

# Pope Benedict XVI's early Contributions to Fundamental Theology – 1955-1961

Emery de Gaál\*

There is a magic to every beginning. This applies also to Pope Benedict XVI's beginnings as professor of theology. This article wishes to turn the reader's attention to select early (1955-61) – in part unpublished – contributions of the young professor of theology, Joseph Ratzinger, to the then nascent academic discipline called Fundamental Theology.

## 1. All great Theology is biographical – and a Hypothesis

As regards what is commonly called *Weltanschauung* something heretofore unprecedented and truly cataclysmic had occurred with the end of World War I in the year 1918. The common narrative that had formed the organizing principle of a private person and bonded a community into one of a shared fate and common destiny in Central Europe since roughly the Middle Ages had violently dissolved: the heretofore considered inseverable triad of God, Ruler (emperor/king/lord) and Home (country/one's native soil). Joseph Ratzinger had been born in the years between the Second (Wilhelmic) Reich (1871-1918) and the Third Reich (1933-45); in a period of constantly changing, weak central German governments struggling to reach an often elusive democratic consensus, of onerous reparations, hyperinflation and depression. The *Reichstag* (the German Diet) resembled «a house divided». Nobody knew who would fill the void the Great War (1914-18) had caused and many were left bereft of a personal compass to master life. In a sense, this historically unparalleled lack of a common meta-narrative bonding society over generations continues to characterize Europe to this day, but – in an ironic twist – is nowadays declared an

\* Prof. Dr. Emery de Gáál is Chairman and Professor of Dogmatic Theology at Mundelein Seminary, University of Saint Mary of the Lake, 1000 East Maple Avenue, Mundelein, IL 60060, United States. E-mail: edegeaal@usml.edu.

altogether rightful *Lebensgefühl* (awareness of life) – in fact, the *only* legitimate norm: postmodernity<sup>1</sup>.

Ratzinger's parents acutely sensed this unprecedented political, social and cultural uncertainty and invariably contrasted it with their idyllic Bavarian landscape and their joyful belief: Bavaria's world of singular harmony between thought, sentiment (*Gemüt*), nature and Catholic faith. Wisely, the father, Joseph Ratzinger, familiarized his family with Augustine's Christocentric reading of human history, composed after the sacking of Rome, the center of human civilization, by Alaric's Vandals in 410 AD: the *De Civitate Dei*. By suggesting an ominous parallel between 410 and 1918, he assisted his family in understanding the *Zeichen der Zeit* («signs of the times», Lk 12:54): a) of impending war and the ideological suppression of Christian faith at the hands of a wholly materialistic Nazi regime and b) growing in confidence in God. Also to this end they read Catholic spiritual literature and Romantic poets. In 1943 the two Ratzinger boys, Georg and Joseph, were thrust into another epic war as forcibly conscripted, *nota bene* unarmed, helpers/soldiers in the German *Wehrmacht*. They found answers in their Catholic faith to the troubling questions provoked by war, pointless death, unimaginable suffering and increasingly futile military measures. Arising from these wartime experiences and in remarkable consonance, both Ratzinger brothers would offer a seemingly rudderless world a salutary answer- the mystery of the Incarnation of God's Word: the one through the arts and the other as a stellar thinker. One would excel as musician and the other as theologian, penetrating Christian faith in a fresh way. Significantly, both reacted to the atrocities produced by ideologies by freely sacrificing their lives as priests. Their respective biographical experiences predestined them for a life-long program of recovery of the intellectual, cultural and religious pillars upon which human civilization needed to be (re-)built<sup>2</sup>.

Tellingly, already early on Georg was nicknamed by fellow seminarians the «*Orgel-Ratz*» (organ Ratzinger) and Joseph the «*Bücher-Ratz*» (book Ratzinger)<sup>3</sup>. Fundamental theology may have been especially appealing to Joseph Ratzinger, as it thematizes numerous central theological concepts bringing «fragments» into dialogue with «the whole of the faith». There the foundations of Catholic faith are spelled out.

<sup>1</sup> J. RATZINGER, *Milestones. Memoirs 1927-1977*, San Francisco 1998, 7-40. Cfr. E. DE GAÁL, *The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI. The Christocentric Shift*, New York 2010, 13-20.

<sup>2</sup> RATZINGER, *Milestones*, 13-20. A. LÄPPLER, *Benedikt XVI und seine Wurzeln. Was sein Leben und seinen Glaube prägte*, Augsburg 2006.

<sup>3</sup> M. SCHLÖGL, *Am Anfang eines großen Weges*, Regensburg 2014, 17.

## 2. Important Elements for a Promising Theologian

Joseph Ratzinger studied theology briefly with his brother on Freising's somewhat secluded and dreamy *Domberg* (Cathedral Mountain) in the Munich archdiocesan seminary, but soon moved to the baroque *Fürstenried* Palace and finally to the ducal *Georgianum* in Munich, where only the most promising of Bavarian seminarians were living – «amidst rubble a new beginning blossoms», as Ratzinger biographer, fellow priest and professor of theology Alfred Läpple later observed<sup>4</sup>. While studying the various disciplines of theology in Freising and subsequently at Munich University, Ratzinger was exposed to the Neo-Scholastic variant of Thomas Aquinas' thought. Initially he considered it too cerebral to answer the existential questions that war invariably forces upon people. More convincing for him was the personal or «illuminatist» approach of Augustine, Bonaventure, Blaise Pascal, John Henry Newman and Romano Guardini<sup>5</sup>. This first impression was reinforced by the personalist thought of contemporaries such as: Martin Buber (1878-1965), Ferdinand Ebner, Wilhelm Adam, and – *sic* a Thomist – Josef Pieper. In addition, Joseph Pascher (1893-1979), the professor of liturgy at Munich's *Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität* and rector of the adjacent *Georgianum*, instilled in the young student a lasting appreciation for the close nexus between liturgy, prayer, scripture, theology and life<sup>6</sup>.

Most importantly, already in 1947 Joseph Ratzinger found in Gottlieb Söhngen (1892-1971) a fundamental theologian attempting to give expression to faith in an unconventional way. From that time onward, Ratzinger remained especially interested in the area of fundamental theology. In distinction from apologetics, it was then a novel way of reflecting on Catholic faith<sup>7</sup>. Söhngen, coming from the cosmopolitan Rhineland, was capable of conversing with equal facility on a wide range of topics. He could discuss the Church Fathers and John Henry Newman, as well as Kant's epistemology and Anselm of Canterbury. In addition, he was highly knowledgeable about music. All these circumstances certainly contributed to the attraction that the discipline of fundamental theology exerted upon the seminarian Ratzinger. Under Söhngen's direction Ratzinger wrote both his prize-winning doctoral dissertation on

<sup>4</sup> RATZINGER, *Milestones*, 41-45. A. LÄPPL, *Dieser in den Trümmern erblühende Neuanfang*. Interview with Prof. Dr. Alfred Läpple by Gianni Valente and Pierluca Azzaro (January 2006), in 30 Giorni 24/1-2 (2006) 54-66. Accessed [www.30giorni.it/articoli\\_id\\_10082\\_19.htm](http://www.30giorni.it/articoli_id_10082_19.htm) (accessed: 2.23.2015).

<sup>5</sup> Such a reading of Ratzinger's basic theological approach is confirmed in J. RATZINGER, *Licht und Erleuchtung. Erwägungen zu Stellung und Entwicklung des Themas in der abendländischen Geistesgeschichte*, in Studium Generale 13 (1960) 368-378.

<sup>6</sup> RATZINGER, *Milestones*, 47-60. DE GAÁL, *The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, 33-45.

<sup>7</sup> J. RATZINGER, *Das Ganze im Fragment. Gottlieb Söhngen zum Gedächtnis*, in Christ in Gegenwart 23 (1971) 398f. Cfr. DE GAÁL, *The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, 33-36.

Augustine's ecclesiology<sup>8</sup> and his *Habilitationsschrift* (terminal paper) on Bonaventure's understanding of history<sup>9</sup>. Both represent original contributions to theology and prefigure important insights Vatican II would soon expound upon, such as «People of God» (LG 13; 32) and the ineluctable correlation between the Church and the Eucharist. Sensitized since 1949 by the writings of Henri de Lubac (1896-1991), he discovered the *communio*-structure of the Church: especially by way of this French Jesuit's writings *Corpus Mysticum* and *Catholicism*<sup>10</sup>.

Ratzinger uncovered in Bonaventure's theology that revelation is not only the communication of supra-temporal propositions: it is primarily ultimately divine self-revelation. Importantly, revelation in this light is perceived as historically mediated, an insight that *Dei Verbum* would incorporate with far-reaching consequences. Thus human beings discover themselves now as personally called by God in and to freedom. The meaning a people had collectively participated in a more or less unreflected way prior to World War I should now be accessed directly and personally by the individual believer. Since 1918, history excuses society and the state as preservers and transmitters of truth and meaning. In this new paradigm the Church is «to awaken in the souls of believers» – thus programmatically captured by Romano Guardini (1885-1968) – who greatly impressed Ratzinger shortly after World War I<sup>11</sup>. Now wholly without state or social support, the Church was considered by some called to provide a life-sustaining meta narrative, serving both the individual and society<sup>12</sup>.

Beginning in the summer of 1952, Ratzinger eclectically taught first sacraments and then also dogmatic and fundamental theology as docent at the archdiocesan Freising seminary. Many an hour he spent in the well-stocked seminary library copying Latin, Greek and French primary texts – including from the first volumes of the pioneering series *Sources Chrétiennes*<sup>13</sup>. This would serve as the indispensable scholarly

<sup>8</sup> J. RATZINGER, *Haus und Volk Gottes in Augustins Lehre von der Kirche*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. 1, Freiburg i. Br. 2011, 43-550.

<sup>9</sup> J. RATZINGER, *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*, Chicago 1971. For the «reunited» text cfr.: Id., *Offenbarungsverständnis und Geschichtstheologie Bonaventuras*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. 2., Freiburg i. Br. 2009, 53-659.

<sup>10</sup> RATZINGER, *Milestones*, 98. Reflective of this *communio*-ecclesiology: J. RATZINGER, *Grundgedanken eucharistischer Erneuerung im 20. Jahrhundert*, in *Klerusblatt* 40 (1960) 208-211. Id., *Kirche und Liturgie/vollzogene Gemeinde im Leben. Zwei Vorträge auf der Österreichischen Theologenwoche vom 14. bis 20. Juli, 1958 in Salzburg*, Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung (2008) 13-27. Cfr. also T. WEILER, *Volk Gottes – Leib Christi. Die Ekkliesiologie Joseph Ratzingers und ihr Einfluß auf das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil*, Mainz 1997. H. DE LUBAC, *Catholicisme. Les aspects sociaux du dogme*, Paris 1947. Id., *Corpus Mysticum: l'Eucharistie et l'Église au Moyen Âge. Étude historique*, Paris 1949.

