1730–1788) criticized his colleague in Königsberg for having neglected the cultural, linguistic and historical mediation of reason. According to his critique, philosophy of religion must be oriented toward concrete religions and seek to grasp their specific logic[20].

The advantage of Hermann Cohen's (1842–1918) neo-Kantian philosophy of religion, which adapts and modifies Kant's approach, lies in its identification of a concrete religion, Judaism, with the religion of reason. Reason generates laws

16 Cf. Immanuel Kant: *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft* B 73–116. Werke in zehn Bänden, [ed. by Wilhelm Weischedel], Darmstadt 1975, vol. 7, pp. 645–894, here pp. 712–740.

17 Cf. Kant: *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft* B 236–255 (Weischedel pp. 826–838).

18 Cf. Wirtz: *Religiöse Vernunft*, p. 265.

19 Cf. ibid., p. 267.

20 Cf. Johann Georg Hamann: *Sämtliche Werke, vol. 3: Schriften über Sprache, Mysterien, Vernunft*, [ed. by Josef Nadler], Wuppertal 1999, p. 284.

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that coincide with the Torah – the Jewish *universale concretum*. Judaism receives absolute justification through reason, as do other religions – insofar as they participate in the religion of reason, namely, Judaism. In other words, Cohen presents an inclusivist project which respects the truth claims of non-Jewish religions with regard to one definitive religion[21]. Thomas Dewender's article in this volume introduces and presents this Jewish philosophy of religion.

Idealist systems and concepts even offer an alternative philosophical approach. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) developed categories of thought such as true infinity[22]. This category carries with it the provision that infinity can be present in contingency and history. For, if this were impossible, infinity would be self-contradictorily limited by a finitude in which it cannot appear as infinity. In light of Hegel's true infinity, Lessing's ugly ditch marks the insuperable border and limit of the absolute as an inconsistent idea. Hegel's concept of true infinity conditions his philosophy of religion. It justifies God's presence in Jesus' death, thus, making death an attribute of God: God is dead[23]. And that is the death of death: whoever instead affirms that death is the definitive end of realty, contradictorily declares finitude (in its ultimate appearance as death) as a definitive entity and instance. The resolution of this contradiction coincides with the affirmation of the absolute and definitive reality (God). In religious language, the affirmation of the absolute as the truth of (humans') finite reality corresponds to resurrection.

According to Hegel, Lutheran Christianity is the consummate religion because of its principle of subjectivity: the divine absolute subject incarnates and represents itself in Jesus' human subjectivity and Lutheranism accordingly realizes subjectivity as a principle of faith and morals. The history of religion tends toward a Lutheran Christianity which contains the *universale concretum* in its insurmountable perfection: the incarnation of the Son of God which becomes the universal truth of humankind. Hegel interprets Christology in anthropological terms in order to demonstrate its universality: everybody can become Christ, the unity of human and divine nature. Philosophy of religion justifies this anthropological universalization of Christology, making evident the fact that human's

21 Cf. Hermann Cohen: *Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums: Eine jüdische Religionsphilosophie*, Wiesbaden 2008.

22 Cf. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: *Wissenschaft der Logik I.* Werke in zwanzig Bänden, vol. 5, [ed. by Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel], Frankfurt am Main 1986, pp. 149–171.

23 Cf. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: *Phänomenologie des Geistes.* Werke in zwanzig Bänden, vol. 3, [ed. by Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel], Frankfurt am Main 1986), p. 566; Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion. Teil 3: Die vollendete Religion*, [ed. by Walter Jaeschke], Hamburg 1984, p. 60, p. 67, p. 150: "Gott ist gestorben – dies ist die Negation, und so ist dieses Moment der göttlichen Natur, Gottes selbst."

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self-consciousness and knowledge of God coincides with God's self-consciousness and knowledge of himself.

Hegel's philosophy of religion offers again an inclusivism which privileges Christianity. Religions are true insofar as they participate in the consummate religion which is Christianity – a philosophically reconstructed Christianity which is true because it represents the philosophical truth of the unity of the absolute and the human in self-consciousness and concept. Furthermore, Hegel's approach relativizes all religions because their representative form of grasping truth remains inferior to philosophy, which offers the most appropriate form of truth, the concept. In its argumentative function, the concept makes evident necessary relations and dependencies among entities and determinations. The concept of true infinity, therefore, demands the necessity of contingency for revelation and incarnation. Due to the ultimate importance of the concept, there remains the constantly discussed question, to what extent Hegel's concept of *true* infinity knows, respects and embraces *true* and *authentic* contingency and history.

Let us now move from philosophy of religion to theology of religion which includes a philosophical aspect. John Hick (1922–2012), among other proponents of the *Pluralistic Theology of Religion*, epistemologically separates absolute reality from its historical appearances. Concrete religions do not reveal the definitive truth of the absolute, as, for instance, whether the absolute is personal or impersonal[24]. First and foremost, religions tell us something about their cultural determination. The particular culture's predominant principles and categories totally establish its respective perception of the absolute.

An *universale concretum* can only be metaphorical. Hick interprets "incarnation" as the mere metaphor of the absolute's manifold appearances in various cultures[25]. Hick's interreligious and intercultural approach suspends the possibility of definitive religious truth claims for the sake of a pluralistic interpretation of religions. On the other hand, Hick's pluralistic theory tends to occupy a transcultural and exclusivist position because he purports a valid description of the relation between absolute reality and concrete religions and cultures. This epistemological position has an affinity to Hegel's absolute system, though pluralistic theology rejects Hegel's epistemology because it neglects the limits of human knowledge.

Compared with enlightenment philosophies of religion, postmodern approaches do not protect and save the transcendent instance from its contact with

24 Cf. John Hick: *An Interpretation of Religion. Human Responses to the Transcendent,* 2nd ed. Houndmills/ Basingstoke/Hampshire/London 2004, pp. 233–296.

25 Cf. John Hick (ed.): *The Metaphor of God Incarnate: Christology in a Pluralistic Age,* 2nd ed. Louisville (Kentucky) 2006.

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history and true contingency; instead, they fragment the absolute. Losing its identity, the absolute becomes exclusively contingent. Odo Marquard (1928–2015) postulates a division of powers within the absolute – emphasizing a new polytheism that warrants interreligious tolerance. Since the transcendent entity loses its unity and uniqueness, even polytheism loses its traditional orientation towards a central godhead[26]. There is only contingency on earth and in heaven. There is no *universale concretum*, since universality itself does not exist.

On the other hand, postmodern pluralism lays claim to a philosophical sensibility when dealing with concrete reality and concrete religions. The Catholic philosopher Peter Koslowski (1952–2012) celebrates postmodernity as a period which allows religious issues to be taken seriously once again, since it rejects the idea of one single form of rationality as the measure of all truth claims. It is the rationality of empirical science and naturalism which reduces religion and metaphysics to an evolutionary survival strategy, while cancelling out their relevance in modern times. According to Koslowski, religious claims must now be respected – starting with philosophy. Along with Gregory of Nyssa (335–394), he argues that philosophy can discover the *akolouthia*, the consequentiality of religious belief, and in turn shows how arguments are appropriated. Philosophy of religion does not demonstrate the necessity of belief, since it refers to a history of contingent events of salvation which do not follow a deductive, conceptual logic, but rather a graspable wisdom[27]. From this perspective, it becomes plausible that one identifies a universal wisdom of salvation in historical experience, that is, in a chain of events or a succession (*akolouthia*) of occurrences. The epistemological form behind this argument is the idea of appropriateness (*convenientia*): events do not exhaust themselves in something we can know and grasp conceptually as a logical necessity, but rather depend on freedom, fitting together, providing orientation and inviting us to trust in a specific way of life. The above-mentioned self-dedication to the transcendent entity that constitutes part of a general idea of religion cannot be anything but a free act: acts as such refer to contingent events, which in their non-necessity, appeal to freedom, but do not force liberty. The transcendent instance must, therefore, manifest itself in contingency; if this is not the case, it becomes difficult to recognize the encounter between humans and the transcendent entity as free in character. The transcendent entity's presence in contingency – its contingent historical mediation, the constitution of this *universal concretum* – enables the act of human self-dedication to this entity.

26 Cf. Odo Marquard: *Abschied vom Prinzipiellen*, Stuttgart 1981.
27 Cf. Peter Koslowski: *Die Prüfungen der Neuzeit*, Wien 1989, pp. 146–150.

