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In what Sense Can the Scientifically Driven Theology Be Considered as a Continuation of the Doctrinal Tradition?

ABSTRACT

The central goal of the presented article is to show that the type of rationality proper to the method of the contemporary sciences yields a unique conceptual environment in which the spirit of rationality instilled to the theological thought by its encounter with the Greek philosophy finds its natural expansion. At the outset, the origins of the Greek rationality in the Ionian school of philosophy are briefly discussed in order to illuminate their adequacy for the exposition and defense of doctrine in the times of the early Church Fathers. Next, the specificity of the scholastic method of St. Thomas Aquinas briefly surveyed to indicate the nature of the unique harmony between faith and reason achieved by the Angelic Doctor. In the following step, the role of rationality in theology is gleaned through negative examples of its elimination as evident in nominalism and the subsequent Lutheran intervention. This is followed by a short discourse into of the origins and the specificity of the contemporary scientific method with particular emphasis on the method's unique potential to expand and deepen the Greek rationality. Finally, a case study of the evolutionary theology is offered in which the implementation of the dynamic (evolutionary) picture of the Universe as the conceptual foundation opens up new and profound ways of understanding the Universe's meaning and the meaning

of man in particular. Thus the spirit of the hellenistic rationality in theology is not only preserved but also significantly enhanced.

KEYWORDS

rationality, nominalism, conceptual basis, evolutionary theology

INTRODUCTION: THE DYNAMICITY OF TRADITION

The notion of tradition plays a central role in theology for, together with the Holy Scriptures, it constitutes a principal source of revelation.¹ In the broadest sense, any tradition establishes the sense of identity since the legacy of the predecessors aids the comprehension on how the present emerges from the past and how the constituents of the present relate to what has been handed from the past. In other words, continuity of tradition is a seminal factor in building and maintaining the identity of communities at the different level of social organization. For Christianity this identity rests on Jesus Christ's mandate given to the Apostles to proclaim the Gospel so that with the aid of the Holy Spirit the salvific message of God can be communicated to all.

In regards to specificity of the doctrinal tradition of the Church, however, the constitution of the Second Vatican Council *Dei Verbum* adds the following: "This tradition which comes from the Apostles develop in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down."² This statement implies that the doctrinal tradition is not confined to a passive transmission of the deposit of faith received by the Apostles but it involves constant development and deepening of the understanding of the Divine message written down in the Holy Scriptures. The doctrinal tradition cannot be understood as a fixed content conveyed independently of the finite means of human expression and thus devoid of any

¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Catholic Truth Society, London 2016, Art. 80–81, p. 31.

² Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution of Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, in: *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. A. Flannery, Northport–New York 1980, Art. 8, p. 754.

contextuality.³ On the contrary, by directly referring to the writings of St. Augustine the Constitution replies: “the exegete must look for that meaning which the sacred writer, in a determined situation and given the circumstances of his time and culture, intended to express and did in fact express, through the medium of a contemporary literary form.”⁴ In response to this the Catechism of the Catholic Church rightly distinguishes between Tradition (with the capital T), the divinely revealed content as evident at a specific stage of the Tradition’s development, and the theological disciplinary, liturgical or devotional traditions (with the small t) which serve as means by which Tradition finds its expression.⁵ This point has been greatly captured by an American evolutionary theologian, John Haught, who states the following:

The deposit of the Catholic faith is not a smoothly rounded rock rolling down the corridors of time cushioned from changing cultures and fluctuating intellectual environments. Doctrine can, and must develop if it is to be the basis of an enlivening spirituality for different periods of time. In fact, theology has always been one of the ways in which living religions have struggled to survive.⁶

The contextuality of theological expressions is a direct consequence of the fact that there exists a permanent and irremovable tension between the finite character of the conceptual frameworks as the human means of expressing the revealed content and the infinite character of the Divine essence these frameworks purport to convey. What is of the primary importance from the point of view of this article, however, is that the application of richer conceptual frameworks equipped with advanced logic may lead to the aforementioned deepening of insight into the Divine mysteries. In addition to the deposit of faith that Tradition hands over and expands, it can be also considered to entail an important methodological aspect according to which to pro-

3 E.g., E. Schillebeeckx, *O katolickie zastosowanie hermeneutyki. Tożsamość wiary w toku jej reinterpretacji*, “Znak” 1968 no. 7–8 (169–170), pp. 978–981.