<sup>11</sup> R. GUARDINI, *Vom Sinn der Kirche*, Mainz 1922.

<sup>12</sup> DE GAÁL, *The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, 66-72.

<sup>13</sup> *Sources Chrétiennes*, ed. by H. DE LUBAC and J. DANIELOU, Paris 1941ff.

basis for one destined to become one of the most influential theologians in Church history.

In 1956, he successfully defended his *Habilitation* on Bonaventure, amid a conflict between his director Söhngen and the second reader, Michael Schmaus (1897-1993) and not without the text being significantly abridged. It would take over half a century before the text would see publication in an unabridged version. Somehow, this conflict will henceforth accompany Ratzinger for the rest of his life, pejorating *apriori* the reception of his thinking, arguably perhaps even impacting his pontificate (2005-13)<sup>14</sup>.

At Freising seminary, Ratzinger acquired the reputation of being a gifted theologian with particular competence in Augustinian and Franciscan theology. When the theology department of the *Rheinische-Wilhelms-Universität* in Bonn announced an opening for the chair in fundamental theology, two candidates were invited to deliver guest (i.e. trial) lectures: Professor Heinrich Dolch from Paderborn and Ratzinger<sup>15</sup>. Already the previous occupant, Albert Lang (1890-1973), had been known for discarding 19<sup>th</sup> century apologetics in favor of the then still novel discipline of fundamental theology<sup>16</sup>. In order to appreciate the invitation extended to Ratzinger, one must know of Lang's stature at that time as the leading fundamental theologian in the German speaking countries. On June 20, 1958, at a Friday evening, Ratzinger delivered a paper titled *Der Weg der religiösen Erkenntnis nach dem Heiligen Augustinus* (The Way of religious Insight according to St. Augustine). Immediately following the presentation the dean and renowned historian and patristic scholar Theodor Klauser (1894-1984) is reported to have exclaimed enthusiastically: «he will be our new professor of fundamental theology»<sup>17</sup>. Klauser was then editing the celebrated *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*<sup>18</sup>. In all probability, Söhngen had recommended Ratzinger to the department where he had once served as *Privatdozent* for seven years<sup>19</sup>.

At the same time, i.e. in 1958, Schmaus had attempted to sidetrack Ratzinger's

<sup>14</sup> RATZINGER, *Milestones*, 103-114.

<sup>15</sup> Ironically, Dolch will immediately succeed Ratzinger at this university. The Nordrhein-Westfalen's (a German province) ministry of education had placed Ratzinger before Heinrich Moritz Dolch (from the *Erzbischöfliche Akademie Paderborn*) and Hermann Lais (from the theologate in Dillingen in Bavaria) as the preferred candidate on the list for the chair of fundamental theology at Bonn. SCHLÖGL, *Am Anfang eines großen Weges*, 19f.

<sup>16</sup> A. LANG, *Fundamentaltheologie*, München 1954. Amplified: ID., *Fundamentaltheologie 1, Die Sendung Christi*, München 1957. ID., *Fundamentaltheologie 2, Der Auftrag der Kirche*, München 1958.

<sup>17</sup> SCHLÖGL, *Am Anfang eines großen Weges*, 19.

<sup>18</sup> T. KLAUSER – G. SCHÖLLGEN – F. J. DÖLGER (eds.), *Reallexikon für Christentum und Antike*, mult. vols., Stuttgart 1950-.

<sup>19</sup> RATZINGER, *Milestones*, 113.

career by convincing the archbishop of Munich, Cardinal Joseph Wendel, to send the Freising professor Ratzinger to an insignificant college of education located in Munich-Pasing<sup>20</sup>. Showing a letter from the Bonn theology department, Ratzinger was able to persuade Wendel. In these trying times, as Ratzinger was torn between obedience to his ordinary and the call to teach demanding theology at a respected institution of higher learning, the famous Bonn church historian Hubert Jedin (1900-80) encouraged the young priest not to give in. Together with Ratzinger, Jedin would later serve as *peritus* for Cardinal Josef Frings during the II. Vatican Council<sup>21</sup>.

On April 15, 1959, the first day of the summer semester, Ratzinger began lecturing in Bonn on philosophy of religion and theological epistemology; first in lecture hall IX and soon in the larger lecture halls X and XI. The popularity of his courses continued throughout his Bonn years. Some students had to make do by sitting on window sills. In the *album professorum* he noted: «With April 1, 1959, ... I have returned to my field of competence – fundamental theology, henceforth my life's task with God's help»<sup>22</sup>. This move also brought geographic distance from the Schmaus school, so dominant in Munich and gaining then in influence throughout the German-speaking countries. Gradually it was to be complemented and finally superseded by the Rahnerian approach<sup>23</sup>.

### 3. The Inaugural Lecture

At 12 PM *cum tempore*, on June 24, 1959 Ratzinger delivered in lecture hall VIII, located in the main building of Bonn University, his inaugural lecture: «The God of Faith and the God of the Philosophers. A Contribution to the Problem of a *theologia naturalis*»<sup>24</sup>. In retrospective, Pope Benedict XVI would declare that this much attended lecture contained «the main theme of my thoughts»<sup>25</sup>. In this concisely argued *tour d'horizon*, he investigated the relationship between the God of Christian revela-

<sup>20</sup> LÄPPLER, *Dieser in den Trümmern erblühende Neuanfang*, 66.

<sup>21</sup> SCHLÖGL, *Am Anfang eines großen Weges*, 20.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 25. «Mit der zum 1. April erfolgten Berufung bin ich wieder in mein engeres Fachgebiet – die Fundamentaltheologie – zurückgekehrt, dem meine künftige Lebensarbeit mit Gottes Hilfe gelten soll».

<sup>23</sup> Cfr. RATZINGER, *Milestones*, 115-119.

<sup>24</sup> The original title reads: J. RATZINGER /BENEDIKT XVI, *Der Gott des Glaubens und der Gott der Philosophen. Ein Beitrag zum Problem der theologia naturalis*, ed. by H. SONNEMANN, Leutesdorf, 2. ampl. ed. 2005.

<sup>25</sup> «[D]er Leitfaden meines Denkens», in RATZINGER, *Der Gott des Glaubens*, 7.

tion and the range of human cognition. Which are the natural bases for religion? In what ways is God different from what philosophers assume to be God? How can God call upon human beings to convert and become disciples of Christ? As Benedict XVI succinctly phrased later: «Which kind of rationality is appropriate for Christian faith?»<sup>26</sup>. Intimately connected with these questions is the relationship between ancient Greek philosophy and biblical faith. Rhetorically the later pope asks whether Greek rationality belongs to «the essence of Christianity» or is this alliance «a disastrous misunderstanding»<sup>27</sup>?

These and similar questions will resurface in his classic *Introduction to Christianity* in 1968 and in his lecture «Christianity – the true Religion» delivered 1999 at the Sorbonne in Paris. Scientific arguments on their own and philosophical reasoning have definitive limits. Christian faith defends the priority of reason and of things reasonable, without believing in an actual proof of Christian faith. But Ratzinger asks whether human reason can remain reasonable and not arbitrary without recourse to the Logos<sup>28</sup>.

In the brief introduction to his lecture Ratzinger presents the 1654 *Mémorial* of Blaise Pascal (1623-62): «Fire. ‘God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob’ not of the philosophers and scholars». Perhaps unlike his early contemporary René Descartes (1596-1650), the mathematician-logician Pascal had encountered the living God of Christian faith – «*dem Du Gottes*» (the Thou of God). Thereby Pascal discovers something philosophy is unable to reach on its own: «the irresolvable intertwinedness of greatness and wretchedness in the immediate encounter with God, who is the living response to the open question of human existence»<sup>29</sup>. Pascal concludes: this is no one else than Jesus Christ, the merciful God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Ratzinger reminds his audience – listening with baited attention – of the unbridgeable difference between, but also the intrinsic complementarity, of the «*esprit de géometrie*» and the «*esprit de finesse*», for the latter penetrates far deeper into the essence of human existence than the grandest mathematical formula. In this context he notes that only Immanuel Kant’s (1724-1804) considerably later dismantling of speculative metaphysics and Friedrich Schleiermacher’s (1768-1834) transferring religion into «the extra-rational and extra-metaphysical realm of feeling» helped bring Pascal’s much earlier realization to the fore as «a radical aggravation of the problem»<sup>30</sup>. In

<sup>26</sup> RATZINGER, *Der Gott des Glaubens*, 8. Cfr. DE GAÁL, *The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, 73-77. For a brief summary of this lecture cfr. H. VERWEYEN, *Joseph Ratzinger – Benedikt XVI. Die Entwicklung seines Denkens*, Darmstadt 2007, 28-30.

<sup>27</sup> RATZINGER, *Der Gott des Glaubens*, 8.

<sup>28</sup> J. RATZINGER, *Truth and Tolerance. Christian Belief and World Religions*, San Francisco 2004, 138-209.

<sup>29</sup> RATZINGER, *Der Gott des Glaubens*, 12.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 12f.

directly, Kant and Schleiermacher demonstrate that theoretical reason cannot access a personal God. But now a singular, infelicitous *caesura* occurs with long-term ramifications: reason vacates the area of religion. Ergo, dogmas are seemingly no longer tenable as religion is relegated to the realm of subjective experience, while philosophy is alone in command of that of objective theory. Fatefully, this now positions faith into a heretofore uncountenanced opposition to knowledge.

Apart from Pascal's fragmentary *Pensées*, in this brief but clear outline of the issue at hand Ratzinger utilizes primarily Romano Guardini's *Christliches Bewußtsein*, his own *Doktorvater Söhngen*'s essay «*Die Neubegründung der Metaphysik und die Gotteserkenntnis*» (Reconstituting Metaphysics and Insight into God) and two texts from then equally young Protestant theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg (1928-2014)<sup>31</sup>.

Having stated the problem, he presents two different approaches: that of Thomas Aquinas and of the Swiss Protestant dialectical theologian Emil Brunner (1889-1966), a stalwart defender of the *theologia naturalis*, who had likewise been influenced by the Jewish thinker Buber.