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2 Juan Carlos Scannone's "new thought" and the philosophy of religion

From the perspective of Latin American philosophy, the difficulties faced by Western philosophy when dealing with and respecting concrete religions is evident. This has been a general problem in European philosophy since René Descartes' (1594–1650) attempt to methodologically guarantee the certitude of any knowledge on the basis of subjectivity's self-certainty in thought. According to Enrique Dussel's (born 1934) interpretation, the consequence of the Cartesian approach lies in a dominating subject of thought's conceptual absorption of all kinds of otherness in their contingency. The conceptual absorption of contingent otherness has a specific political manifestation. Dussel argues that European subjectivity constitutes itself historically, politically and culturally by absorbing ethnical and cultural otherness, transforming historical contingency into a conceptual possession, and realizing its self-certitude by conquering the world. Certainly, there are many exceptions, including missionaries, theologians and philosophers who defended the indigenous population's rights and dignity, such as Antonio Montesinos (1475–1545), Bartolomé de Las Casas (1484–1566), Francisco de Vitoria (1483–1546), José de Acosta (1540–1609), and Antônio Vieira (1608–1697). It is, therefore, neither possible nor just to reject European philosophy completely in order to establish a postcolonial discourse. But, it is the specific experience of Latin America's history which raises awareness for an alternative form of thought which also belongs to the European tradition – alternative forms which are also helpful for philosophy of religion.

Enrique Dussel and other authors[28] such as the Argentinian Jesuit Juan Carlos Scannone (born 1931), interpret and adopt the Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas' (1906–1995) ethical approach, his idea of exteriority and otherness, in order to develop an alternative form of thought that respects ethnical and cultural otherness – as well as religious concreteness.

Scannone exposes a crisis of modern rationality[29] characterized by the following keywords: identity, necessity, intelligibility, eternity and universality. Hegel's philosophy of subjectivity synthesizes these five paradigms, the origin of which which is to be found in Parmenides' ontology. In order to establish a "new thought", Scannone contrasts identity with alterity, difference and community;

28 Alejandro Arturo Vallega published in 2014 a study about the history and development of *Latin American Philosophy from Identity to Radical Exteriority*, Bloomington (Indiana) 2014.

29 Characterizing modernity, Scannone follows Martin Heidegger, the Jewish philosopher Werner Marx, and remarks by Jürgen Habermas: cf. Juan Carlos Scannone: *Religión y nuevo pensamiento. Hacia una filosofía de la religión para nuestro tiempo desde América Latina Tomo I de Obras selectas*, Barcelona/México 2005, pp. 109–121.

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necessity with gratuity; intelligibility with love and feeling; eternity with historical novelty; and universality with singularity and uniqueness[30].

While Levinas conceives of otherness in a general manner, Scannone grasps it in a Latin American context, speaking of an interruption by the poor and the victims[31]: their power lies in their powerlessness, interrupting the subject's ontological discourse of being that would otherwise be dominated by the finite immanence of its *cogito* and opening it to the concrete social situation of the other in his or her indissoluble infinity and transcendence. Within the horizon of transcendent otherness, being does not coincide with a static identity, but rather reveals itself in the concrete situation of the asymmetric encounter with the other's exteriority. Being, therefore, connotes a being located and situated, which the Spanish language expresses with verb *estar*. *To be situated* refers to the historical situation of persons, that is, to contingency. Rethinking God, Scannone concludes that even God is (*ésta*) historically situated and exposed to the poor and the victims.

Mysticism must, therefore, include God's being exposed to human misery. God's mediation through another person cannot be vaporized or skipped. The God of Israel identifies himself with the poor, widows and orphans. Following the Swiss Theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–1988), Scannone speaks about God's *kenosis* (Phil 2,7) in favor of human otherness. Following Levinas, Scannone deciphers the other as the concrete and wounded person that reveals God's *in*finity, his being situated *in* finitude, in human life and history. The poor achieve the status of a *universale concretum:* they represent God's transcendence in contingency, the universal truth of God's saving self-identification with the destiny of all humans.

These remarks make evident Scannone's reinterpretation of the God presented by an enlightened philosophy: God's omnipotence and greatness are not coextensive with a totality of being which realizes its absolute identity, necessity, intelligibility, eternity and universality in its infinite self-referentiality. God is more, capable of difference and alterity; God is Trinity and Creator and concedes the liberty of otherness; God is the mystery of love, the God who is more than necessary (Eberhard Jüngel)[32]; God's intelligibility is goodness, divine eternity

30 These opposed principles interpret human subjectivity not as an otherness absorbing and conquering identity, but as exposed to the always different alterity of otherness changing the nominative of the subject into the case of accusative: the other accuses the subject to be responsible, to be the messiah and redeemer of him- or herself.

31 Cf. Juan Carlos Scannone: 'La irrupción del pobre y la pregunta filosófica en América Latina', in: Juan Carlos Scannone and Gerardo Remolina (eds.): *Filosofare en situación de indigencia*, Madrid 2001, pp. 61–74.

32 Cf. Paul J. DeHart: *Beyond The Necessary God: Trinitarian Faith and Philosophy in the Thought of Eberhard Jüngel*, Atlanta (Georgia) 2000.

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constitutes history, and God manifests universal truth in contingency. Scannone is convinced that this idea of God is more rational and plausible than any other.

But, we may ask, how can philosophy justify this provocative idea of God as the transcendent entity?

As mentioned above, Hegel's philosophy outlines the category of true infinity, demonstrating the possibility of the absolute's presence even in finitude and in death, that is, the possibility that the infinite God is *in*-finite.

In a similar manner, Joseph Ratzinger, Pope Benedict XVI, argues from the standpoint of the greatness of God: *Greater, semper major* is the God whose greatness more than transcends finite contingency. In his *Introduction to Christianity*, Ratzinger references an aphorism used by the lyric poet and exponent of Romanticism Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843) to preface his work *Hyperion: Non coerceri maximo, contineri tamen a minimo, divinum est* – Not to be encompassed by the greatest, but to let oneself be encompassed by the smallest – that is divine[33]. From this, it follows that there is a rational logic of divine greatness which justifies the idea of God's presence in finite reality. It is appropriated to endorse the notion that the poor and victims encompass the divine[34] – they correspond to the concept of a *universale concretum*. The Christian belief in incarnation finds a logical justification. Although philosophy cannot deduce purely on the basis of a transcendent entity that this entity identifies itself with marginalized people, philosophy is able to make evident the possibility of religious conviction.

3 Philosophy of religion as a platform for discussion of the personality and impersonality of the transcendent entity

Certainly, even the clarification of the possibility of God's identification with the poor presupposes a personal image of God. Xenophanes of Kolophon, who lived in the fifth century before Christ, might be the only early Greek philosopher to develop a personal idea of God[35]. His colleagues saw a personal god as a mythical one, that is to say, not the god of philosophical discourse. The situation is similar in Asian thought. Hinduism is familiar with the transcendent instance as an impersonal reality that represents the ultimate unity in the plurality of things and is present in personal gods. Buddhism refers to the ineffable being free of all

33 Cf. Joseph Ratzinger / Benedict XVI: *Introduction to Christianity*, San Francisco 2004, p. 146.

34 Cf. Matthew 25,40: "Truly I say to you, because you did it to the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."

35 Cf. Christian Schäfer: *Xenophanes von Kolophon. Ein Vorsokratiker zwischen Mythos und Philosophie*, Stuttgart/Leipzig 1996, pp. 193–202.

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determination. Buddhist gods differ greatly from each other; they are limited, mortal, and subject to the cycle of births. What can philosophy of religion do? Can it decide who is right and who is wrong?

An interreligious and intercultural philosophy of religion that refers to concrete religions can identify, describe and reconstruct the philosophical core of religions in order to assist a dialogue of religions on the level of argumentative validity. It can detect convergent and divergent elements in their understandings of the transcendent entity and its presence in contingent reality in order to cope with human misery. It discusses the conditions and circumstances that privilege a personal or an impersonal conception of ultimate reality or a conception that transcends the difference between the personal and the impersonal. It can one help to see one's own tradition through the eyes of the other.

As an example of this, I would like to cite Markus Enders, a German philosopher of religion, who has introduced Anselm of Canterbury's (1033–1109) definition of God into the philosophy of religion in order to offer a rational and communicable orientation and heuristic norm about what can be called God: *aliquid quo maius nihil cogitari potest.* This God is unthinkably great[36]. This insurmountable perfection includes God's presence in history, the possibility of its being encompassed by the smallest of things, and seems to exclude a necessary enforcement of the absolute to be *in*-finite.

This criterion offers an indication about the impersonality and personality of the absolute. Philosophy must demand that a personal understanding of the absolute not coincide with an anthropomorphic and therefore limiting conception of the transcendent reality, because, if this is the case, then something greater can always be conceived of. An impersonal notion is intended to correspond to the absolute's radical greatness and perfection. A personal conception, in turn, must also have this intention. To this end, the concept of person could be developed in the sense of Levinas' idea of transcendent otherness in order to illustrate that personality is the last guarantee of God's greatness and transcendence.