4 Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, op. cit., Art. 12, p. 757.

5 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, op. cit., Art. 83.

6 J. Haught, *Resting on the Future: Catholic Theology for an Unfinished Universe*, New York–London–Oxford–New Delhi–Sydney 2015, p. 29.

ceed in the spirit of the Tradition means to continuously strive for the expansion and strengthening of the conceptual frameworks whereby the revealed message may continuously reveal its meaning and gradually unveil its fullness.⁷ Any attempt to divert from such a path would jeopardize the mechanism by which the doctrine can properly develop and retain its dynamic character. Such jeopardy clearly arises when a given philosophical system in theology is absolutized and decreed as *a priori* superior to any other and granted the status of the perennial philosophy.

The main purpose of this study is to demonstrate that the type of rationality proper to the method of the contemporary sciences yields a unique conceptual environment in which the spirit of rationality instilled to the theological thought by its encounter with the Greek philosophy finds its natural expansion. As a result, a profound deepening of insight into the content of the deposit of faith is achieved and Tradition reveals its dynamic character. The demonstration proceeds in four distinct stages. Firstly, the very origins of the Greek rationality in the Ionian school of philosophy are briefly discussed in order to illuminate their adequacy for the exposition and defense of the tenets of faith in the times of the early Church Fathers. Secondly, the specificity of the scholastic method of St. Thomas Aquinas is touched upon to indicate the nature of the unique harmony between faith and reason achieved by the Angelic Doctor. Thirdly, the role of rationality in theology is gleaned through negative examples of its elimination as evident in the nominalist movement and the subsequent Lutheran reformation. This process is pointedly named by Joseph Ratzinger as *dehellenization*. In the fourth step, the highlights of the origins and the specificity of the contemporary scientific method are presented with particular emphasis on the method's unique potential to expand and deepen the Greek rationality. Finally, the fifth step involves a case study of the evolutionary theology in which the implementation of the dynamic (evolutionary) picture of the Universe as the conceptual foundation opens up new and profound ways of understanding the Universe's meaning and the meaning of man in particular. Thus the spirit of the hellenistic rationality in theology is not only preserved but also significantly enhanced.

7 E.g., M. Rusecki, *Traktat o objawieniu*, Kraków 2007, p. 458.

LOGOS: THE MEETING PLACE OF THE GREEK RATIONALITY AND THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION

In order to shed light on how the Greek rationality comes into fruition in the context of the contemporary scientific method, one needs to reach back to the very beginnings of science, namely, to the times of the Ionian school of thought when a brave and successful attempt to demythologize nature was undertaken. As a result, the pantheon of gods arbitrarily ruling the Universe had been abolished in favor of the acknowledgement of the regularities built into nature itself which the human mind can discover without resorting to the activity of supernatural agents that act in an arbitrary manner. A renowned Danish historian of science, Olaf Pedersen, summarizes this by saying:

The non-mythological account of nature was born in a revolt against of the essential elements of the Greek religion. The Olympic deities and their less august assistants were deprived of their role as authors of the phenomena of nature and replaced by an immanent, impersonal necessity which would be gradually disclosed by scientific investigation.⁸

One of the leading thinkers of the time, Heraclitus of Ephesus (c. 535–475 BC), coined out the term *logos* to designate a principle of order and knowledge with a strong reference to the idea of the divine rationality permeating the laws governing the Universe. The scientific inquiry, initiated in the antiquity, was but a first attempt to unlock the mysteries hidden in nature and to provide natural explanations of the observed phenomena. Inasmuch as today the Aristotelian physics is considered as a primitive and inadequate account of the workings of the Universe, it led to the formulation of metaphysics that – for hundreds of years to come was considered to give insight into the most fundamental and general principles of reality. For instance, this includes the celebrated notion of *substance* on which most of the human common sense thinking continues to rest.

The advent of Christianity, however, did not occur by means of a clearly formulated doctrine with a well established conceptual framework but as the so called *sacra pagina*, namely, the books of the New

⁸ O. Pedersen, *The Two Books: Historical Notes on Some Interactions Between Natural Science and Theology*, Vatican City 2007, p. 29.