Ratzinger sees Thomas' view as bringing the God of religion and that of philosophy precariously close to coinciding, where as he himself maintains the two are distinct. While there does exist an insoluble relationship between the two, he holds that the God of religion transcends philosophy. Ratzinger points out that to Thomas' mind whatever a non-Judeo-Christian religion holds concerning God and going beyond what philosophy can ascertain must be «*Abfall und Verirrung*» (decline and aberration)<sup>32</sup>. Outside Christianity, philosophy describes the highest point the human mind can reach concerning matters divine<sup>33</sup>. Ratzinger underscores and appropriates for his line of argument the Thomist dictum *gratia non destruit, sed elevat et perficit naturam* to crystallize his own position. As is well known, Thomas incorporates the Aristotelian God. Yet, Christian faith grasps this God infinitely deeper and as an entity constituted as person(s). Ratzinger concludes his treatment of Thomas by observing that the Christian faith is related to (natural) philosophical insight into God as man's eschatological vision of God is to his (supernatural) faith. In sum, they constitute but three stages on a single path<sup>34</sup>. For his presentation of Thomas he relies on *Summa Theologiae* q. 1 a 1 and q. 2 a 2 ad 1. In addition, he briefly references the

<sup>31</sup> R. GUARDINI, *Christliches Bewußtsein. Versuche über Pascal*, München 1950, 2nd. ed. English: *Pascal for our Time*, New York 1966. G. SÖHNGEN, *Die Neubegründung der Metaphysik und die Gotteserkenntnis*, in A. DYROFF (ed.), *Probleme der Gotteserkenntnis*, (Alberts-Magnus-Akademie II, 3) Münster 1928, 1-55. W. PANNENBERG, *Gott V*, in *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, II, Tübingen 1962<sup>3</sup>, 1729f. ID., *Die Aufnahme des philosophischen Gottesbegriffs als dogmatisches Problem der frühchristlichen Theologie*, in *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 70 (1959) 1-45.

<sup>32</sup> RATZINGER, *Der Gott des Glaubens*, 15.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

philosopher and sociologist Max Scheler (1874-1928) and Catholic theologian Heinrich Fries (1911-98), who will later write one of the seminal textbooks in the area of fundamental theology<sup>35</sup>.

In order to bring the *problématique* at hand into better focus, Ratzinger then discusses Brunner's position as an antithesis to this Thomist harmony of human cognition and the self-revealing God. The Swiss theologian detects in the Old Testament «a double development». While God receives increasingly more names, God also becomes more abstract. These opposing movements notwithstanding, the awareness of God having a name becomes firmly established among Israelites. This culminates in John 17:6: «I have manifested your name to the men whom you gave me ...» (cf. John 17:26; 12:28 and Mt 6:9). Revelation conveys the certainty that God can be addressed, while not revealing divine aseity. God alone can establish humankind's close «*Mitexistenz*» (co-existence) with Him<sup>36</sup>. No human effort, however ingenious can supplant divine initiative in this regard. While admittedly yielding profound metaphysical knowledge, the God of philosophers cannot establish what the searching and inquiring human spirit ultimately intends: community with God. Admittedly, to the philosopher's mind the term «God's name» must remain unsettling and objectionable. Yet, human cognition cannot reach more than what it is capable of thinking on its own. Therefore it can never imagine a personal and self-communicating God who nevertheless remains utterly transcendent<sup>37</sup>. The God revealing himself, becomes in the very process the one who veils himself yet more – a *paradoxon* a philosopher must find objectionable. To Ratzinger, Brunner infelicitously develops an irreconcilable contradiction between the God of the philosophers and the God of faith.

Ratzinger notes that this seemingly irreconcilable contradiction is precisely captured by the Old Testament in the Hebrew words of God addressing Moses in the burning fire bush: «aehjae hašaer aehjae» (commonly in English transcribed as *Ehye hasher ehyeh*) – «I am who I am» and rendered in the Septuagint into the Greek words of «Ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ Ὦν» (I am the being one) – thereby transforming the divinely sovereign «I am» into the philosophical term «the Being» (Ex 3:14). A surprising agreement and, dare one say, a synthesis between biblical faith and Greek philosophy, between divine existence and essence occurs, the consequences of which will be manifested in Patristic and Scholastic thought. According to the LXX translators (whose translation is considered inspired by Christianity), what human metaphysical reflection reaches and what Scripture reveals about God coincide. At this point

<sup>35</sup> M. SCHELER, *Vom Ewigen im Menschen*, Leipzig 1921, 323ff. H. FRIES, *Die katholische Religionsphilosophie der Gegenwart*, Heidelberg 1949, 61f.

<sup>36</sup> RATZINGER, *Der Gott des Glaubens*, 18.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

Ratzinger asks whether the possibility of a conflation of the content of both had heretofore been sufficiently countenanced<sup>38</sup>.

However, and in notable contradistinction to the Alexandrian translators, Brunner detects an irresolvable material disjunction between the Hebrew Scripture and Greek philosophy and describes what the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament achieved as amounting to «a devastating misunderstanding», thereby condemning also the «hyphen» Augustine accomplished between neo-Platonic ontology and biblical faith<sup>39</sup>. Brunner detects a chiasm between the essentially dialogical God of Scripture and the monological or static God of Greek philosophy. Therefore to Brunner this translation is nothing short of *the* central distortion of the biblical message. The result is that the Christian authors of the first millennium and of the Middle Ages did not appreciate the radical opposition of Judeo-Christian revelation to human exploits in the area of metaphysics.

Indeed, in Brunner's observations Ratzinger detects a question tangating the very essence of Christianity. If there is no positive connection between (monological) philosophy and (dialogical) revelation, then the *analogia entis* must be considered illegitimate. Closely allied with this is the decisive understanding regarding the nature of Christianity, so much contested between Catholic and Protestant (*evangelische*) theology since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In this issue, Ratzinger discovers a crucial question Catholic fundamental theology must confront<sup>40</sup>.

As in the introductory section of his address, Ratzinger here again makes use of the *Doctor Angelicus*, along with Söhngen, Pannenberg and Scheler. In addition, he extensively references not only Brunner, but also the then contemporary theologians Erich Przywara, SJ (1889-1972) and Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-88), thereby engaging the most current contributions to the issue at hand<sup>41</sup>.

In the third and last section, Ratzinger attempts a resolution. He alerts his audience that one must consider the intellectual and religious ambience which gave rise to the Greek philosophical *Gottesbegriff* (notion of God). The Stoa had differentiated between *theologia mythica – civilis – naturalis*<sup>42</sup>. This Stoic tripartite approximation

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>41</sup> E. BRUNNER, *Die christliche Lehre von Gott (Dogmatik I)*, Zürich 1953<sup>3</sup>, 121-140. Id., *Wahrheit als Begegnung. Sechs Vorlesungen über das christliche Wahrheitsverständnis*, Berlin 1938. He also made use of Ferdinand Ebner. Cfr. H. JONE (ed.), *Für Ferdinand Ebner*, Regensburg 1935, 12-15. Concerning the then much discussed area of the *analogia entis* he consulted G. SÖHNGEN, *Die Einheit der Theologie*, München 1952, 235-264. H. U. VON BALTHASAR, *Karl Barth*, Köln 1951. E. PRYZWARA, entry *Analogia entis und Analogia fidei*, in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vol. I, Freiburg i. Br. 1959<sup>2</sup>, 470-476.

<sup>42</sup> Θεολογία μυθική – πολιτική – φυσική. RATZINGER, *Der Gott des Glaubens*, 24. He cites J. BILZ entry

of God is reflected in M. Terentius Varro's (116-27 BC) now only partially extant *Antiquitates rerum humanarum et divinarum*. The distinction between *theologia civilis* and *mythica* serves «probably apologetic and reforming» purposes, Ratzinger surmises<sup>43</sup>. While *theologia mythica* belongs to the realm of the poets and *theologia civilis* to that of the average people, the *theologia naturalis* is reserved for the philosophers and *physici*. It is the latter *theologia* which attempts to approximate cognitively the problem of divine reality<sup>44</sup>.

He summarizes this section by quoting from his doctoral dissertation: «civil theology ultimately has no God, but merely 'religion', 'natural theology' has no religion, but merely a deity»<sup>45</sup>. Far from mere pointless speculation, to him philosophy «uncovers the truth of the real and thereby the ontic truth of the divine»<sup>46</sup>. In Ratzinger's judgment there exists a conceptual proximity between monotheism – as subscribed to also by the philosophers' understanding of God – and the «*Menschgott*» (man-God) of «Abraham, Isaac and Jacob»<sup>47</sup>. Ratzinger deduces that it is legitimate for Augustine to perceive the Christian God as the «hyphenated» God, posited between Neo-Platonic ontology and Scripture. The abstract God, perceived in philosophical terms, becomes in Jesus Christ the God human beings can address.

This entails far-reaching consequences. Over and against Brunner's position, Ratzinger argues that the synthesis of biblical faith with the Hellenic «*Geist*» (mind) which the Church Fathers achieved – but *nota bene* the Old Testament had anticipated – is legitimate and even «necessary», thereby presupposing the *analogia entis*, which would not be taught explicitly until the Middle Ages. The analogy of being is «a necessary dimension of the Christian reality»<sup>48</sup>. The absolute God of monotheism and the biblical God turning to humankind coincide. Ratzinger sees this development as being justified early on when Deutero-Isaiah depicts the God of Israel as

*Theologie*, in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vol. X, Freiburg i. Br. 1959, 65f. P. BATIFFOL, *Theologie, Theologi*, in *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovaniensis* 5 (1928) 205-220. J. STIGLMAYR, *Mannigfache Bedeutung von 'Theologie' und 'Theologen'*, in *Theologie und Glaube* 11 (1919) 296-309.

<sup>43</sup> For these insights he refers to his doctoral dissertation Joseph RATZINGER, *Volk und Haus Gottes in Augustins Lebre von der Kirche*, München 1954, 265-276. Again he references W. PANNENBERG, *Die Aufnahme des philosophischen Gottesbegriffs als dogmatisches Problem der frühchristlichen Theologie*.

<sup>44</sup> He refers to AUGUSTINE, *De Civitate Dei* VI, 5 cited according to *Sancti Augustini de Civitate Dei, Libri I-X, Ad fidem quartae editionis teubnerianae quam a. MCMXVXVIII-MMXXXIX*, curaverunt B. DOM-BART et A. KALB, in *Corpus Christianorum* 47, Turnhout 1955, 171; cfr. IV, 32, 126.

<sup>45</sup> RATZINGER, *Volk und Haus Gottes*, 270.

<sup>46</sup> RATZINGER, *Der Gott des Glaubens*, 26.

<sup>47</sup> The text refers to E. ZELLER, *Philosophie der Griechen*, vol. III, 2, Leipzig 1903<sup>4</sup>. H. VON GLASENAPP, *Die Nichtchristlichen Religionen*, Fischer-Lexikon, vol. 1, Frankfurt am Main 1957, 76ff and 156ff.

<sup>48</sup> RATZINGER, *Der Gott des Glaubens*, 30.

being no ethnic or immanent or fertility deity, but instead as «the absolute ground of the world»<sup>49</sup>. He substantiates this view by quoting Isa 40:12-18:

«Who has measured the waters ... weighed the mountains? ... Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket ... All the nations are as nothing before him ... To whom then will you liken God or what likeness compare with him?»<sup>50</sup>.