In order to emphasize the radical transcendence and otherness of God, Meister Eckhart (1260–1328) dared to state hyperbolically: God is nothing – because he does not exist in the same way as created beings: "You shall love God as he is a No-God, No-Spirit, No-Person, No-Figure/Image, still more: as a sheer, pure and

36 Anselm von Canterbury: *Proslogion*, cap. 15, "Ergo domine, non solum es quo maius cogitari nequit, sed es quiddam maius quam cogitari possit." Cf. Markus Enders: 'Das Unübertreffliche im Verständnis der monotheistischen Weltreligionen – zur interreligiösen Relevanz des "ontologischen Gottesbegriffs"', in: Thomas Jürgasch et. al. (eds.): *Gegenwart der Einheit. Zum Begriff der Religion. Festschrift zu Ehren von Bernhard Uhde*, Freiburg i.Br. 2008, pp. 205–238.

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clear One, separated from all duality"[37]. This no-duality and unity of God, which recalls the Neoplatonic concept of the One (*Hen*), can be understood as the attempt to translate a personal concept of God into an impersonal one: as an indication of what lies behind the difference of the personal and impersonal. A philosophy of religion in the occidental tradition can even present the personal as an unfathomable abyss in which the impersonal moment is included: What is more inconceivable than (absolute) freedom? Beyond liberty there could be found a weaker, less dense form of reality. A personal conception that corresponds to the criterion of God's greatness as unthinkably great is philosophically acceptable, along with its consequences, including God's identification with the poor and God's incarnation.

Philosophy of religion can even assist in identifying elements of personal thinking in an impersonal tradition and impersonal aspects in personal thought. The following example illustrates this well: the Buddhist Theravada Canon states that Nirvana is an eternal place, an heaven of peace, supreme blissfulness and happiness[38]. From a Western perspective, it is appropriate to affirm that peace, bliss and happiness in daily life are usually the result of free inter-human recognition and appreciation. This is why eternal bliss seems to presuppose an absolute divine personality who recognizes and appreciates the human person with eschatological definitiveness. In order to avoid metaphysical terms while still indicating a personal permanence in the "holy city" – which is another name of the nirvana[39] – authors speak of an "ethical immortality".

Secondly, one should also consider that Buddhists teach the doctrine of anatman – the non-self – and reject the concept of an eternal person because, in Buddhism, the human person should perish in so far as it is a human self. The self is the origin of the thirst to be and to have, which effects negative karma and the need for redemption. By the same token, the doctrine of karma and samsara presupposes a persevering human reality which is the subject of both reincarnation as well as liberation from reincarnation. Some Buddhist schools,

37 Meister Eckhart: *Deutsche Werke II. Texte und Übersetzungen von Josef Quint*, [ed. by Niklaus Largier], Frankfurt am Main 1993, Predigt 83, p. 197: "Du sollst ihn lieben, wie er ein *Nicht*-Gott, ein *Nicht*-Geist, eine *Nicht*-Person, ein *Nicht*-Bild ist; mehr noch: wie er ein lauteres reines, klares Eines ist, abgesondert von aller Zweiheit. Und in diesem Einen sollen wir ewig versinken vom Etwas zum Nichts."

38 Cf. *The Dhammapada: Verses and Stories*, [transl. by Daw Mya Tin, M.A, ed. By Editorial Committee], Burma Tipitaka 1986, p. 203: "Nirvana is the highest/greatest happiness/bliss." Cf. Konrad Klaus: 'Früher Buddhismus und Rationalität – Anmerkungen zur Regensburger Papstrede aus indologischer Sicht', in: Görge K. Hasselhoff and Michael Meyer-Blank (eds.): *Religion und Rationalität*, Würzburg 2008, pp. 79–97, here 86.

39 Cf. Lynn A. de Silav: *The Problem of the Self in Buddhism and Christianity*, London 1979, pp. 71–74.

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therefore, favor the Hindu idea of atman, the self, as the subject of redemption[40]. This position is at least akin to the Jewish-Christian tradition. There is a consensus that Buddha was not a great friend of speculative thought about soul and immortality; he preferred to emphasize moral selflessness and altruism as a way to redemption. It is, therefore, a well-founded hypothesis, that Buddha's parenetic understanding of selflessness was modified into a metaphysical concept. If this is the case, then the idea of a human subject that enjoys eternality because it is infinitely recognized by the absolute achieves plausibility within the horizon of Buddhism.

This distinction between the human self and moral selflessness is a common idea in Western philosophy. But, the Buddhist doctrine of no-self may be dialectally helpful for preserving this distinction, because, even in Western thought, there is the tendency to define human reality as a deficient mode of being. In order to explain the universal fact of moral evil in human history, the Protestant theologian, Wolfhart Pannenberg (1928–2014) dares to state that human beings' God-given self tends to selfishness and that autonomy tends to try and gain independence from the creator[41]. This explanation cannot easily be reconciled with the biblically attested idea of man's original goodness (Gen 1,31) as a "reflection" of the goodness of the creator.

Furthermore, philosophy of religion discusses the *universale concretum* in Asian religions in order to recognize parallel structures which constitute and actualize religion. In Hinduism, the *universale concretum* consists in the contingent and concrete plurality of god and avatars of gods which are a personalization of the neutral and unique Brahman. In Mahayana-Buddhism, the *universale concretum* is the Buddha's universal nature as first realized by Buddha Siddharta Gautama. Living beings can participate in it and achieve an illumination which indicates the path to redemption and unity with the absolute. Even the plurality of Boddhisattva represent the universality of redemption discovered by Buddha. In an act of compassion for all living beings, they communicate the way to illumination and redemption. In general, it is a contingent human reality, a person or human means of communication, such as human language or writing, a human doctrine or a human form of a deity, which communicates and mediates redemption or the way to it. Philosophy of religion discloses the possibility and coherence of this belief.

40 Cf. Heinz Bechert et al. (eds): *Der Buddhismus I*, Stuttgart 2000, pp. 41–50; de Silav: *The Problem of the Self*, pp- 15–74.

41 Cf. Wolfhart Pannenberg: *Systematische Theologie 2*, Göttingen 1990, pp. 199–200, p. 434.

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4 Philosophy of Grace?

According to the above-mentioned definition of religion, humans cope with contingency and the lack of being through an act of self-dedication to a transcendent entity. Usually, this act refers to the *universale concretum* which mediates the unity between the human person and the absolute. Many religions consider the realization of this act as an act of grace: humans may prepare themselves to enter into unity with the absolute, but they cannot make or bring it about by themselves. Philosophy of religion can illustrate the appropriateness of this crucial idea.

From an anthropological perspective, Josef Ratzinger argues that the most important and decisive realties in human life, those which enable life and give orientation, consist in contingent, free acts of reciprocal appreciation. They are gifts, grace[42]. Buddhism, which, in Western culture, is often accused of teaching self-redemption, understands illumination as a gift, since redemption cannot be desired. Again, desire would cause negative karma.

Gift and grace are categories of freedom, contingency and historical events and do not correspond to the category of necessity. It is, therefore, wrong to construct a philosophy of religion which locates the universal truth of religion exclusively on the level of necessary truths of reason. What is needed and necessary for humans occurs in history in the form of non-necessary events of grace. The unity of free grace and its free acceptance by human persons constitute the core of religion. This acceptance usually first takes place in the founding mediator or mediators of a concrete religion. The members of a religion adopt this initial event into their religious life. A philosophy of religion which deals with concrete religion can justify the founding event of religion: establishing the idea of a *universale concretum* and arguing for the necessity of the non-necessity of free grace.

5 Uniqueness and Plurality of the Transcendent Reality's Presence

There is yet a further consideration that we should address: the question of the uniqueness and/or plurality of the *universale concretum* which constitutes concrete religions. Hinduism recognizes many avatars which lead to the definitive and insurmountable unity with the absolute; but there is no definitive, unique avatar. Buddhism recognizes different forms of Bodhisattvas, of mediators. But,

42 Cf. Ratzinger: *Introduction to Christianity*, pp. 267–268.

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it is the uniqueness or ultimateness of God's revelation and mediation that characterizes the monotheistic religions: Torah, Christ and Quran. Hinduism can easily recognize mediations of the absolute in other religions based on the multiplicity of avatars; Jesus and Mary are avatars. Even the plurality of mediations corresponds to contingency. The thought of an unparalleled, insurmountable single event in history (incarnation) is not only unnecessary, but actually seems to represent an error, indeed, a lack of respect for other manifestations of ultimate reality.