Testament, written down not by philosophically versed authors but by simple witnesses of the life and the works of Jesus Christ. Some influences of the Greek thought can be already found in the Old Testament in such books as the Book of Wisdom or the Maccabees. In addition to this, elements of the Greek thought penetrated into the Old Testament through the Hebrew to Greek translation of the Septuagint. In the New Testament, examples such as the opening verses of the Gospel of St. John and some statements in the Pauline writings do indicate of a more advanced conceptual apprehension of revelation.⁹

The real crystallization of doctrine, however, began as the content of revelation came into the full contact with the philosophy of the ancient Greece at the turn of the 2nd and 3rd century. This philosophy offered a particularly suitable conceptual environment for the deepened exposition of the tenets of faith thereby unlocking the proper dynamic character of Tradition as specified by the conciliar constitution *Dei Verbum*. Interestingly enough, the very meeting point of the Greek thought with Christianity involved the bilateral conviction on the rationality immanent in the structure and the workings of nature. On the part of Christianity, this conviction appeared as early as around the turn of the first century in the works of St. Clement of Rome, whose affirmation of the cosmic order and the harmonious interrelation of all constituents of the Universe was a clear indication that the demythologization of nature had already made its way into the minds of the early Church fathers. St. Clement writes:

The heavens revolve as He has ordained and are subjected to Him in peace. Day and night complete the revolutions He has decreed, and the one does not disturb the other. Obeying His command the sun and the moon and the choir of the stars roll on in harmony without deviating from their prescribed paths. The earth bears fruit in the proper seasons in agreement with His will. [...] The mighty Lord and Creator [...] has obliged all these creatures to work together in peace and concord as it behooves the universe, and even more us, who have sought shelter under His mercy.¹⁰

9 E.g., 1 Cor 13:12: "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known."

10 St. Clement of Rome, *Letter to the Corinthians*, Chap. 20, in: *Ancient Christian Writers*, vol. 1, Westminster, Maryland 1946, p. 22.

The patristic conviction on the cosmic order and harmony greatly strengthened the monotheistic belief in the one God, the creator of the Universe. The assimilation of the Greek thought by the emerging Christian doctrine facilitated the origin and the development of the speculative theology with Origen, the famous pillar of the Alexandrian School at the turn of the 2nd and 3rd century, as its founding father. The speculative theology was equipped with the unique capacity of rational argumentation and defense against error as exemplified, for instance, by the first four councils in the 4th and 6th century thereby attesting to the importance of reason in the matters of faith.

Based on the above, it is evident that the marriage of the Greek philosophy and the Biblical faith constitutes the fundamental characteristics of Christianity where the rationality contained in the Revelation falls upon the rationality inherent in the conceptual frameworks developed by means of the scientific inquiry. Since this inquiry engages the study of the principles governing the Universe, the famous metaphor of the Two Books: *The Book of Revelation* and *the Book of Nature*, traceable to the works of St. Augustine, justifies the resonance between the Greek philosophy and the Biblical faith.¹¹ In other words, the meeting of logos as deciphered from the Book of Nature and implanted in philosophy with the Logos that reveals itself must agree for they are indeed the same.

DEHELLENIZATION: UNDOING AQUINAS

A unique contrapuntal harmony of faith and reason reached its climax in the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas in which reason illuminated the content of faith (*fides quaerens intellectum*) and faith provided the proper basis for the broadened understanding beyond the natural powers of the human intellect (*credo ut intelligam*).¹² It is not as frequently accentuated, however, that the genius of Aquinas became truly manifest as he cleverly exchanged the Neoplatonic conceptual foundation of theology for the Aristotelian on the premise that the latter would offer a more precise and scientifically sound conceptual framework

11 E.g., O. Pedersen, *The Two Books*, op. cit., xv–xix.

12 Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio*, https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091998_fides-et-ratio.html (21.08.2019), Art. 43.

wherein the rules of logic could assure a considerably greater inferential power. In doing so Aquinas demonstrated great intellectual flexibility in affirming the auxiliary role of philosophy in theology whereby he eschewed any *a priori* predilection for a particular type of philosophical enterprise.