Poetically circumscribed by the prophet, the singular God of Israel utterly transcends all empires and human imagination. Paradoxically, in this Israelite perspective the absolutely ineffable God is presented as the God simultaneously accessible to human beings, while retaining the character of utter ineffability. He parallels this with passages from Ezra and Daniel. The *Deus otiosus* (God resting in his aseity) becomes close and yet retains the qualities of radical otherliness, ruling over all peoples. Herein Ratzinger detects already in late 6<sup>th</sup> century BC Israel the God of the philosophers and the one of biblical faith becoming close to being synonymous.

At the same time he cautions against facilely conflating philosophical and biblical terms, such as divine eternity, omnipotence, unity, truth, goodness and sanctity. Yet there is a remarkable approximation between *theologia naturalis* and the revealed God of Scripture already at a time when philosophical terms only gradually begin to develop in ancient Greece. Concurrently, Israel apprehends God by virtue of his ontological density as the one God liberated from anthropomorphisms.<sup>51</sup> Significantly, Ratzinger avers, the appropriation of an abstract or philosophical understanding of God by ancient, «less expansive» Israel logically leads to the now essentially missionary and evangelizing form of biblical faith in Christianity. This is the case precisely because on account of the fact that the God of biblical revelation can be «translated» into «the common language of human reason»<sup>52</sup>. He summarizes: «The true claim of Christian faith in its greatness and earnestness can ever again be rendered visible only through the hyphen towards that which human beings have already earlier grasped [philosophically] in some form as the absolute»<sup>53</sup>, Ratzinger asserts that if Christianity were to surrender the metaphysical dimensions of the Judeo-Christian understanding of God, then invariably it would simultaneously give up its claim to universality.

He concludes his lecture by discussing the relational unity (*Beziehungseinheit*) of philosophy and faith. He acknowledges there is validity in «the partial system of

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* For this section he consulted A. DEISSLER's article *Gott* in J. B. BAUER (ed.), *Bibeltheologisches Wörterbuch*, Graz 1959, 352-368. W. EICHRODT, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, vol. I, Leipzig 1913.

<sup>51</sup> RATZINGER, *Der Gott des Glaubens*, 31.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 31f.

identity»<sup>54</sup> as developed by Thomas. In a footnote he concedes, however, referencing his predecessor on the Bonn chair, Albert Lang, that Max Scheler's reservations are justified since there can be only a unity of relation between faith and philosophy, as there can never be an identity of *religio naturalis* and *theologia naturalis*. Against Scheler, he detects this is in fact also rather close to Thomas' position<sup>55</sup>. Likewise there must be legitimacy to «the hyphen» between the God of faith and the God of the philosophers. This notwithstanding, he recognizes in Brunner's position a genuine concern one must take seriously<sup>56</sup>. He argues that precisely by possessing its own methods and approaches, philosophy can be that discipline to which faith intends to relate and by which it makes itself understood. By shedding all vestiges of polytheism, he sees philosophy preparing human kind for becoming the properly prepared addressee of divine revelation<sup>57</sup>. The great achievement of Greek natural theology was being veracious enough not to distill from human thought a god for mythical or religious piety.

Ratzinger admits remaining somewhat critical of this approximation of biblical faith and metaphysics by Christian apologetics and Church Fathers. Nevertheless, he considers this process as necessary and beneficial for both sides. The nature of the question pleads for maintaining a tension between the two. In relatedness to the other, both disciplines gain their respective contours, acquire greater depth and achieve their «requisite critical purification and transformation» («*kritische[n] Läuterung und Verwandlung*»)<sup>58</sup>. If God is indeed personal, then from this insight philosophical language must be revisited and rethought afresh – a task not performed by first millennium Christianity. He suggests this is a question Catholic and Protestant theologians could now jointly address.

In closing, he reminds his audience of the actual mission of «theo-logy» which Augustine and Richard St. Victor found in Psalm 104:4: «*Quaerite faciem eius semper* – seek constantly His face». He remarks «The task of theology remains in this aeon necessarily incomplete. It is precisely the ever fresh seeking for God's countenance

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>55</sup> Cfr. RATZINGER, *Der Gott des Glaubens*, endnote 17, 64. Cfr. Ratzinger's references: A. LANG, *Wesen und Wahrheit der Religion*, München 1957, 88f.

<sup>56</sup> RATZINGER, *Der Gott des Glaubens*, 33.

<sup>57</sup> On this point he refers readers to his article *Ewigkeit II*, in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vol. III, Freiburg i. Br. 1959<sup>2</sup>, 1268ff. There he had already developed a dialectical relationship between faith and reason.

<sup>58</sup> Ratzinger does not specify what he might mean by *Verwandlung* but refers in a footnote the reader to Pannenberg's already cited *Aufnahme*. He also references his entry *Ewigkeit*, in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vol. 3, Freiburg i. Br. 1959<sup>2</sup>, 1268ff. RATZINGER, *Der Gott des Glaubens*, 64, endnote 18. There transformation is defined as *Gemeinschaft mit dem Gott-Menschen Christus Jesus*. This is the *aeum* between *aeternum* and temporality.

‘until he comes’ and becomes Himself the answer to all questions»<sup>59</sup>. Indicatively for his own theological proclivities, he quotes from Hans Urs von Balthasar’s translation of Augustine’s *Enarrationes in Psalms 104*<sup>60</sup>.

## 4. Observations

In this early stage of his academic life, Ratzinger evidences himself as what later will be known as a *Communio*-theologian (i.e. favorable to the positions of the international review “*Communio*” which underlines the importance of the community in the Church). In addition, he subscribes to dialogical personalism; not unlike Brunner’s position. Yet, unlike the transcendental Thomist Karl Rahner, Ratzinger sees no need to develop independently a natural theology to which then a theology of revelation will give account to<sup>61</sup>.

He is careful to note an insurmountable material difference between what philosophy can yield as regards what/who God might be and what God actually reveals of Himself. He registers a material difference, but equally an ontological coincidence between a philosophical understanding of God and what faith knows God to be. The historical horizon of the philosophical quest for God is ultimately open to the same God as the one proclaimed by Judeo-Christian revelation. The truth of humankind’s existential and intellectual search is welcomed and transformed by the true God in his self-communication. This notwithstanding, the God of revelation is radically different from what finite cognition can reach with the resources at its disposal; for it is oftentimes self-constrained by a rigid, closed systematization of the question. However, the merit of such thinking «on the border of reason» is to highlight that the human being is by his nature «a surplus» that encounters its fulfillment in revelation - which it cannot reach on its own. Philosophical truth becomes personal, divine-human truth in Jesus Christ as the *Logos*. Truth and charity become synonymous in Christ. Rather apodictically he states that negating the possibility of a correlation between philosophy and revelation amounts to abolishing humankind – as almost five decades later both then Cardinal Ratzinger and Jürgen Habermas will agree in 2004<sup>62</sup>. The inau-

<sup>59</sup> RATZINGER, *Der Gott des Glaubens*, 35.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, endnote 20, on 65. There reference is made to AUGUSTINUS, *Das Antlitz der Kirche*, ed. by H. U. VON BALTHASAR, Einsiedeln 1942, 352.

<sup>61</sup> RATZINGER, *Milestones*, 128f. Cfr. K. RAHNER, *Hörer des Wortes, Zur Grundlegung einer Religionsphilosophie*, München 1942. English: *Hearer of the Word, laying a foundation for a philosophy of religion*, New York 1994.

<sup>62</sup> J. HABERMAS – J. RATZINGER, *Dialectics of Secularization: reason and religion*, San Francisco 2006.

gural lecture of 1959 demonstrates the remarkable consistency of positions, insights and lines of argumentation of the theologian Ratzinger over the decades. Ratzinger reminds one of the abiding relevance of Thomas Aquinas also on this point. *Ab initio* he thereby argues against facile simplifications, as manifested in fideism and rationalism. Both faith and reason stand to gain from relating to one another time and time again. Were faith to retreat from rationality into the realm of «mere piety», it would betray the incarnation of the eternal Logos, Jesus Christ, as Ratzinger later demonstrates in his classic *Introduction to Christianity*<sup>63</sup>. In the same vein one may not deny philosophy metaphysical competence, as this would deprive «faith of air to breathe». Faith and reason are not autonomous entities. As he later succinctly phrases the situation: without faith reason fails to become integral; however, faith without reason fails to become humane<sup>64</sup>.

Ratzinger's understanding of Christian revelation as divine self-communication will significantly inform the Second Vatican Council's dogmatic constitution on divine revelation *Dei Verbum*.

St. John Paul II, in all probability indebted to Ratzinger, captured succinctly this mutually indebted relationship of faith and reason in the *prooemium* to his encyclical *Fides et Ratio*:

«Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth and God has placed in the heart a desire to know the truth – in a word, to know himself – so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves (cf. Ex 33:18; Ps 27:8-9; 63:2-3; Jn 14:8; 1 Jn 3:2)»<sup>65</sup>.

A few years later, in his now famous dialogue with Habermas, he will state: there is a requisite correlationality between reason and faith. They are called to a reciprocal purification and sanation. Both sides are in need of recognizing this<sup>66</sup>. Then the words of Our Lord are freeing human rationality from being «amputated reason» and from the fallacies attendant to all ideologies: «I am the way, the truth and the life» (John 14:6). This is what Ratzinger means when defining Christianity as the synthesis of faith and reason.

<sup>63</sup> J. RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, San Francisco 2004, 184-190.

<sup>64</sup> «Die Vernunft wird ohne den Glauben nicht heil, aber der Glaube wird ohne die Vernunft nicht menschlich». J. RATZINGER, *Glaube – Wahrheit – Vernunft Das Christentum und die Weltreligionen*, Freiburg i. Br. 2003, 110.

<sup>65</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Encyclical Letter Fides et Ratio*, Vatican City 1998, opening statement, prior t. 1.

<sup>66</sup> «Ich würde von einer notwendigen Korrelationalität von Vernunft und Glaube, Vernunft und Religion sprechen, die zu gegenseitiger Reinigung und Heilung berufen sind und die sich gegenseitig brauchen und das gegenseitig anerkennen müssen», in Zur Debatte 34/1 (2004) Stellungnahme 5-7.

## 5. A Course on Fundamental Theology

Professor Ratzinger lectured from notes and keywords he had jotted down in an exercise book commonly used in German schools. Usually, he never prepared university lectures word by word. Only some scripts authored by individual students and distributed among students in preparation for an examination are now extant – but remain unpublished<sup>67</sup>. While obviously there must be assumed a difference between what Ratzinger actually lectured and how students received his elaborations, one encounters a similar situation already with some of Aristotle's most crucial writings. It was on the basis of such a typed and mimeographed script that students would prepare for the oral examination with Father Ratzinger – usually lasting twenty minutes. The student typing a script would earn a bit on the side by selling its copies to his fellow students.