In order to resolve this question, it is helpful to study a classic argument for the uniqueness of the absolute's manifestation as outlined by Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa Theologiae.* He qualifies the epistemic status of his arguments with the term *convenientia*, *conveniens* (appropriateness, appropriate), since it is impossible to philosophically deduce necessary realities which have their origin in God. This is why there is no strict proof which demonstrates the necessity of a unique incarnation[43]. Firstly, Thomas Aquinas argues that it is impossible to necessarily exclude a multiplicity of incarnations when stating *increatum a creato comprehedi non potest*[44]. The absolute cannot be comprehensively, exhaustively presented by created contingency. Therefore, aside from the assumption of human nature in Christ, the divine person of the Logos can, theoretically, assume other human natures. Even God's love, which is mediated by the incarnation, could be mediated immediately to all human beings.

But, if personality and freedom are unique and unrepeatable realities, then it becomes difficult to assume a plurality of unrepeatable human freedoms, which are the historical presence and reality of the one, unique, divine freedom or personality. If a personal God definitively presents himself to humanity in history as unconditional love and appreciation, then it is appropriate that he does so in an unrepeatable and unique form: in a human freedom that perfectly accepts and realizes this divine self-communication for all of humankind. Others participate in this unique event: the poor, for instance, are participating mediations of the *universale concretum* that is the incarnation of God's Logos; thanks to the one mediation which is realized in Christ's incarnation, the poor person can be a participating *universal concretum.* This *convenientia*-based argument is based on specific presuppositions such as personality and freedom, including the personality of the Absolute, which are unique and unrepeatable realities. An interreligious and intercultural philosophy of religion should attempt to communicate and translate this insight within the horizon of other cultures. At the

43 Cf. Thomas Aquinas: *Summa Theologica* III q. 1, a. 1: "De convenientia incarnationis". Cf. Michael Schulz, 'Unicità della mediazione della salvezza in Cristo e pluralità delle religioni. Considerazioni sulla scia di Karl Rahner', in: *Rivista teologica di Lugano* 10 (2005), pp. 253–264.

44 Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologica* III q. 3, a. 7.

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same time, philosophy of religion marks the limits of mutual understanding. It must also convey the pluralistic intuition of Hinduism to monotheistic religions. Where Christianity and Hinduism converge is their shared conception of a concrete mediation of the Absolute. As has been said before, in Hinduism, mediation is to be regarded as such, in its plurality as a *universal concretum.* Admittedly, this means that the concrete is abstractly understood as an attribute of many particularities, so that no original and authoritative form of mediation can be indicated in which others participate. Obviously, this divergence between Christianity and Hinduism divergence cannot be fully compensated for.

Epistemologically, Thomas Aquinas' incarnation-theoretical argument, according to which the created cannot exhaustively present the uncreated, also indicates that God's revelation in the incarnation can never be exhaustively recognized and conceptually *possessed* by humans. It is for this reason that contact with non-Christian cultures and religions can lead to a deepening of the knowledge of Christian Revelation.

In order to avoid the arrogant impression that can be given by an exclusive belief in one unique self-mediation of the transcendent entity, it is crucial to explain this uniqueness in terms of freedom and love – in terms of contingency. Since the content of the absolute event is nothing but free grace, even the mediation of this content must be realized in terms of freedom, as, for instance, in the struggle for the freedom of others, of the poor and the victims. According to Bartolomé de Las Casas (ca. 1484–1566) in *De unico vocationis modo omnium gentium ad veram religionem*, the freedom of the other person is the condition of Christian mission. Philosophy of religion has the right to examine the relation between the essential content and message of a religion and the method of its missionary mediation. Since freedom and grace determine the encounter with the transcendent entity and the aim of religion is eternal bliss, it is impossible to justify missionary methods which violate freedom and destroy the experience of happiness in concrete life.

6 Participated Mediations and Mutual Inclusivism

From a Christian perspective, it is possible to interpret mediations of the absolute's presence as they appear in other religions as various forms of "participated mediations" and participating modes of the unique *universale concretum.* The Roman-Catholic Church's controversial document *Dominus Iesus* speaks of Christ's mediation as that which "gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is

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but a participation in this one source"[45]. The document does not explain what the expression "gives rise" ("*suscitat*") means concerning other religions, but does indicate an interesting theological question with philosophical implications.

If God communicates himself in a historical human-divine event within human history, then this event must be mediated through history; there is no universal, immediate access to a historical event. Philosophy of religion can conceive of the idea that the universal mediation of a unique historical event of universal significance, a definitive *universale concretum* in time and space, requires and gives rise to a plurality of mediations in the history of religions. Without a manifold mediation, the unique event of revelation cannot be received by all times and cultures.

This logic of participated mediation is called inclusivism and differs from both exclusivism, which excludes participation and reserves truth-claims for only one tradition, as well as pluralism, which interprets religions as parallel paths of moral perfection.

It is interesting to observe this inclusive position in non-Christian traditions. The Jewish philosopher Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929) asserted that Christianity participates in a unity with God represented by Judaism. While Christ is the way to God for those who still need to come to God, Jews do not need Christ's mediation because they have both already reached and should stay with God. Christ is a participated mediation of Jewish salvation. According to Hermann Cohen, other religions can participate in the religion of reason which coincides with Judaism.

According to Islam, the people of the Scriptures and the Book (i. e. Jews and Christians), participate in the definitive and saving Word of God in the Quran through their dependence on the Old and New Testament which are essentially integrated in the Quran. In the Hindu and Buddhist universe, Christian incarnation participates in the idea of avatars and bodhisattva.

This observation permits the conclusion that one can establish mutual inclusivism as a theoretical framework for interreligious relations on the basis of a philosophically graspable understanding of participated mediation in a definitive *universale concretum* which constitutes definitive and consummate religion[46]. This framework recognizes the contingent and historical basis and truth-claims of religions and their historical mediation. It requires a sensibility on the part of all religions to discover and respect traces of the transcendent reality's

45 Declaration *Dominus Iesus*, published in the year 2000 by the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, no. 14.

46 Cf. Michael Schulz: 'Mediazione partecipata e inclusione mutua. Sul cristocentrismo del dialogo interreligioso', in Massimo Serretti (ed.): *L'attuale controversia sull'universalità di Gesù Cristo*, Roma 2002, pp. 51–66.

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presence in the various religious traditions – a presence that suffuses and fulfills contingent life.

An interreligious and intercultural philosophy of religion within the horizon of contingency justifies the possibility and appropriateness of concrete religions – including the resurrection of the flesh – and opens a door for an interreligious and intercultural dialogue on basis of religious truth-claims and mutual inclusivism.

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Public Opinion and sensus fidelium

Introduction

This study was presented at the Symposium on Philosophy of Religion at PUCRS, 24th–26th November, 2014. The debate was focused on the Philosophy of Religion in Latin America and Europe: A Diologue on Current Issues and Developments – Reason as a Mediator between Religious and Cultures.

The theme of public opinion and the *sensus fidelium* are phenomena of culture and religious experience that need the mediation of articulated social intelligence in social networks. The phenomenon of public opinion is used to make diagnoses, trace scenarios and establish action plans. Likewise, religious public opinion becomes increasingly useful for Churches to investigate the opinions of the faithful with the aim of updating their pastoral actions, debating moral problems, being in tune with the challenges of the spirit of the times and interpreting the "signs of the times." Both public opinion and religious opinion are met with a new fact: plural societies connected in social networks. Here, the opinion finds its special forum to be affirmed in the instantaneousness of the internet as well as to be denied in the opposition of plural societies, constituting itself in the moment of the contradiction that seeks institutional mediations in order to influence public opinion and the establishment of themes that constitute the world agenda.

The problem discussed in this text exposes public opinion firstly as situated within the field of publicity, secondly as a phenomenon of contradiction and finally as something useful for the relationship between societies and churches. In interpellative terms: how do the phenomena of public opinion, religious opinion and the *sensus fidelium* are articulated interdisciplinarily? How do they contribute for relationship in plural societies? This article is structured according to the following objectives: (i) to evidence the proximity between public opinion and religious opinion, showing how both pass through the assessment of publicity, contradiction, utility and truth; (ii) to present the fact of network society, in which religious citizens exercise the right of expressing their opinions and reli-

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gious convictions; (iii) to describe the phenomena of the *sensus fidei* and *sensus fidelium* as being, on the one hand, the clarification of the experience of faith among the religious citizens in their immediacy and, on the other, subjective convictions and religious opinions that are objectivized through the collegiate mediation of the Church; (iv) to point to diagnoses and scenarios for churches in times of networked societies, plural societies connected through religious public opinions as experiences in the sense of faith and plural beliefs.