The significance of the hellenistic spirit essential to Christianity comes also to the fore in a negative way as one turns to these episodes in its history that are marked by the diminishing role of rationality in favor of arbitrariness as a founding concept of the theological inquiry. In his papal address to the representatives of science at the University of Regensburg in Germany on September 12, 2006, Ratzinger directly pointed to the fact of the dehellenization of Christianity by stating:

The thesis that the critically purified Greek heritage forms an integral part of Christian faith has been countered by the call for a dehellenization of Christianity – a call which has more and more dominated theological discussions since the beginning of the modern age.¹³

Moreover, in consonance with the acknowledgement of the great value of the theological method of St. Thomas Aquinas, Ratzinger clearly perceives the dehellenization of the Christian thought as the departure from this very method set in motion by thinkers belonging to the generation directly following that of the Angelic Doctor. Ratzinger does not hesitate to infer the following:

In all honesty, one must observe that in the late Middle Ages we find trends in theology which would sunder this synthesis between the Greek spirit and the Christian spirit. In contrast with the so-called intellectualism of Augustine and Thomas, there arose with Duns Scotus a voluntarism which, in its later developments, led to the claim that we can only know God's *voluntas ordinate*.¹⁴

13 J. Ratzinger (Benedict XVI), *Glaube, Vernunft und Universität. Erinnerungen und Reflexionen*, „Acta Apostolicae Sedis” 98 (2006) n. 10, pp. 728–739; official English translation: http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg.html (21.08. 2019).

14 J. Ratzinger (Benedict XVI), *Glaube, Vernunft und Universität. Erinnerungen und Reflexionen*, op. cit.

In such a short and compact address Ratzinger could not expand in fullness on the complexity of conceptual transformations that took place following the onset of voluntarism promoted by Duns Scotus. His insistence on the total freedom of God in determining the laws of the Universe did not quite accord with the spirit of rationality instilled by Logos.¹⁵ The ground for the resulting separation between faith and reason had been already prepared by the condemnations of the 1277 leading to the growing distrust of theologians to philosophers who slowly began to disengage philosophy from the theological inquiry. Likewise, philosophers went on to exercise their work without reference to religion as their motivating factor.¹⁶ This separation dominated the modern times and hasn't been restored until the present day.

Scotus' voluntarism was brought to its inevitable fulfillment in the philosophy of Wilhelm of Ockham, who is considered to be the father of *nominalism*. According to the nominalist doctrine, one cannot point to any general laws governing reality with the universals being only signs pointing to individual objects. Consequently, nature cannot be understood in terms of any regularities captured in the language of universal relations and the idea of understanding of the rationality of creation as the immanence of Logos loses its validity.¹⁷ Thus, voluntarism received its full conceptual support.

The voluntarist and nominalist influence resulted in the profound transformation of religious thinking in general which came into fruition in philosophical doctrines of Master Eckhart¹⁸ and Nicolas of Cusa.¹⁹ This movement bears the common title of *devotio moderna*. It is also commonly known that Martin Luther, the father of Reformation, was heavily influenced by Eckhart's thought and writings as well as of those of Wilhelm of Ockham. Taken literally, Luther's writings do indeed suggest his total contempt of reason in religious thinking as expressed in the following utterance:

15 E.g., O. Pedersen, *The Two Books*, op. cit., pp. 186–193.

16 J. Mączka, *Średniowieczny konflikt nauki z teologią (potępienie z 1277 r.)*, in: M. Heller, Z. Liana, J. Mączka, W. Skoczny, *Nauki przyrodnicze a teologia: konflikt i współistnienie*, Kraków–Tarnów 2001, pp. 115–126.

17 E.g., A. M. Maurer, *Medieval Philosophy*, Toronto 1982, pp. 265–291.

18 E.g., A. M. Maurer, *Medieval Philosophy*, op. cit., pp. 292–309.

19 E.g., A. M. Maurer, *Medieval Philosophy*, op. cit., pp. 310–324.

But since the devil's bride, Reason, that pretty whore, comes in and thinks she's wise, and what she says, what she thinks, is from the Holy Spirit, who can help us, then? Not judges, not doctors, no king or emperor, because [reason] is the Devil's greatest whore.²⁰