Though by avocation a fundamental theologian, he read also in the area of dogmatics. In fact, of the 44 lectures, seminars and colloquia he held between the winter semester of 1954/55 and the winter semester of 1962/63 in Freising and Bonn, only 19 can be considered as covering aspects of fundamental theology in the strict sense of that discipline<sup>68</sup>. The Renaissance versatile nature of his courses need be empha-

<sup>67</sup> SCHLÖGL, *Am Anfang eines großen Weges*, 126.

<sup>68</sup> He taught the following courses at Freising Seminary:

During Winter Semester 1954/55: Lecture Course, *Die Lehre vom dreieinigen Gott*, Colloquium zur Vorlesung. Summer Semester 1955: Lecture, *Die Lehre von der Schöpfung*; Seminar, *Grundprobleme der Confessiones Augustins*. WS 1955/56: Lecture, *Dogmatik: Die Lehre von unserem Heil in Jesus Christus*; Lecture, *Fundamentaltheologie I: Grundlinien der Religionsphänomenologie und Religionsphilosophie*; Seminar, *Moderne christologische und mariologische Literatur*. SS 1956: Lecture, *Dogmatik: Gnadenlehre*; Lecture, *Fundamentaltheologie II: Religion und Offenbarung*; Seminar, *Ausgewählte Texte zur Gnadenlehre des Thomas von Aquin*. WS 1956/57: Lecture, *Dogmatik: Sakramentenlehre, I. Teil*; Lecture, *Fundamentaltheologie III: Ekklesiologie*; Seminar, *Fundamentaltheologie: Übungen zum Kirchenbegriff unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Petrusproblems*. SS 1957: Lecture, *Dogmatik: Sakramentenlehre, 2. Teil/ Eschatologie*; Lecture, *Mariologie*; Seminar, *Die theologischen Probleme der heutigen Mariologie*. WS 1957/58: Lecture, *Dogmatik: Die Lehre vom dreieinigen Gott*; Lecture, *Die Lehre von den Letzten Dingen*; Seminar, *Fundamentaltheologisches Kolloquium zur Frage des Traditionsbegriffs*. SS 1958: Lecture, *Dogmatik: Der Schöpfergott und Sein Werk*; Lecture, *Fundamentaltheologie IV: Grundprobleme der theologischen Erkenntnislehre*; Seminar, *Die moderne Diskussion über das Verhältnis von Natur und Übernatürlichem*. WS 1958/59: Lecture, *Dogmatik: Die Lehre vom Heil des Menschen in Christus Jesus*; Lecture, *Fundamentaltheologie I: Wesen und Wahrheit der Religionen*; Seminar, *Kritische Lektüre der Augsburger Konfession*.

At the Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in Bonn he taught the following courses:  
SS 1959: Lecture, *Einführung in die Religionsphilosophie*; Lecture, *Theologische Erkenntnislehre: Glaube und Theologie*; Major Seminar, *Der Theologiebegriff in Bonaventuras De reductione artium ad theologiam*. WS 1959/60: Lecture, *Wesen und Wirklichkeit der göttlichen Offenbarung*; Seminar, *Gottesbeweise in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. SS 1960: Lecture, *Die Lehre von der Kirche*; Seminar, *Kirche, Sakrament und Glaube nach der Augsburgischen Konfession*. WS 1960/61: Lecture, *Religionsphilosophie I: Religionsgeschichtliche Grundlegung*; Seminar, *Probleme der frühchristlichen Kirchenverständnisses* (jointly with the noted patristic scholar Alfred Stüber, 1912-81). SS 1961:

sized. In his courses on religion he would incorporate the most recent findings from non-biblical religions and peoples or the natural sciences. Oftentimes a philosophical perspective would be employed to enrich a theological insight. The seminars he held display ecumenical interests: such as Melanchthon and the *Augsburg Confession*. While having written his terminal studies on dimensions of Augustine's and Bonaventure's thoughts, he displays a consistent interest in Thomas Aquinas, i.e. the doctrine of grace as well as the interface of the natural and supernatural. In the area of dogmatics he presented tractates on Mariology, ecclesiology, sacraments, soteriology, creation, eschatology and the Blessed Trinity. In fundamental theology he addressed the topics of revelation, the nature of religion and of philosophy of religion, the Petrine office, the nature of tradition, religious epistemology, proofs of God's existence, the natural sciences and the nature of contemporary apologetics.

A scriptum titled *Wesen und Wahrheit der Religion – Grundlinien einer Phänomenologie und Philosophie der Religion. Nach einer Vorlesung aus der Fundamentaltheologie* (The Nature and Truth of Religion – An Outline of a Phenomenology and Philosophy of Religion. According to a course in Fundamental Theology) was written by the seminarian and later priest Josef Mühlbacher at Freising Seminary during the winter semester 1958/59<sup>69</sup>.

In this course Ratzinger first discusses the possibilities and limits of a *theologia fundamentalis* (§ 1). This is followed by a presentation of the genesis of the terms «philosophy of religion» and «phenomenology of religion» (§ 2). In continuity with this trajectory theories regarding the origin of religion are discussed (§ 3). On these bases he then discusses the unity and pluriformity of religions (§ 4). Upon this broad anthropological background he subsequently presents the «metaphysical type» of insight as exemplified by Thomas Aquinas and the «religious type» as advanced by Augustine (§§ 5 and 6). In the final section he then relates metaphysical and religious insight to «the truth of religion» (§§ 7 and 8).

It is interesting to note that Ratzinger had delivered a course on § 2 already during the winter semester 1955/56; while during the summer semester 1956 he had devoted a course to §§ 5 and 6<sup>70</sup>.

Lecture, *Fundamentaltheologie I: Gottes Offenbarung in Jesus Christus*; Seminar, *Grundfragen der Religionsphilosophie*; Seminar, *Religionsphilosophische Probleme in den Confessiones Augustini*. WS 1961/62: Lecture, *Religionsphilosophie II: Religion und Offenbarung*; Colloquium, *Für Laientheologen über Probleme einer zeitgemäßen Apologetik*; Seminar, *Gesetz und Gnade nach Thomas von Aquin*. SS 1962: Lecture, *Fundamentaltheologie II: Die Lehre von der Kirche*; Seminar, *Grenzfragen zwischen Naturwissenschaft und Glaube*. WS 1962/63: Lecture, *Religionsphilosophie I: Religionsgeschichtliche Grundlegung*; Seminar, *Melanchtons Tractatus de potestate papae*.

Cfr. SCHÜLERKREIS (V. PFNÜR main editor), *Joseph Ratzinger. Papst Benedikt XVI. Das Werk. Veröffentlichungen bis zur Papstwahl*, Augsburg 2009, 401-403.

<sup>69</sup> PFNÜR, *Das Werk*, 402.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 401.

In § 1 Ratzinger asserts «the inner right» of fundamental theology to supply a rational basis for faith. He admits, however, «a double aporia» for fundamental theology. Conventional apologetics is no longer tenable, as a rational penetration of faith is commonly considered not viable. With reference to Jesus' messianic cries of jubilee Mt 11:25-27 and Lk 10:21f he sees rationality unable to access faith. Paul underscores this separation in his *moria* (folly) teaching (1 Cor 1:18-2:5): there is a qualitative difference between insight into revelation and scientific knowledge. As exemplars of this position he presents Peter Damian, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Francis of Assisi. He regards Martin Luther indebted to Peter Damian for his anti-intellectual stance, which on this basis rejects *in globo* Scholasticism. Indebted to such earlier Lutheran, anthropological decisions, and from different perspectives Kant and Schleiermacher drive yet deeper the wedge between faith and science. Ratzinger observes «One can state, that Kant became the Aristotle of Protestantism (while) Schleiermacher became its Thomas»<sup>71</sup>.

Subsequently he presents the «Catholic solution to this aporia». On the basis of the Johannine Christ as *the Logos*, the rationality of Christianity is laid forth. He mentions that the Lutheran theologian and his friend Heinrich Schlier (1900-78) converted to Catholicism when he discovered this form of Christianity doing justice to the intellectual quality of Christian faith, which he found is original to the New Testament<sup>72</sup>. Ratzinger lists a number of «intellectual» theologians: Athanasius, Hilary, Augustine, Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas<sup>73</sup>. Ergo, Jesus Christ is rational *and* divine self-communication, i.e. objective and subjective at the same time, as «*Offenbarung ist die Selbsterschließung Gottes an den Menschen*» (revelation is the self-disclosure of God to man), or, phrased yet differently: «revelation is the [human] 'I' being touched by the 'Thou' of God»<sup>74</sup>. Therefore, faith is indeed as the Council Trent declares *virtus supernaturalis*<sup>75</sup>. It follows for Ratzinger: «[göttliche Selbst-]*Offenbarung ist inwendiges Hineintauchen in das Herz des je einzelnen Ich, das vor Gott steht*» ([divine self-]revelation is the interior immersion into the heart of the individual I, standing in front of God)<sup>76</sup>. Echoing de Lubac's seminal study *Catholicisme*,

<sup>71</sup> *Scriptum*, 3.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Scriptum*, 5 refers to an edition of Denzinger-Schönmetzer: DS 1789, which is reprinted in DH 3009: Heinrich DENZINGER, *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, Latin-English, ed. by P. HÜNERMANN, San Francisco 2012<sup>43</sup>.

<sup>76</sup> *Scriptum*, 5. Revelation «always requires a living person to whom it is communicated. Its goal is always to gather and unite men, and this is why the Church is a necessary aspect of revelation. If, however, revelation is more than Scripture, ... the historical-critical method cannot be the last word concerning revelation; rather, the living organism of faith of all ages is then an intrinsic part of revelation».

he observes such revelation is transmitted in community. While there is an internal inspiration by virtue of the (subjective) *verbum inspiratum*, an equally important second component must be noted: the *doctrina externa*, which is based on the (historical) *verbum incarnatum* – Jesus Christ. Together these two moments describe revelation. The actual insight into revelation occurs in the personal, interior contact with God («*inwendiger Kontakt mit Gott*») and thus is beyond the range of scientific investigation. Exactly on account of this personal constitution of revelation, it can be accessed equally by the *näpios* (childlike) and the *morios* (foolish)<sup>77</sup>. This delineates simultaneously «the grandeur and limits of theology»<sup>78</sup>. While reflecting on and expressing the positive content of revelation, theology need remain ever mindful of the personal and thus ultimately unscientific and inexplicable dimensions of faith, which by its very nature is mystery. This permits Ratzinger to circumscribe fundamental theology as follows: it «*kann nicht den Offenbarungsglauben erzeugen oder begründen, das kann nur Gott allein, aber Fundamentaltheologie kann die Sinngemäßheit der mit dem Offenbarungsglauben verbundenen Lehre aufweisen*» (it cannot generate or establish the faith of revelation, this only God can do, but fundamental theology can evidence the inner intellectual coherence of the doctrine connected to faith in revelation)<sup>79</sup>.