Firstly, public opinion is approached in face of the new scenario of networked societies, having in mind three complementary principles: publicity, contradiction, and utility. Afterwards, the *sensus fidei*, the *sensus fidelium* and the *consensus fidei* are described as inclusion, expression and mediation of religious opinion of the faithful in face of plural societies.

1 Public Opinion: Publicity, Contradiction and Utility

We initially present a brief exposition of some theories concerning public opinion that we believe are important for understanding the phenomenon of opinion in social networks, specifically how the believers' opinion are constituted (*religious opinion*) and the believers' expressions of faith in order to understand the logic that moves the new networked social subjects and actors and their religious experience.[1] The concept of social networks here is understood in an operational sense, that is, when a computer network connects a network of people, groups and organizations in all levels.

a) *The Principle of Publicity*[2]

The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789) (*Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen*) was the document that synthesized the ideals of the French Revolution, in which individual and collective rights of humans are clarified; preoccupied with universality, they advocate for the freedom of opinion in two articles:

> 10. No one shall be disquieted on account of his opinions, including his religious views, provided their manifestation does not disturb the public order established by law.

1 This part is the reproduction of a chapter of a book, already published in: Agemir Bavaresco and Draiton Gonzaga de Souza: 'Epistemologia das redes sociais, opinião pública e teoria da agenda', in: Draiton Gonzaga de Souza and Agemir Bavaresco (eds.): *Direito e Filosofia I*, Porto Alegre 2013, pp. 92–115.

2 Cf. Agemir Bavaresco et al.: 'Mídias, democracia e opinião pública: diagnósticos, teorias e análises', in: Agemir Bavaresco et al. (eds.): *Projetos de Filosofia II*, Porto Alegre 2012, pp. 8–39, http://www.abavaresco.com.br/publicacoes.html#capitulos.

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> 11. The free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious of the rights of man. Every citizen may, accordingly, speak, write, and print with freedom, but shall be responsible for such abuses of this freedom as shall be defined by law.

Afterwards, in the 20th Century, the Declaration of Human Rights will consolidate this principle:

> "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold bopinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." (Human Rights, article 19).[3]

Modernity had already instituted the principle of publicity as groundwork for the advancement of the protection of the right of freedom of the press and opinion. This principle is simultaneously constituted by the formation of the public sphere. Therefore, there is a mutual imbrication between publicity and public sphere, freedom of the press and public opinion.

On a philosophical level, Kant theorizes about the principle of publicity as a stage of majority, as an emancipation of humanity. Kant inaugurates, as we have seen, the discussions about public opinion through the *principle of publicity* presented in *Perpetual Peace:* Justice "[…] can only be thought of as publicly disclosable" (KANT, 2010, p. 75). Publicity is a political concept that creates, in political philosophy, the idea of public sphere as a structure that ensures individual and public rights; the formal principle of publicity ensures legitimacy to juridical norms. The right of expressing one's own opinion has, in the principle of publicity, its legitimation.

> Publicity is the formal principle and public opinion is the practical-phenomenological device that mediates between the formal principle of publicity and the empirical dimension that is effected in civil law, in international law and in cosmopolitan law (LIMA, 2011, p. 286).

Kant, in publishing the work *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, triggered a great debate, since it was understood as a challenge to the emperor of the theistic Christian State of his time. There is no publicity in the court, since there is no public space, only private, that is, the sovereign space. In this context Kant introduces the principle of publicity, disclosing the conflict between the public use of reason and private reason within the religious and political ambit that is thematized in *The Conflict of the Faculties.* Kantian public reason foreshadows the idea of freedom of expression implemented in contemporary democratic constitutions as well as introduces the legitimacy of public opinion in the modern State.

3 United Nations Human Rights: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Pages/WelcomePage.aspx.

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It is Hegel, notwithstanding, who will explicitly posit the theory of public opinion by thematizing the principle of contradiction as being its immanent movement. Public opinion is a phenomenon of the contradiction of opinions on all the levels of society.

b) Contradiction of Public Opinion[4]

Hegel understands public opinion as a phenomenon of contradiction that needs to pass from immediacy to mediation. The phenomenon of public opinion is contradictory, because it contains within itself both the universality of constitutional principles, of Law and Ethics, and the singularity of rights and interests of citizens and of the expression of their subjectivity. This contradiction finds its solution through the mediation of freedom of the press itself within a framework of democratic lawfulness. This is the strength of contradiction: to effect the mediation of the dialectic tension between the opposite poles of the universal and the singular in the freedom of the press, ensuring the right of every citizen to publicly express his or her opinion.

Hegel develops the principle of contradiction in his *Logics of Essence*, describing the movement in which being is opposed insofar as it is reflected in itself and in the other. Contradiction is a logical concept that moves the whole of political reality. Hegel analyzes the fact of public opinion and understands it as a contradiction; the right the citizen has of freely expressing his or her opinion allows opposite opinions to be manifested. This is the logics of opinion, saying what one thinks immediately, surpassing the contradiction of prejudices, preferences, interests etc. The logics of opinion is the movement of contradiction of the right to freely express what one thinks and wants, passing through the mediation of sociopolitical institutions.

The Hegelian principle of contradiction provides us with a diagnosis and an understanding of public opinion that is relevant to understand both its time and the complex framework of contemporary society. However, how is public opinion treated afterwards by J. S. Mill? What is his diagnosis and interpretative horizon to analyze public opinion?

4 Cf. Agemir Bavaresco and P. R. Konzen: 'Cenários da liberdade de imprensa e opinião pública em Hegel', in: *Kriterion* 50 119 (June 2009), http://www.abavaresco.com.br/publicacoes.html #artigos.

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c) *Principle of utility*

The utilitarianist horizon is present in the political philosophy of J. S. Mill[5] and, therefore, in his irreducible defense of freedom of expression. In Mill's conception, a society wherein freedom of expression flourishes has more positive consequences for its members than one in which freedom is restricted; and free opinion is a more adequate regime than censorship in face of the unavoidable partiality of individual opinions.

Mills stresses that there is also the *principle of utility* to guide the defense and maintenance of free public opinion, since it brings forth benefits for the collectivities in which it is applied. A democratic society allows its citizens to satisfy their desire of having the best opinions possible according to the scenario most fit for an impartial consideration of all the opinions without arbitrary privileges to one specific opinion. It could be said that Mill applied the moral principle of utility to public opinion: there is joy in conveying one's own opinion; more than that, expressing what one thinks is pleasurable. The individual seeks an advantage or an interest and may want his or her opinion to influence others. It is useful for the individual to ensure the moral pleasure of having his or her opinion acknowledged by the public. The interplay of opinions acknowledges the utility of everybody expressing their opinions. However, the justification of the many opinions occurs through impartiality, that is, the opinion needs to be useful for the largest number of individuals possible and not only satisfy the partiality of some opinions. Thus, we have publicity, contradiction and utility as the three principles of public opinion. We think that they are very consistent to understand the fact of public opinion. Publicity of politics, the logics of contradiction and utilitarianist morals are constitutive principles of public opinion. They allow understanding the new scenarios of the public sphere constructed or influenced by the multimedia, social networks and nationally and internationally broadened in a dynamics of global self-communication (cf. Castells). Thus, it may be posited that the network of opinions follows a logics of contradiction moved by immediate perceptions and impressions in the utilitarianist conflict of interests, ac-

5 Cf. Barbara Orlans et al.: *The human use of animals: case studies in ethical choice*, Oxford 1998. (1) The principle of utility: for utilitarianists, the idea that subjects seek the maximization of their well-being is indispensable. The postulate that the greatest happiness possible should be sought for the largest number of people involved in a determinate action is part, therefore, of utiliatarianist ethics; (2) A scale of benefits: utilitarianists defend that the benefits and evils of the consequences of an action may be measured through items hat count as goods or primary utilities; (3) Consequentialism: all utilitarian theories are consequentialist. This means that the actions will be morally right or wrong according to their consequences, far beyond the virtues that refer to any moral quality they may possess, such as fidelity, friendship or trust; (4) Impartiality: finally all the parts involved in the action should receive impartial consideration. Any partiality referring to particular individuals should possess a reasonable and strict utilitarian justification.

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tivated by the principle of the public that articulates the opinions in religious and social networks. This research will investigate to what extent these principles are also present in the religious public opinion in scenarios of plural societies. Currently new scenarios for communication are built, having, on the one hand, the large corporations of television, radio, press and online media and, on the other, the role of the independent/alternative press, understood as not linked to a private, public or state company or some economic group. The constitution of opposition between conventional media and independent/alternative press is progressively configured, having as material support the new technologies of information.