The literal reading of Luther's account of the role of reason in religious thinking often serves to qualify him as the greatest enemy of theology and Christianity altogether.²¹ There are sources, however, that insist on a more balanced appraisal of this visibly negative attitude towards rationality by claiming that Luther objected to the foreign and effectively distorting character of the Aristotelian and scholastic thought in theology only while retaining his affirmation of rationality more in consonance with revelation.²² In his address to the representatives of sciences Ratzinger seems to contradict this position by clearly identifying the Reformation with dehellenization:

Dehellenization first emerges in connection with the postulates of the Reformation in the sixteenth century. Looking at the tradition of scholastic theology, the Reformers thought they were confronted with a faith system totally conditioned by philosophy, that is to say an articulation of the faith based on an alien system of thought. As a result, faith no longer appeared as a living historical Word but as one element of an overarching philosophical system. The principle of *sola scriptura*, on the other hand, sought faith in its pure, primordial form, as originally found in the biblical Word. Metaphysics appeared as a premise derived from another source, from which faith had to be liberated in order to become once more fully itself.²³

On one hand, Ratzinger's insistence on the elimination of metaphysics as decreed by the Reformation seems to be corroborated by the afore-

20 M. Luther, *Last Sermon in Wittenberg ... Second Sunday in Epiphany, 17 January 1546*, *Dr. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, Herman Boehlaus Nachfolger, Weimar 1914, Band 51:126, Line 7ff.

21 E.g., P. Lisicki, *Luter – ciemna strona rewolucji*, Warszawa 2017, passim.

22 R. N. Frost, *Aristotle's "Ethics": The "Real" Reason for Luther's Reformation?*, "Trinity Journal" 18 (1997) no. 18 (2), pp. 223–242.

23 J. Ratzinger (Benedict XVI), *Glaube, Vernunft und Universität. Erinnerungen und Reflexionen*, op. cit.

mentioned impact of nominalism on Luther's thinking. On the other, it is not sufficient to infer that Luther would indeed oppose any type of rationality in theology. At a first glance, his attack on Aristotle might indeed be perceived as a showcase against scholasticism manifesting the harmony of faith and reason he was directly confronted with. Taking into account, however, that any conceptual framework used in theology must eventually show anomalies due to its finiteness in respect to the infinity of God, it might be rational to suspect that Luther did not contest the true deposit of faith but he objected to the doctrinal artifacts caused by the onset of the conceptual inadequacy of scholasticism. It is in this precise sense that Luther qualifies as a doctrinal "whistle blower" and his legacy might be considered to have a positive impact on the life of the Church. Thus it also becomes more intelligible why the emergence of lutheranism had been preceded by a combination of complex coincidence of social, political and moral factors affecting the Catholic Church in the 14th and 15th century.

THE CONTEMPORARY SCIENTIFIC METHOD: NEW HORIZON

The next important point of this study is that the Greek philosophy does not constitute the maximum of the human ability to uncover the mysteries of Logos hidden in nature. On the contrary, it is only the very beginning of the human encounter with rationality contained in nature. It will be argued that the Greek adventure with the discovery of rationality hidden in nature finds its continuation in the development of the modern scientific method launched in the 16th century by Galileo and soon brought into fruition by Isaac Newton. In other words, the hellenistic spirit can be confined neither to the literal language of the Greek philosophy nor to the conviction that the Greek metaphysics gave the exhausting and ultimate insight into the fundamental principles of reality. This is most evident in the depth of insight into the workings of the Universe that this method was able to effect in the form of such sophisticated theories as quantum mechanics or general relativity.

The scientific method rests on two pillars: (1) the planned experiment that reveals regularities inherent in nature and (2) the language of mathematics that provides the proper means of expression of these

regularities.²⁴ These elements, however, were not invented with the method itself but they had been absorbed from the Platonic and empirical traditions professed by such thinkers as Roger Bacon at Oxford and running parallel to the scholastic preoccupation with Aristotle. Contrary to the still prevailing understanding of science as reductive in the positivist anti-metaphysical sense, the works of Albert Einstein and Karl Popper in particular have demonstrated that the scientific inquiry does not commence from the accumulation of the empirical data generalized to the universal laws but from a theoretical, that is, metaphysical hypothesis that is subsequently subject to empirical verification (falsification).²⁵ The contemporary science opens up great space for profound metaphysical speculation as it involves abstract mathematical structures irreducible to any sensorially observed phenomena.