Discussing philosophy of religion and phenomenology of religion, he demonstrates how both terms are colored by Deism's reduced vision of religion – and, by extension, of the human being. Bound to sense experience, man can no longer penetrate metaphysical reality. As thinkers indebted to this epochal context, Ratzinger presents the positions of Schleiermacher and Kant, as well those of Albrecht Ritschl, Wilhelm Herrmann and Karl Barth. This presentation is followed by a brief discussion of early 20<sup>th</sup> century thinkers Edmund Husserl, Max Scheler, Martin Heidegger, Rudolf Bultmann and Nicolai Hartmann. For Ratzinger religious phenomenology is philosophically not satisfactory. Likewise, the *Quinque Viae* of Thomas are inaccessible for our age. At the same time the uncertainty principle discovered by Heisenberg cautions against overconfidence in the positive sciences. Not always can the positive sciences be trusted in producing unambiguous results<sup>80</sup>.

He tells his students that according to Pascal human reason can gain insight and state what is true and false. But it is volition that can achieve bliss or beatitude, as it

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RATZINGER, *Milestones*, 127. Schmaus considered apprehending the individual or the Church as part of revelation to be «a dangerous modernism». RATZINGER, *Milestones*, 109.

<sup>77</sup> *Scriptum*, 7.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, 13. Cfr. W. HEISENBERG, *Der Teil und das Ganze*. München 1969. Heisenberg discovered the uncertainty principle already in 1927. This principle takes into account the fact that light may either appear as wave or corpuscle, but never at the same time and under the same consideration.

existentially differentiates between salvation and damnation (*Heil und Unheil*)<sup>81</sup>. The question of God's existence only human volition can decide as there is no completely convincing proof for God's existence by human reason. This Pascalian position best reflects Ratzinger's own position.

In the section on the origin and nature of religion in general (§ 3) he apprehends history as a valuable aid. He discusses dynamism, fetishism and animism, all of which ultimately recognize the reality of a soul and of all being as ensouled. He mentions critically the theory of a primordial monotheism preceding the advent of polytheism as propounded by the ethnologist Wilhelm Schmidt, SVD (1868-1954)<sup>82</sup>. The primordially religious orientation of human existence suggests humankind being created *ab initio* for God: the *capacitas infiniti*<sup>83</sup>. If this is indeed the case, Ratzinger asks «what does religious cult intend?» and he responds that it intends «adoration», which is «a radical form of love»<sup>84</sup>. This leads Ratzinger to the insight that it is «God who loves and not we human beings. ... the most sublime parable for religion remains bridal, matrimonial love (OT-NT)»<sup>85</sup>. This in turn permits the professor to define religion, *nota bene* from a philosophical vantage point:

«as based on the fact that man is *capax infiniti*, capable of God, in need of God. Religion is the acceptance of one's being, as being loved and of loving in turn the eternal love, called adoration and which finds concrete form in cult»<sup>86</sup>.

However, when magic enters the sphere of religion, then love is dispensed of. In this context he reminds his students of the always valid critique of the Old Testament prophets and King Saul.

In the next section he discusses first Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's (1729-81) famous ring parable in the dramatic poem *Nathan the Wise*. Then he sees essentially two patterns of religious experience existing: what he circumscribes as the Eastern and Western variants<sup>87</sup>. While Judaism, Christianity and Islam are unambiguously monotheistic, Eastern religions are essentially polytheistic. For the former there is an inherent value to this contingent reality as (human) persons can address a God

<sup>81</sup> *Scriptum*, 10.

<sup>82</sup> Cfr. s. v. entry *Schmidt, Wilhelm*, in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vol. 9, Freiburg i. Br. 1964<sup>2</sup>, 435.

<sup>83</sup> *Scriptum*, 17.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.* «Philosophische Definition: Religion beruht auf der Tatsache, daß der Mensch *capax infiniti*, gott-fähig, gottbedürftig, ist. Sie ist die Annahme des eigenen Seins als Geliebt-sein und jenes wiederlieben der ewigen Liebe, das Anbetung heißt und im Kult konkrete Gestalt findet».

<sup>87</sup> *Scriptum*, 18.

perceived as personal. In the latter no deity can be addressed, as it is not considered personal – on this point the East parallels the philosophical positions of Plato and Aristotle. To the Eastern mind, all activities are preliminary (and therefore futile) to a final state that becomes one of negation of anything previous. Whatever is palpable in the here and now is but deception<sup>88</sup>.

Hinduism receives rather extensive treatment. He discusses the concept of *Karma*, which considers the world as «a single wheel without beginning and end». In a similar vein, *Samsara* is frighteningly negative since it holds «there is no redemption in this world, but only from this world»<sup>89</sup>. This world is seen by the Hindu philosopher Shankara (800 AD) as a dangerously deceptive illusion (*Maya*). Ratzinger registers passivity and unity as the outstanding, presumably positive characteristics of the Hindu deity, which one is allowed to enter someday. When speaking of Buddhism, Ratzinger notes that *Nirvana* is not merely liberation from *Samsara* (change) and the burdensome human I, but defines entry into a radically different world shedding one of one's identity. He also notes that Buddhist love of neighbor is quite unlike the Christian understanding of this term. In Christianity this is due to a world view an infinite valuing of one's own personhood and elevating every other human being to the same level of esteem. In contrast, he cautions his students, Buddhism practices not love of neighbor but compassion with everyone and everything animate – including plants. Ergo, «the foreign I [i.e. other person] should be loved as little as my own I»<sup>90</sup>.

The Eastern God is thus not one of action, but of negation vis-à-vis the restless activities of the world. The «antinomy» between Western and Eastern religions can only be resolved in the unity of the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ as defined by the Council of Chalcedon united, unconfused, unchanging, indivisible and inseparable<sup>91</sup>, who alone reconciles «immanence and transcendence». The normativity of Jesus Christ notwithstanding, he cautions his listeners: «we should assimilate the positive aspects of all religions, integrating them into the salvific Christ (*Christusheil*)»<sup>92</sup>.

For this section Ratzinger consulted books authored by the French scholar Jacques A. Cuttat and Franz König, the later cardinal and archbishop of Vienna<sup>93</sup>.

In the next two sections he differentiates between two principal modes of insight

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 21: «das fremde Ich soll so wenig geliebt werden, wie das eigene».

<sup>91</sup> DH 302.

<sup>92</sup> *Scriptum*, 22.

<sup>93</sup> *Scriptum*, 23. J. A. CUTTAT, *Begegnung der Religionen*, Einsiedeln 1956. F. KÖNIG, *Christus und die Religionen der Erde*, 3 vols., Freiburg i. Br. 1951. ID., *Religionswissenschaftliches Wörterbuch*, Freiburg i. Br. 1956.

into divine existence: «metaphysical insight» as developed by Thomas Aquinas and «religious insight» (distinguishing terms he adopts from Scheler), as represented by Augustine. In § 5 he presents and discusses «metaphysical insight». While Augustine had stated *Deum esse est verum indubitabile* (divine being is truly indubitable), Thomas believed *Deum esse est demonstrabile* (divine being is demonstrable)<sup>94</sup>. These «analytical» statements define the respective thinkers' position as regards the question of God. With Thomas' approach one is able to reach «*Deus per se*, but not *quoad nos*», Ratzinger argues, while with Augustine's position the yield is *Deus esse per se quoad nos* (divine being insofar as for us). To Thomas' mind there exists in human yearning for beatitude, which is «a dark preliminary knowledge of God»<sup>95</sup>. Any knowledge of God presupposes something noetic and anthropological. The latter, however, Thomas «barely indicates»<sup>96</sup>. It is on this crucial point that Ratzinger critiques him. While admitting the need to prove the sentence «God exists», Thomas actually «does not go beyond» a rational distillation.<sup>97</sup> Though Thomas admits that Augustine is right to assert God is presupposed in every true statement as he is the *prima veritas*, the great Dominican theologian tragically and subcutaneously constricts God to being *per se* and implicitly excludes his being for us<sup>98</sup>.

After these preliminary remarks, Ratzinger discusses *in extenso* the *Quinque Viae*<sup>99</sup>. Being loyal to the Aristotelian philosophical self-limitation to sense perception, Ratzinger sees in the Thomist proof of God's existence not a creator God, but merely a first mover evidenced. He considers Thomas' conclusion *Et hoc omnes nominant Deum* (and this all call God) illegitimate as here *sub rosa* metaphysics and religion are conflated. «Thomas raises a question he does not provide an answer for»<sup>100</sup>. He merely demonstrates the final or first member of a physical chain. Hence, on the basis of a Christian perspective, Thomas' approach must nowadays be disregarded. Rather, in discourse with contemporaries reference should be made to «the objective spirit» one encounters on a daily basis in the world («*objektiven Geist*»)<sup>101</sup>. Is this

<sup>94</sup> *Scriptum*, 23 – as quoted.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 25-29. Cfr. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 2, a 1 and *Summa contra Gentiles* I, cap. 13.

<sup>100</sup> *Scriptum*, 27. «Unter der Hand wird Metaphysik und Religion identifiziert. Dieser Schritt vom ‚Erstbewege‘ zum Gott der Religion ist keine Selbstverständlichkeit. Bei Aristoteles hat das *protokinum* nichts mit Religion zu tun. Thomas wirft eine Frage auf, die bei ihm nicht beantwortet ist; von dieser Frage hängt aber der Wert des Gottesbeweises ab».

<sup>101</sup> *Scriptum*, 28.

meant with a nod to Karl Rahner's then much discussed *Geist in Welt*<sup>102</sup>? On a purely scientific basis one should readily admit the aporetic nature of the quest for proving God's existence. He envisions four possible theoretical responses: materialism, idealism, Christian theism or dualism. The first two he considers «*Identitätssystem*»<sup>103</sup>. The incontrovertible fact of objective spirit existing in the world eliminates materialism as a viable option for resolving the problem of God. On the other hand, idealism cannot explain the individual human person. It is in Christianity that both the objectivity of God and the unique individuality of the human person are safeguarded, come to the fore and the human being is dignified beyond imagination (the latter the script seems to imply)<sup>104</sup>.

Reference is made to the writings of Eugen Rolfes, A. Dondeyne and J. Allan in this section<sup>105</sup>.

Counterintuitively, now only does Ratzinger discuss the «religious type» as represented by Augustine. Here the *cor mundum* (the cleansed heart) is the singular *locus* of insight into God. Ever confident of the epistemological import of the senses, Thomas states *et hoc omnes intelligent Deum* (and this all recognize as God). Diametrically opposed to this approach, Augustine argues in Ratzinger's inimitable words «God stands behind man. When I intend recognizing God, I need to turn around»<sup>106</sup>. The interiority of the human mind is central. Beyond the *videre corpora sensibus* (bodily seeing via the senses) there is for him the *videre corde mentis intuite interior homine* (beholding the heart of the mind intuitively by the interior man). Truth is present to the human spirit, but sin alienates from the attendant interior eyesight. It is regained via an ascetical *purgation cordis*<sup>107</sup>. Without any preceding academic problematization Augustine had recognized this.