In the networked society connected with plural societies, three processes of learning and changes are found: (α) on a technical level, television, radio, press and online media are articulated, having in mind that, with the advent of the internet and independent social networks, there is a progression from the age of the mass media to the age of the media for all, that is, there is democratization of the media; (β) on a communicational level, there is a progression from the concept of exclusive journalism to inclusive press and journalists; (γ) on a political level, social networks question representative democracy and defy the implementation of digital democracy and the democratization of the media.

Having these scenarios of communication and public opinion as expressed in social networks and plural societies in mind, religious opinion is also seen to be traversed by the three abovementioned principles of public opinion, so that the publicity of religious opinions is freely expressed in networks, generating the phenomenon of the contradiction of believers on various themes of society (ethics, politics, doctrines etc.) according to utilitarianist interests of the believers. It is known that religions suffer the impacts of this phenomenon of public opinion and that the religious opinion of the believers, in addition to being a part of this scenario, is guided by the principle of the truth of religious opinions.

2 sensus fidei, sensus fidelium and concensus fidei

Initially it is worth positing that there is an implicative articulation among these three levels of experience of faith: *sensus fidei*, *sensus fidelium*, and *consensus fidei*. These expressions are connected to varied yet complementary contents. Herbert Vorgrimler defines (1) *sensus fidei* (SF) as "a determined species of knowledge that arises from faith and refers to the essential content of this same faith."[6] It is a spontaneous, non-discursive, intuitive and immediate way of

6 Cf. Frans Haarsma: 'Investigação empírica por um consensus da Igreja?', in: CONCILIUM 1 (1972), pp. 100–102.

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knowing. It is the sense of faith particular to anyone who believes in God's revelation. It is the individual consciousness illuminated by the light of the Spirit of God. The (2) *sensus fidelium* is, according to the author, the sense of the faithful or the collective consciousness of faith. The (3) *consensus fidei* is the faithful's agreement formed out of the sense of faith.[7]

According to Dario Vitali, the term *sensus* means sense; this noun corresponds to the Greek term *aisthesis* (*αἴσθησις*), which means perception, sensation or feeling, indicating a way of knowing from experience, acquired through the senses; a way of understanding or being conscious of something. On the other hand, the term *fidei* means faith as an attitude of deliverance, that is, the assent about that which is experienced as *sensus*.

The *sensus fidei* (personal consciousness) is connected to the *sensus fidelium* (collective consciousness). The individual Christian existence is situated within the context of ecclesial communion, that is, the Christian faith is, at the same time, personal, communitarian and ecclesial. Christian faith becomes explicit in the community, constituting the communicative relationship of the Church in its personal and communitarian dimension.

The *sensus fidelium* (faithful's sense) has an objective meaning, referring not only to the believer as individual, but to that which is objectively believed in. It is an ecclesial and collegial function through theologians, the magisterium and the group of the faithful. It is, then, something objective, since it is made explicit in a communitarian level.[8]

The *consensus fidei* (consensus of faith, that is, the universal agreement or consensus on questions of faith and moral action) has the value of a criterion of truth. Frans Haarsma relates the faithful's consensus to the sense of faith, positing that "the consensus is defined as a unisonous expression of faith by the totality of the faithful and may be confirmed by statistics in a kind of ecclesial public opinion[9] whereas the sense of faith should be based on theology."[10]

In the experience of the *sensus fidei*, the phenomenon of the expression of faith occurs immediately as sensibility of the act of believing in God. Here, the freedom of the act of believing is manifested in its intuitive and spontaneous expression, that is, the freedom of opinion of the faith that the believer has the right of freely expressing, for instance, in the form of popular religion in face of God and its historical mediations.

7 Cf. Dario Vitali: *Sensus fidelium. Una funzione ecclesiale di intelligenza della fede*, Brescia 1993, p. 148.

8 Cf. Salvador Pié-Ninot: 'Sensus fidei', in: R. Latourelle and R. Fisichella (eds.): *Dicionário di teologia fondamentale*, Assisi 1998p. 1131.

9 Vitali: *Sensus fidelium*, p. 274.

10 Cf. Frans Haarsma: 'Investigação empírica por um consensus na Igreja?', in: CONCILIUM, Op. Cit., p. 95.

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Afterwards, in the *sensus fidelium*, religious opinion experiences the contradiction of religious opinions, since there is a plurality of opinions about the same themes and issues. It is something typical of plural societies that show their faith as autonomous persons to say freely what they think about their experience of faith. However, there is a mediation to be made among the multiplicity of opinions of the faithful; this mediation aims at making explicit the contradictions of religious opinions so that the truth of faith may be achieved. This is the objective moment of the experience of faith that assumes the individual opinions and mediatizes them through theological debates, magisterial memory and the hermeneutics of the believers. Here opinion as *sensus fidelium* is achieved, that is, the ecclesial consciousness as faith made explicit by the faithful in the light of the mediations of the ecclesial community and its members.

Finally, in the *consensus fidei*, religious opinion is evaluated through the many collegiate instances of the Church – communities, magisterium, theologians, assemblies, synods, councils etc. – to establish agreements or understandings that ensure the unity and truth of opinions in terms of faith, embracing the universal acknowledgment of the Church.

To what extent may the *sensus fidelium* be brought near religious public opinion? That is, is there a public sphere in the Church, allowing the believers (the faithful, theologians, bishops) to freely express their opinion through social networks? To deal with these problems, the experience of faith is described in terms of the *sensus fidei*, the *sensus fidelium* and the *consensus fidei*, which constitute the subjects of the expression of the Catholic faith. Our objective is to bring the phenomenon of public opinion near the phenomenon of religious opinion, showing, at the same time, the specificity of religious public opinion.

2.1 *Sensus fidei:* Experience as the epistemological place of faith

The *sensus fidei* constitutes the starting point of the movement of faith and refers to the expression of a form of acknowledgment of belief, defining the ability of each baptized individual to live the religious experience. However, it is a personal and, at the same time, public experience of faith experienced and manifested in the community of believers wherein the act of faith is a vital and existential act in which the whole person is involved.[11] The experience of faith enables the person to express the *sensus fidei*, whereas personal consciousness experiences the relationship and identification with the object of faith.

11 Cf. Vitali: *Sensus fidelium*, pp. 251–252; cf. D. Mieth: 'Alla ricerca d'una definizione del concetto esperienza: che cos'è l'esperienza?', in: *Concilium* 3 (1978), p. 89.

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Theology has the difficulty of bringing near *experience* and *sensus fidelium.* When *sensus fidelium* and experience come near, in Catholic theology, one oscillates between complementary opinions: on the one hand, in denying the role of experience, one equally denies the function of the *sensus fidelium.* According to D. Vitali, the moment of greater rejection of experience in modernist crisis is also the moment of greater suspicion in relation to the doctrine of the *sensus fidelium.*[12] On the other hand, when in theology the experience is recovered, a return to the *sensus fidelium* occurs. Indeed, there is, between experience and *sensus fidelium*, a constitutive relationship; otherwise, the object of the *sensus fidelium* is empty without the object of the spiritual experience. Therefore, the spiritual experience is linked to the *sensus fidelium* when a content of the experience of revelation is made explicit.

According to E. Schillebeeckx, "praxis is the place wherein authentic theory is manifested. A clear idealistic-minded disposition between pure reason and practical reason does not hold. Concretely, Christianity is essentially a renovation of the concrete and real being in which the theory occurs interiorly and implicitly"[13]; that is, it is a practice lived in the experience of the people as community that practices the faith.

The reflection about the *theological places* and the understanding of the practice of faith occurs through the mediation of the local synods, of the articulation of the communities, of the liturgy in the life of communities. The life of families in their varied forms witnesses the *lex vivendi* according to the Gospel as well as the testimony of charity and the lives of Saints.[14]

Experience is the *epistemological place of Faith:* the *fact* of the manifestation of faith is a practice that constitutes an object of analysis and theological knowledge in its own source from the subject that makes experience, that is, from the *sensus fidei.* Faith and experience together give meaning and identity to the interpretation of the experience in itself.[15]

12 Cf. Vitali: *Sensus fidelium*, pp. 259–260; cf. pp. 241–243; cf. J.-J. Tamayo: 'El Magisterio de la comunidad cristiana', cit., p. 237; cf. Paul G. Crowley: 'Catholicity, inculturation and Newman's Sensus fidelium', in: *The Heythrop Journal* 33 (1992/2), p. 168.