Taking up the thought of Ratzinger on the dehellenization of the Christian thought discussed above, the renowned Polish philosopher, cosmologist and the Templeton Prize laureate, Michael Heller, makes the following bold statement:

In this context Benedict XVI spoke on the dehellenization, on the departure from the great stream of rationality, initiated by the Greeks. Of course, one does not mean here returning to the methods of the distant past nor any form of going back. The stream of the Greek rationality is by no means static, it is constantly flowing as a rapid torrent. The period of the Greek philosophy, patristics, the mediaeval theological schools – these were only the initial stages. If to say that they have brought forth the new incarnations of rationality is too much of a statement, they have certainly laid down foundations for these incarnations: the origin of the empirical sciences in the 17th century and the accompanying philosophical reflection. It is true that shortly strong atheistic tendencies began to dominate (enlightenment followed by different forms of positivism) and this could be one of the reasons why the Catholic theology isolated itself by a wall of censures and condemnations. It remains beyond doubt,

24 For a systematic account of the specificity of the contemporary scientific method see for example: A. F. Chalmers, *What is this thing called science?*, Indianapolis–Cambridge 1993.

25 A. Einstein, *O metodyce fizyki teoretycznej*, in: *Albert Einstein. Pisma filozoficzne*, red. S. Butryn, Warszawa 2001, pp. 180–187; K. Popper, *Logika odkrycia naukowego*, Warszawa 1977, pp. 32–33.

however, that the stream of the Greek rationality had today assumed the form of the development of the natural sciences. It is precisely these sciences that dictate the standards of rationality today, and the philosophical reflection that accompanies them, attempts to provide their proper reading and interpretation.²⁶

Similar opinions have been voiced by several scientifically inclined theologians, such as another world renowned laureate of the Templeton Prize, Arthur Peacocke.²⁷ Although Heller ostensibly agrees with Ratzinger that the dehellenuzation means the departure from the paradigm of rationality set in motion in the ancient Greece, their paths radically diverge in the appraisal of the understanding of the scientific rationality as a continuation of the Greek legacy. Ratzinger perceives the scientific rationality as a part of the second stage of dehellenuzation following that of the Reformation. He goes as far as to proclaim severe judgment on science in the address to its representatives already cited by saying:

First, only the kind of certainty resulting from the interplay of mathematical and empirical elements can be considered scientific. Anything that would claim to be science must be measured against this criterion. Hence the human sciences, such as history, psychology, sociology and philosophy, attempt to conform themselves to this canon of scientificity. A second point, which is important for our reflections, is that by its very nature this method excludes the question of God, making it appear an unscientific or pre-scientific question. Consequently, we are faced with a reduction of the radius of science and reason, one which needs to be questioned.²⁸

The two points raised by Ratzinger deserve now several critical remarks. Inasmuch as scientists will normally respect the methodological

26 M. Heller, *Teologia dzisiaj – detronizowanie królowej?*, Lectio magistralis, The Ceremony of the Conferral of the Doctor honoris causa degree at the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Kraków, June 22, 2016, in: *Promotio Doctoris Honoris Causa Pontificiae Universitatis Cracoviensis Joannis Pauli II Reverendissimus Professor Michael Heller*, Cracoviae 2016, pp. 53–62.

27 E.g., A. Peacocke, *Theology for a Scientific Age: Being and Becoming – Natural, Divine and Human*, Minneapolis 1993.

28 J. Ratzinger (Benedict XVI), *Glaube, Vernunft und Universität. Erinnerungen und Reflexionen*, op. cit.

diversity of the human sciences, the rapid progress of the cognitive sciences especially in the area of psychology and sociology reveals that what used to be the matter of a philosophical qualitative method receives much more rigorous treatment with the application of models subject to empirical verification.²⁹ This has been largely achieved by means of the theory of evolution with the natural selection as its principal mechanism resulting in the origin of such pioneering disciplines as the evolutionary psychology.³⁰ Moreover, thanks to the combination of theory of evolution with cosmology based on the general theory of relativity the historicity of the Universe, that is, its dynamic evolution from the moment of the Big Band has received its solid theoretical foundations.