In his presentation, Ratzinger genetically traces Augustine's thoughts on this matter from his time at Cassiciacum, to his ministry as priest and finally as bishop. A key insight is offered to Augustine by Acts 15:9 «He had purified their hearts through faith». The *homo exterior* becomes through Christ the *homo interior*. Later for Augustine the Petrine motif is enriched by the Pauline (Eph 3:18) and Johannine (John 14:9) motifs. Conformity to *both* beams of the cross of Christ, permits one to gain heuristic progress: «love so that you may behold» (*ama, ut videas*). On this point

<sup>102</sup> An endnote reference is made to RAHNER, *Hörer des Wortes*, 141. Cfr. *Scriptum*, 14.

<sup>103</sup> *Scriptum*, 28.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.* E. ROLFES, *Der Gottesbeweis bei Thomas und Aristoteles*, Limburg 1927. A. DONDEYNÉ, *Die Existenz Gottes und der zeitgenössische Materialismus*, in *Gott, Mensch, Universum*, Graz 1957, 25ff. D. J. ALLAN, *Die Philosophie des Aristoteles*, Hamburg 1955.

<sup>106</sup> *Scriptum*, 29.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

Ratzinger observes Augustine is considerably clearer than Scheler. It is in this *Mystik des Dienstes* (mysticism of service), drawing its inspiration i. a. from the horizontal beam of the cross, that ever greater knowledge can be reached – which explains Augustine as the great «carer of souls» («als Seelsorger»)<sup>108</sup>. As God is essentially invisible, any insight into God depends on God revealing himself. Ratzinger seconds this Augustinian position by way of recourse to Bl. John Henry Newman, when the later states that God is recognized by one's conscience<sup>109</sup>. While Augustine does see humankind seeking beatitude, Ratzinger points out that this does not serve for the African Church Father as a proof of God's existence<sup>110</sup>.

With a diagram Ratzinger summarizes Augustine's theology. While philosophy may entail purgation and humility, which lead to love and beatitude, theology is underpinned by faith and the incarnation, as unfolded in the Old and New Testaments and Christian doctrine. This leads to charity and to Christ as God, which are sustained by cult, importantly bifurcated into Eucharist and love of one's neighbor. In this Augustinian thought Ratzinger apprehends a grand unity<sup>111</sup>.

This is followed by brief, but penetrating summaries of Pascal's, Newman's and Scheler's positions. He sees Pascal arguing that a metaphysical proof of God, while legitimate, remains but an abstract insight, void of religious relevance<sup>112</sup>. Regarding Newman, he presents this Englishman's distinction between notional and real assent and discusses his famous quotation: «many a man will live and die upon a dogma, no man will be a martyr for a conclusion»<sup>113</sup>. It is of germane import for Christianity that at her beginning stood the testimony of simple believers and not a learned lecture<sup>114</sup>. Scheler's position is discussed at greater length. On the basis of a distinction between being and value («*Sein und Wert*»), Scheler illustrates that a saint can only exist as a «*Personwert*» (person of value)<sup>115</sup>. Far from being something emotional, for Scheler «to feel» is object oriented and culminates in a «*Wertfühlen*» (being sensitized for values), which can inform both hatred and charity. Ratzinger also critiques Scheler. For instance, Scheler incorrectly simplified the issue by claiming that for Augustine charity enjoys primacy, while for Thomas pure insight rules supreme - thus burying charity. Ratzinger points out that Augustine expressly denies granting charity undis-

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<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>109</sup> J. H. NEWMAN, *A Grammar of Assent*, Notre Dame 2001, 98ff.

<sup>110</sup> *Scriptum*, 32.

<sup>111</sup> *Scriptum*, 33.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 34. J. H. NEWMAN, *A Grammar of Assent*, 89.

<sup>114</sup> *Scriptum*, 34.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

puted primacy<sup>116</sup>. He does, however, agree with Scheler's defining the human person as a unity of acts of charity. This means that one can apprehend the highest person, God, only if one perceives him also as the highest good by way of imitating divine charity. From this follows that authentic recognition of God requires «*Mitlieben mit seiner ewigen Liebe*» (loving along with God's eternal charity)<sup>117</sup>.

Ratzinger concludes this section by stating that God is never representationally («*gegenständlich*») recognizable or as object via human reason. As God is person, God could also conceal himself. It follows that any human, personal apprehension of God is grounded in divine condescension to reveal himself «naturally»<sup>118</sup>. Such historical communication, however, may not be misunderstood as rendering God objectifiable. Anyone attempting to apprehend God merely rationally or metaphysically, is unable to grasp divine personhood<sup>119</sup>.

This obvious advantage of religious insight notwithstanding, Ratzinger advocates in § 7 for a relational unity (*Beziehungseinheit*) between metaphysical and religious insight. In the ductus of Scheler and to a lesser degree of Söhngen, he distinguishes between systems of identity, of duality and of conformity<sup>120</sup>.

He associates Enlightenment and especially Kant with the first system. When religious and metaphysical insights are identical, then this is to Ratzinger gnostic. This also applies when religious insight is generated from metaphysical insight; it is subsumed under the system of identity<sup>121</sup>.

The system of dualism, where religion and metaphysics are unrelated, is perceived as ultimately one of agnosticism and irrationalism. This concept of dualism does not allow for any rational access to faith. He identifies Schleiermacher as the main representative of this current.

As the *via media*, the system of conformity is in principle the correct solution for him. Both forms of insight, metaphysical and religious, are different but not separate, as they are intimately related to one another; thereby allowing order to come about. Certitude exists only in faith, whereas philosophy can provide probability. It is in this context that sainthood is achieved: by permitting God to work wondrous

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<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> In all probability naturally is intended to mean historically.

<sup>119</sup> «*Jede personale Gotterfassung gründet dann auch auf einer Herablassung Gottes, einer natürlichen Offenbarung Gottes. Das darf aber nicht im objektivistischen Sinne (wie in der Scholastik) aufgefaßt werden. Wer Gott nur ‚natürlich‘ (rational, metaphysisch) erkennt, der kann die Personalität Gottes nie erfassen*», *Scriptum*, 36.

<sup>120</sup> *Scriptum*, 36.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

things with people<sup>122</sup>. Such a perspective makes allowance for both human insight and human marveling to coexist in harmony. This model vouches for God's utter transcendence remaining intact and yet dignifies the human person beyond compare. Crucially, he notes, the object is «intentionally identical, but materially different»<sup>123</sup>. He even ventures stating: «the status of a religion depends on its ability to see this unity of the God of the philosophers and the God of faith. Thus, only jointly can religion and metaphysics recognize the true image of God»<sup>124</sup>. This insight leads to following concluding observation: religion enjoys primacy of insight, as religion supplies its own justification. Religion implies possessing something and being possessed by something greater than one can imagine on one's own - and which remains at the same time always unfathomable, namely mystery<sup>125</sup>.

Against this background, Ratzinger cogently argues that it is religion that grounds, eradicates and enables philosophical metaphysics to be pursued in the first place. But now an equally powerful complementary argument emerges, justifying the afore-stated: metaphysics becomes the external condition for religion. Proofs of God's existence legitimize religion. They remain indispensable as they anchor religion in human existence. The relationship of religion to metaphysics corresponds roughly to that of faith to theology<sup>126</sup>.

In § 8 he concludes his course by addressing «the truth of religion». By way of introduction he discusses Gustav Mensching's position of a plurality of religious truths<sup>127</sup>. His *point d'appui* is that if one were, à la Mensching to comprehend religious statements as rational, firm knowledge, thereby exposing these to criticism from rational sciences, one would counterfeit religions' purpose and nature. To Mensching intolerance becomes impossible provided one accepts a plurality of symbols. Ratzinger responds that while this concern is *prima vista* laudable, intriguing and perhaps even captivating, it does not do justice to the very essence of religion. Every religiously inclined human being assumes receiving a truth answerable to reason («*eine rational verantwortbare Wahrheit*»)<sup>128</sup>. Quite artificially Mensching positions *veritas ontologica* and *gnoseologica* in opposition to one another. However, every religion not

<sup>122</sup> «Der Heilige ist ein Mensch, an dem Gott Wunderbares tut, das bis zum Wunderlichen gehen kann». This is a quotation from Söhngen. *Scriptum*, 37.

<sup>123</sup> *Scriptum*, 37.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> G. MENSCHING, *Die Religionen und die Welt. Typen religiöser Weltanschauung*, Bonn 1947. Influenced by Rudolf Otto, Mensching (1901-78) had been a Protestant German theologian who developed his understanding over and against theology and the Protestant creeds. He had been a member of the Nazi party (NSDAP) and had taught at Bonn University.

<sup>128</sup> *Scriptum*, 39.

only believes God to be true, but ultimately even that God is *the* truth per se. In fact, God is the highest form of insight. Every kind of religious truth intends being plausible and reasonable. He concludes, were this not the case, then Christians cannot be held responsible for the way the world evolves and «the Protestant withdrawal from the world» is the only viable alternative<sup>129</sup>.

This does not, however, occasion Ratzinger to take up cudgels on behalf of a total intelligibility of faith. Referring to Aristotle's saying that our eyes are stupid like the eyes of owls vis-à-vis what is most luminous, he holds a twofold delimitation to exist vis-à-vis a rationalization of religious truth: 1. objective intelligibility does not correspond to subjective visibility, and 2. God is not an objectively intelligible entity in a manner that human beings can at random take possession of him, thus God is not any kind of object: such as wine glass, plant or elephant, but *sui generis*. This consideration shows that the Scholastic distinction between ontological truth and gnoseological truth is insufficient. To Ratzinger's mind one has to introduce both a *veritas mere rationalis* and a *veritas personalis vel veritas integraliter humana* (a personal truth or a truth integral to human nature)<sup>130</sup>. This *veritas personalis* – to which religion first and foremost relates – is characterized by it being inseparable from the totality of the human person. Ratzinger observes almost apodictically: «*Person muß auf Person antworten, mit der ratio allein geht es nicht*» (person needs to respond to person, reason alone is inadequate); this all the more on account of the object's ontological superiority<sup>131</sup>. Religious truth is rational and much more. At this point he cannot help observing that the error of St. Thomas and of medieval philosophy of religion in general was to define «so-called natural religion in purely rational terms»<sup>132</sup>. Yet, religion is «a truth one cannot fully rationalize»<sup>133</sup>. This applies to all religions. Religious truth encompasses the totality of human existence and includes divine reality, «which is not a passive partner of insight»<sup>134</sup>. Insight into divine existence involves constitutively a personal and dynamic dimension.