13 L.M. Fernandez de Troconiz: 'La Teologia sobre el *sensus fidei* de 1960 a 1970', in: *Scriptorium Victoriense* 31 (1984), p. 23; cf. Felisa Elizondo: '*Conocer por experiencia (II). Un estudio de sus modos y valoración en la Summa Theologica de Tomás de Aquino'*, in: *Revista Española de Teología* 52 (1992), pp. 189–194; cf. Xavier J. Puthenkalam: 'Religious Experience and Faith', in: *Louvain Studies* 12 (3/1987), pp. 274–278.

14 Cf. Alfred Cioffi: 'La storia (vita) della Chiesa locale come luogo teologico', in: Antonio Barruffo (ed.): *Sui problemi del metodo in Ecclesiologia,* Milano/ San Paolo 2003, p. 239, pp. 242–243.

15 Cf. Adolfo Gonzalez Montes: 'La experiencia, lugar epistemológico de la fe', in: *Estudios Eclesiásticos* 68 (1993), pp. 417–431.

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The *Lumen Gentium* articulates the *supernatural sense of faith* (*sensus fidei*) and the *consensus* of the universality of the believers:

> The entire body of the faithful, anointed as they are by the Holy One, (cf. 1Jo 2, 20.27) cannot err in matters of belief. They manifest this special property by means of the whole *peoples' supernatural discernment in matters of faith* when "from the Bishops down to the last of the lay faithful" (8*) they show *universal agreement in matters of faith and morals.* That discernment in matters of faith (*sensus fidei*) is aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth. It is exercised under the guidance of the sacred teaching authority, in faithful and respectful obedience to which the people of God accepts that which is not just the word of men but truly the word of God.(*LG* 12a)

> The *universal agreement in matters of faith and morals* includes that which the Church is and believes, that is, the *depositum fidei* and other forms of expression of the Christian faith that are the manifestation of the *sensus fidei* of the faithful in unity with the ecclesial institutions, in the liturgical-sacramental practice of the Church, in the theological reflection and in the practice of a Christian life.[16] Therefore, all this experience of faith by the believer is manifested as religious opinion through the *sensus fidelium.*

2.2 *Sensus Fidelium*[17]*:* Religious opinion and unity of faith

The *sensus fidelium* is the religious experience as manifestation of the phenomenon of the divine Spirit that communicates its charismas to the believers. Thus, the charismas may be considered an expression of the *sensus fidelium* in the ecclesial community and in the world,[18] in a subjective and objective dimension.

a) The subject of the *sensus fidelium:* In the ecclesial language, the term *sensus fidelium* was habitually applied to the members of the Church that were not part of the hierarchy.[19] However, there is equivalence between the Catholic Church and the *sensus omnium fidelium*, that is, there is a coincidence between the *sensus Ecclesiae* and the *sensus omnium fidelium*, since there is only one subject to the *sensus fidelium* formed by the whole of the believing faithful. The members of the

16 Cf. Angel Antón: 'Recezione e Chiesa locale. La connessione di ciascuna delle due realtà da punto di vista ecclesiale ed ecclesiologico', in: *Rassegna di Teologia* 40 (2/1999): pp. 170, 177.

17 Para aprofundar este tema, ver a tese de doutorado: Wilson Dallagnol: *O Povo de Deus como sujeito na vida Igreja. O sensus fidelium como chave de leitura em Eclesiologia*, Rome 2005.

18 Cf. Guiseppe Biondo: *Il Sensus fidelium nel Vaticano II e nei Sinodi dei Vescovi*, Roma 1989, p. 34, pp. 76–78; cf. P. Granfield: 'Il sensus fidelium nella scelta del vescovo', cit., p. 74.

19 Cf. Vitali: *Sensus fidelium*, p. 157; cf. pp. 321–322.

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hierarchy and the faithful have different functions and missions, but both form "one only subject, which is the universal Church."[20]

According to E. Schillebeeckx, the subject of the *sensus fidelium* is both the particular person and the Christian community (the universal Church). The *sensus fidelium* is among the subjects of the transmission of the Revelation, identified with the totality of the Christian people,[21] since the action of the Spirit is present in all those who were baptized, there being a complementariness of functions and opinions according to the plurality of missions. According to Y. Congar, the community of believers is the subject of the *sensus fidelium*, since it continues to transmit and actualize the content of the faith, being every faithful an active subject in the dynamics of ecclesial life, freely participating with his or her religious opinion.[22] Therefore, the subject of the *sensus fidelium* is the Church as People of God: "the People of God, professing the faith, contributes to expose it, publish it, manifest it, then, in the moment in which they believe, the People of God teaches."[23] This implies that the *sensus fidelium* is present within the Christian community as an intuition, an opinion and an understanding of the faith.[24]

The subject of the *sensus fidelium* is an *universalis coetus fidelium*, that is, all the faithful form this subject not as a sum of individuals, but as an expression of the unity of all those baptized in the function of intelligence of the faith.[25]

b) The object of the *sensus fidelium* is the very content of the revelation, that is, what the Catholic Church has "believed in everywhere, always and for all (*quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est*)",[26] constituting the universality of the Christian faith. The revelation goes through the mediation of the faithful (bishops, theologians, missionaries, etc.), who, through their experience

20 Cf. ibid., pp. 158–161.

21 Cf. L.M. Fernandez de Troconiz: 'La teologia sobre el Sensus fidei de 1960 a 1970', in: *Scriptorium Victoriense* 31 (1984), p. 6; cf. L.M. Fernandez de Troconiz: 'La teologia sobre el *sensus fidei* de 1960 a 1970', in: *Scriptorium Victoriense* 32 (1985/1–2), 6.9; cf. de Troconiz: '*sensus fidei*', pp. 78–79.84; cf. Ormond Rush: 'Sensus fidei: faith making sense of Revelation', in: Theological Studies 62 (2/2001), pp. 240–242.

22 Cf. de Troconiz: '*sensus fidei* de 1960 a 1970', in: *Scriptorium Victoriense* 29 (1982), pp. 171–174; cf. Leonard Fic: *Il sensus fidei nel Pensiero di M.D. Kloster e nel Vaticano II,* Włocławek 1995*,* p. 138, p. 160; cf. Biondo: *Il sensus fidelium*, p. 35.

23 Fic: *Il sensus fidei,* p. 139.

24 Cf. Patrick Granfield: 'Il sensus fidelium nella scelta del vescovo', cit., 70; cf. L.M. Fernandez de Troconiz: '*sensus fidei* de 1960 a 1970', p. 9.

25 Cf. Vitali: 'Sensus fidelium e opinione pubblica nella Chiesa', in: *Gregorianum* 82/4 (2001), p. 704; cf. Vitali: *Sensus fidelium*, p. 173.

26 Bruno Forte: *La Chiesa della Trinità,* p. 177.

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and practice of faith, develop their historical experiences[27] that form the *sensus fidelium.*

Therefore, the object of the faith are concrete realities, the experience of people, that living sensibility of faith that J. Wicks understands as the common profession of faith, therefore being "the *sensus fidelium* an important criterion of the validity of an article of faith."[28] From the dynamicity of the faith the dynamicity of the *sensus fidelium* emerges, inspiring the whole ecclesial body in a process of interaction and complementariness of charismas and missions, contributing to the ongoing renovation of the Church.[29]

The *sensus fidelium* is the legitimate expression of the plurality of the experience of faith in the tension of the ecclesial unity.[30] The *sensus fidelium* acquires a central place between the criteria of discernment of the faith, having an effective incidence in the formation of the opinions of the ecclesial will, thus becoming one of the means of assessment of the validity of the orientations of the Churches.[31] Therefore, the *sensus fidelium* is a constitutive subject of the Church, ensuring that the believers express their religious opinions on the contents of the revelation. Therefore, a correct relationship between all the subjects of the revelation and of the ecclesial organization is established so that the *sensus fidelium* maintains and stimulates a symmetrical relationship in the ecclesial dynamics,[32] achieving the unity of the practice of the faith through the *consensus fidei.*

2.3 *Consensus fidei:* Opinion, ecclesiality and *conspiratio*

The act of faith implies being professed, celebrated and manifested in the community of faith, constituting itself in *consensus fidei* that strengthens the identity and the mission of the Church as people of God in the history of ecclesiality.[33]

27 Cf. Zoltán Alszeghy: 'Il senso della fede e lo sviluppo dogmatico', in: in: Vaticano II, bilancio e prospettive 1, pp. 149–150.
28 Jared Wicks: *Introduction to the theological method*, Milano1994, p. 128; cf. de Troconiz: '*Sensus fidei*', pp. 152–153.
29 Cf. David Pietropaoli: *Visible Ecclesial Communion,* Rome 1997, pp. 94–95; cf. Vitali: '*Sensus fidelium*', p. 420; cf. Angel Antón: *El misterio de la Iglesia* (II), pp. 1050–1055.
30 Cf. Leo Scheffzyk: 'Sensus fidelium: testemonio sustentado por la comunión', pp. 459–560.
31 Cf. Giuseppe Alberigo: *La Chiesa nella storia*, Brescia 1988, p. 32.
32 Cf. Vitali: *Sensus fidelium*, p. 388.
33 Cf. Hans Waldenfels: *Teologia fondamentale nel contesto del mondo contemporaneo*, Milano 1996, p. 397, pp. 446–447.