Every revelation can be true in two regards: objectively, if it is divine self-communication, and subjectively it becomes true for the human person insofar as the human being must posit «himself into openness to God»<sup>135</sup>. While Christianity always remains objectively the true religion, it may be that a Christian lives less in the true

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.* This remark is not clarified in the script.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 40. In this regard there is a helpful diagram on 42.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> «[D]er göttlichen Wirklichkeit, die nicht passiver Erkenntnispartner ist», *Scriptum*, 41.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

religion than «a Buddhist or Moslem. ... [as] It requires the addition of a subjective moment, in which truth fulfills itself»<sup>136</sup>.

Placing Augustine and Thomas on a scale, he suggests every human being can progress from *ratio pura* to *ratio purgata*. Insight into God is not a path of simple, intellectual demonstration, but rather first of existential and personal *purgation cordis*, which then *a posteriori* opens the path to a rational demonstration of faith. For this journey human beings should cast away all preconceived assumptions. The only permissible assumption is the human being himself. It would miss the level religion operates on, were it to be *a priori* rationally verifiable. Nevertheless its rational coherence is *a posteriori* recognizable and demonstrable<sup>137</sup>.

The twofold delimitation Ratzinger introduced earlier in this section enables him in conclusion to state a parallel twofold extension of rational statements concerning religious truth: a) a more intensive opening of human beings to God, and b) a more intensive opening of God to human beings – than humanly imaginable. «From this perspective one can render rationally visible the superiority and absoluteness of Christianity»<sup>138</sup>. By this he means that the Chalcedonian formula of Christ being equally fully a human being and fully God states the most monumental truth any religion can possibly define rationally. At the same time the greatest possible is stated concerning human beings: «radical openness to God»<sup>139</sup>. Both God and human beings are thought of in the highest radicality possible. Heretofore God had been the faceless *Deus absconditus*, the concealed God. In Christ Jesus God becomes «the open God» and human beings need do nothing else but enter into this divine openness. Such openness for the divine human beings cannot create on their own. One clearly recognizes now what Christian revelation truly means. It means that God exists in a form that is accessible for all, irrespective of a person's rational sophistication. By teaching reciprocal and total openness, Christianity represents the highest conceivable «religious idea». From this incarnational perspective any religion left to its own devices appears as «a hopeless endeavor» if divine openness is missing<sup>140</sup>.

## 6. A Speech at the Eve of Vatican II

In his Bonn years Ratzinger contributed in many ways to fundamental theology

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

– and he was a much-valued interlocutor. For instance when the nuncio to West Germany, Archbishop Corrado Bafile, had prepared a talk for an ecumenical gathering, he first consulted Ratzinger in his Bonn apartment before delivering the paper.<sup>141</sup> Little wonder that Joseph Ratzinger became the theological *peritus* to the most influential German bishop during Vatican II.

In sum, Ratzinger wrote in the Rhineland three smaller books, 33 articles/essays, 20 book reviews and 22 dictionary entries<sup>142</sup>. He had planned publishing during his Bonn years a text book on Catholic dogmatic theology. Though Maria Ratzinger, the theologian's sister, had put several hundred pages to paper and the Munich *Wewel Verlag* had anticipated printing it, the project never materialized<sup>143</sup>. This is regrettable, as it would have not only displayed Ratzinger's superior synthetic powers, but could also have positively influenced the reception of Vatican II.

In an entry under the heading «*Katholische Theologie*» for the Protestant encyclopedia *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* he defines fundamental theology thus:

«... fundamental theology is positioned vis-à-vis dogmatic theology as a kind of basic science, which is to justify the claim of the [theological] science presupposing faith and [therein] specifically the right of dogmatic theology of applying a [specific] method. The fact that this foundational science predicates itself as theology, demonstrates that the concern is not one of a rational construction of faith, but rather of uncovering that faith is answerable to reason»<sup>144</sup>.

The age-old principle of *fides quaerens intellectum* is utilized by Ratzinger in order to localize in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the specific charism of the new discipline of fundamental theology<sup>145</sup>. Uncovering and defending the intelligible bases for faith is a recurring leitmotif in his vast œuvre: for instance in *Introduction to Christianity*, *Principles of Catholic Faith* and in *Jesus of Nazareth*, vol. 1<sup>146</sup>. Famously he warned of a pathology

<sup>141</sup> «Eseguie dell'Em.mo Card. Corrado Bafile. Omelia del Card. Joseph Ratzinger, 2.5.2005», in [http://www.vatican.va/news\\_services/liturgy/2005/documents/ns\\_lit\\_doc\\_20050205\\_notification\\_it.html](http://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/2005/documents/ns_lit_doc_20050205_notification_it.html) (accessed 2.23.2015).

<sup>142</sup> PFNÜR, *Das Werk*, 14f, 115-130.

<sup>143</sup> RATZINGER, *Milestones*, 150.

<sup>144</sup> To dogmatics «ist die Fundamentaltheologie als eine Art theologischer Grundwissenschaft vorgebaut, welche das Recht einer den Glauben voraussetzenden Wissenschaft und so speziell das Recht der in der Dogmatik angewendeten Methode rechtfertigen soll. Daß diese Grundlegungswissenschaft selbst Theologie heißt, zeigt, daß es nicht um eine rationale Konstruktion des Glaubens geht, sondern darum, die rationale Verantwortbarkeit dieses Glaubens aufzudecken», J. RATZINGER, entry *Katholische Theologie*, in K. GALLING – H. VON CAMPENHAUSEN (eds.), *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, vol. VI, Tübingen 1962<sup>3</sup>, 775-779, at 776.

<sup>145</sup> Insightful also: J. RATZINGER, *Theologia perennis? Über Zeitgemäßheit und Zeitlosigkeit in der Theologie*, in *Weisheit und Wissenschaft* 15 (1960) 179-188.

<sup>146</sup> RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 74-79. Id., *Principles of Catholic Theology*, San Francisco 1989, 315-331. Id., *Jesus of Nazareth* (vol. 1), San Francisco 2007, xi-8.

of faith and a pathology of reason at the 60<sup>th</sup> commemoration of the allied landing in Normandy in 2004<sup>147</sup>.

This is to him an urgent task as he argued in 1961. In a talk he had prepared for Cardinal Josef Frings, titled *The Council and modern intellectual Life* he states that the inexorable process of globalization entails imposing a technical perspective upon all aspects of life, compelling people *nolens volens* to believe in exclusively the positive sciences being capable of offering solutions to questions human beings raise. A unified global culture (*Einheitskultur*) will evolve that will relativize the achievements of every culture. Christianity can no longer present itself to a globalized community in its European variant. Nevertheless, relativizing a particular manifestation of Christian faith need not in and of itself be viewed negatively. By extension he argues, it is important to preserve the core of Christian faith: i.e. revelation, and to employ the principles of rationality as developed by Greek philosophy to enunciate the gospel to the new, global community. In the epochal process of globalization, however, he presciently asserts a vainglorious «self-divinization of human kind» as occurring, clad in the guise of atheism. Two ideologies serve to promote this epochal development: neoliberalism and communism. It is the task of Christians to uncover the genuinely Christian attitudes hidden in seemingly profane and unchristian modernity and to demonstrate convincingly to the world how precious and livable our faith is. In this process Christian faith need not fear the sciences, nor fear it being transformed into new forms that might counterfeit it, «as she feels safe (*geborgen*) in God's truth»<sup>148</sup>.

## 7. Conclusion

Automatically at numerous points in the script on fundamental theology the reader would like to raise a question or two, but, alas, this is not possible. The intention of this article is to share the main lines of thought of the early fundamental theologian Ratzinger. There is undeniably from the very beginning «a modern turn to the subject» in his thoughts that will spiritually underpin all his subsequent theological writings. This notwithstanding, as it is grounded in the historical objectivity of the God of Israel and Christianity, his position never becomes subjectivist.

<sup>147</sup> J. RATZINGER, *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, San Francisco 2006, 160ff.

<sup>148</sup> J. FRINGS, *Das Konzil und die moderne Gedankenwelt*, in Herder Korrespondenz 16 (1961/62) 168-174, at 174. E. DE GAÄL, *The Theologian Joseph Ratzinger at Vatican II. His Theological Vision and Role*, in Lateranum LXXVIII/3 (2012) 515-548, at 519-524. Quite illuminative: M. SCHLÖGL, 'Ich durfte den Weg des Konzils von innen her mitgehen'. *Anmerkungen zum Konzilstheologen Joseph Ratzinger*, in Klerusblatt 93 (2013) 146-149. The text was studied in J. WICKS, *Six Texts by Prof. Joseph Ratzinger as peritus before and during Vatican Council II*, in Gregorianum 89 (2008) 233-311.

Ratzinger's course on fundamental theology refreshes an important Augustinian insight: the quest for God is by its nature radically different from any other human investigation. It requires both an intellectual and an ethical effort on part of the human being embarking on a search for God, as also human reason remains inextricably postlapsarian. In a scientific probe, the human being can assume a neutral position. Yet, when it comes to the problem of God, the human being is already existentially involved and neutrality impossible.

In all probability this entails the following consequence for Ratzinger: negating outright the possibility of divine existence is a morally bad option. If not subscribing *expressis verbis* to God's existence, the only morally not bad position would be of a form of agnosticism sympathetic to the hypothesis of God. While certainly intellectual veracity is required for any inquiry to succeed, to arrive at an answer concerning God's existence, both intellectual veracity and virtue inform decidedly the outcome. Ratzinger perceptively offers the contemporary discussion on God a helpful, indeed redemptive corrective: both God and the human person are greater than the range of positive, scientific investigation.

The problem of God stands under two differences: the alternatives between right and wrong, *and* between good and bad.

There is a profound, indeed unfathomable relationship between the God of philosophers and the God of faith; but the two do not collapse into identity. To Ratzinger something not unlike the uncertainty principle, discovered for the realm of physics by Werner Heisenberg, also applies to the relationship between faith and reason, as the ontological difference between God and human being is in principle insurmountable – and, most importantly, it is God who first loves.

### **Abstract**

The article portrays Joseph Ratzinger's early contributions to the discipline of fundamental theology. This investigation reveals a personalist approach: revelation is ultimately an encounter of two persons. The formative influence of Gottlieb Söhngen, Bonaventure and Guardini are discussed; as is Ratzinger's much celebrated 1959 inaugural lecture at Bonn University. The content of his unpublished course in fundamental theology is summarized; likewise that of the much noted 1961 Genoa lecture he had authored for Cardinal Frings. Upon sound biblical and patristic bases, but also via excursions to philosophy and non-Christian religions he demonstrates the symphonic relationship between faith and reason.