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a) The criterion of ecclesiality of the faith: *Consensus fidei*

The criterion to distinguish the ecclesiality of faith is the *consensus fidei* that emerges from the communion and participation in ecclesial procedures such as the relationship with the content of the faith through the mediation of the community of believers, as a space of credibility of faith and ecclesial credibility.[34] The experience of faith and the theological reflection made explicit in formulations of faith move the teaching activity of the Church and the consensus as to what is taught.[35] The *sensus fidelium* of the people of God constitutes and moves the *sensus Ecclesiae*, the tradition and the fidelity to the history of the faith.[36] The many expressions such as *sensus fidei*, *sensus fidelium*, *consensus fidelium*, *sensus Ecclesiae* are actually many criteria and moments of mediation of the sense that constitutes ecclesiality.[37] According to G. Biondo, "the *sensus fidelium*" may be "considered as the objective element of the faith, that is, that which is exteriorly realized, the collective consciousness of faith of the Christian people that is concretized and becomes historical in an ecclesial community."[38] Here, this sense is identified as *consensus fidelium*, so that the collective experience of the Church people of God is the expression of the *sensus Ecclesiae.*

According to J. H. Newman, the *sensus Ecclesiae* brings preachers and the faithful together in public acts that form ecclesiality through solidarity, liturgy, festivities, prayer and devotions of popular religiosity. These acts are the force of communion and communication of the religious opinions of the *sensus communis fidelium* advancing the ecclesial process.[39] For J.-M. Tillard, the *sensus fidelium* is one of the essential elements of the *sensus Ecllesiae*, one of the fibers sustaining the life of faith of the people of God.[40]

34 Cf. Walter Kasper: *Introduzione alla fede*, Brescia 2008, pp. 75–76.

35 Cf. Marie-Thérèse Nadeau: 'Le développement de l'expression *fides Ecclesiae*', in: *La Maison-Dieu* 174 (1988), p. 137.

36 Cf. Massimo Palombella: *Actuosa participatio,* Rome 2002, p. 169; cf. Yves Congar: *La Tradition et les traditions*, Paris 2010, p. 268.

37 Cf. Yves Congar: *Jalons pour une Théologie du laïcat*, Paris 1953, p. 398; cf. Yves Congar : La *Tradition et la vie de l'Église*, p. 31, pp. 62–64; cf. Biondo : *Il sensus fidelium*, p. 18.

38 Cf. Biondo: *Il sensus fidelium*, pp. 19–20.

39 Cf. John Henry Newman: *On consulting the faithful matters of doctrine,* London 1961, p. 65.

40 Jean-Marie Roger Tillard: 'Le *sensus fidelium* : réflexion théologique', in: *Foi populaire Foi savant,* [ed. by Jean-Marie R. Tillard et al.], Paris 1976, p. 16.

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b) Ecclesial *Conspiratio:* Confluence of opinions

The term *conspiratio* (*spiratio*/breathe + *con*/together = to breathe together)[41] means the act that constitutes a human group in their breathing together, which in the theological context is made explicit in the communion (inspiration) and communication (expiration) of the plurality of ecclesial opinions, traditions, ideas and practices. Therefore, the *conspiratio* as a dimension of the *consensus fidelium* enables the believers in their different articulations to express their opinions and religious missions in favor of conviviality, tolerance and the freedom between the churches and the society, triggering a fluent and confluent process of communication and changes on all the levels of reality.

An example of *conspiratio* as expression of the *consensus fidelium* was the Second Vatican Council, which has articulated the intra-ecclesial and extra-ecclesial relationships in many typologies. Theology, after the Second Vatican Council, highlighted the issue of the subject of faith: the faithful. If in the manualistic the identification of the revelation with the dogma highlighted the primordial function of the ecclesiastic magisterium, now the faithful are emphasized. And here the affirmations in the perspective of the *sensus fidelium*[42] are developed. Then, "the transcendent subject of knowledge of the Mystery, the Spirit of the Living God, operates in the *conspiratio* of the historical subjects, not mortifying, but exalting in originality and in specificity the pneumatological and Trinitarian Ecclesiology."[43]

That is why "the faithful are not, in the life of the Church, only receptive and passive receivers of the ecclesial doctrine, but participant subjects of the Church."[44] The inheritance of the Second Vatican Council enables, then, an open hermeneutics counting on the participation of the faithful in the life of the Church.

For J. H. Newman, the *consensus fidei* is oriented by the pursuit of truth, but we should be attentive to the threat of homogenization, since the suppression of novelty leads to monotony, to impoverishment and ends up causing tension.[45] The *consensus fidei* ensures the plurality of religious opinions, enabling debate and creativity about theoretical and practical questions within the Church, something that renders the ongoing *aggiornamento* of the institution feasible through the confluence of opinions and its mediation in the pursuit of truth.

41 Cf. Available at: http://www.lmcomboni.org/documentos/ConspiracionEclesialparalaRegeneraciondeAfricaPValente.pdf.

42 Cf. Vitali: *Sensus fidelium*, 86.

43 Bruno Forte: 'Premessa', cit., p. 15.

44 Johann Baptist Metz and Edward Schillebeeckx: 'A herança do Concílio', *Concilium Petropolis* 4/200 (1985), p. 3.

45 Cf. John Henry Newman: *La ricerca della verità*, Padova 1995, pp. 83–89; cf. D.W. Read: *Sensus fidei*, pp. 35–38.

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The *conspiratio* is a form of mediation that strengthens the pursuit of truth in a communitarian manner, specifically through the plurality of opinions and ideas, the debate and the dialog that allow a creative and innovative hermeneutics of the Gospel and ecclesial tradition.[46] The dialog between plural opinions is part of the very reality of human life. "The Ecclesiology of dialog and service is not the loss of identity of the Church, but the search for an identity of a higher level typical of the evangelical exigency of 'losing' one's own life in order to 'save it'" (cf. Mt 10, 39).[47]

Conclusion

In public opinion and *sensus fidelium*, the principles that constitute the public opinion – publicity, contradiction and utility – were evidenced, pointing out that the mediation for the truth is a constitutive criterion for both public opinion and religious opinion. Afterwards, we have presented the *sensus fidei*, the *sensus fidelium* and the *consensus fidelium* as theological concepts that express religious phenomena close to public opinion as the freedom of freely expressing religious opinions.

The worldly and ecclesial context presents us with new scenarios of experience of faith, since we are living in ever more plural societies articulated by social networks that allow the free expression of public opinion and religious opinion in the public sphere as a phenomenon specifically traversing the Catholic ecclesial institutions and also all the religions in general.

Initially a difference between opinions is perceived, since the believers go from one level to the other, expressing their opinions in social networks. However, there is a difference between public opinion and religious opinion, since the *sensus fidelium* is the expression of the identity of the faith. If, on the one hand, there is indifference between the opinions binding all the citizens in plural societies, expressing their opinions publicly, on the other hand, there is the difference that identifies the *consensus fidei* or the community of faith. Nevertheless, this difference between the spheres is increasingly slight, since social networks instantaneously traverse all the institutions, influencing decision-making in the instances of power, which implies that they are ever closer to public opinion and religious opinion through the *sensus fidelium.*

46 Cf. Karl Rahner: 'Piccolo frammento sullo scoprimento collettivo della verità', in: Idem: *Nuovo Saggi*, Roma 1969, pp. 154–155.

47 Bruno Forte: *La Chiesa icona della Trinità*, Brescia 2003, p. 43.

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Schulz, Michael studied philosophy and theology in Mainz, Rome and Munich. His doctoral thesis on Hegel's philosophy of religion and its reception in Protestant and Catholic theology was published under the title *Sein und Trinität* (1997). From 1994–2001, he was an associate researcher in Munich and from 2001–2004 professor of systematic theology in Lugano (CH). In 2003, he completed his Habilitation with a thesis on original sin. From 2004–2009, he was professor of dogmatics on the faculty of Catholic theology at the University of Bonn, from 2008–2009, he was dean of the faculty and, since 2010, he has been the director of the University of Bonn's Department of Philosophy and Theory of Religions as well as the director of the Interdisciplinary Latin America Center. Since 2019 he is associate professor of the Postgraduate Program at the Pontifícia

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