It remains beyond doubt that one can legitimately debate on the pre-eminence of the scientific method as the superior mode of the acquisition of knowledge. Regrettably, Ratzinger's claim that science excludes the question of God attests to his far reaching ignorance of the deep philosophical reflection that surrounds this method and clearly points to the meaningfulness of this question from the perspective of sciences. Interestingly enough, this fact has been convincingly articulated by a famous German theologian and Ratzinger's older colleague, Karl Rahner.³¹ Moreover, although Albert Einstein did not acknowledge the existence of the transcendent God in the Christian understanding of the term, he did perceive science as a religious activity insofar as it involved the uncovering of the mysteries of rationality immanent in the physical reality.³² Both of the two points of Ratzinger's in regards to the reductive character of science as a paradigm of rationality do not seem to find support in the current metatheoretical reflection carried out within the philosophy of science. Consequently, his attempt to discredit science as the legacy of the Greek ethos of rationality and qualify it as a stage dehellinization of the Christian thought has to be recognized as unjustifiable. Interestingly enough, however, Ratzinger seems to have mitigated his attitude

29 For a detailed analysis of the scientific treatment of the problem of free will see: S. Spence, *The Actor's Brain: Exploring the Cognitive Neuroscience of Free Will*, Oxford 2009.

30 E.g., D. Buss, *Evolutionary Psychology: The New Science of the Mind*, London–New York 2016^s.

31 K. Rahner, *Nauka jako wyznanie*, in: K. Rahner, *O możliwości wiary dzisiaj*, Kraków 1983, pp. 62–80.

32 A. Einstein, *Jak widzę świat*, in: *Albert Einstein*, op. cit., pp. 379–383.

towards science recently as he has openly expressed his urge to incorporate the language of contemporaneity into the theological thinking.³³

Ratzinger's criticisms of the mathematical – empirical method of science mentioned above regard primarily the fundamental epistemological issues that in his view make this method inferior and reductive compared to other disciplines of the rational inquiry. In his point of departure, however, Heller takes the privileged epistemological status of the scientific method for granted and moves on to the discussion of the possible alterations and reinterpretations of the theological expression once the pre-scientific image of the world is exchanged for that obtained from contemporary physics, cosmology and evolutionary biology.³⁴ According to Liana, the hermeneutic category of the picture of the world consists of two principal components: (1) “a certain complete set of convictions on the fundamental characteristics and the mode of the functioning of the Universe, man and cognition itself” and (2) “a certain intellectual background or a specific background knowledge of all possible cognitive behaviors of man with the theological and scientific cognition inclusive.”³⁵ The validity of the category of the picture of the world relies on the contextual character of the language involved in any theological expression.

As evident from Heller's quote given above, the constant update of this picture by the theologians as they strive to conceptually express the deposit of faith in the proper sense constitutes the continuation of the Greek rationality that stood at the origins of the Christian theological thought in the times of the early Church fathers. If the true spirit of Tradition is then meant as theology's strict adherence to the continuously developing standards of rationality gradually unveiling the depths the divine Logos, then the scientifically driven theology is but the *par excellence* incarnation of Tradition with the unique capacity of the unceasing growth of the theological insight as stipulated by the Conciliar Constitution *Dei Verbum*. In such circumstances, the often feared category of the *development of doctrine* receives its solid methodological support and the direction of the strengthening of the theology's conceptual founda-

33 Benedykt XVI, *Ostatnie rozmowy*, Kraków 2016, pp. 276–278.

34 M. Heller, *Scientific Image of the World*, “Studies in Science and Theology” 6 (1998), pp. 63–69.

35 Z. Liana, *Teologia a naukowe obrazy świata*, in: *Wiara i nauka*, red. J. Mączka, Kraków 2010, pp. 70–71.

tion based upon the up-to-date scientific reading of Logos immanent in the Universe determines the legitimate *rationality* of this development. Clearly then, this rationality must engage the *hermeneutics of continuity* insofar as it conveys the invariable truths contained in the deposit of faith. In parallel to this, however, it must entail the *hermeneutics of rupture* resulting from the replacement of the scientifically outdated pictures of the world. The rationality of the development of doctrine can be then considered to rest on two seminal hermeneutical principles remaining with each other in the relation of complementarity. This issue, however, necessitates a more in-depth historical and methodological treatment to elucidate its proper meaning and specificity.

A CASE STUDY: FROM STATIC TO DYNAMIC

Although Heller's calls for the application of the scientific picture of the world are abundant, his original research in this area concerns issues pertaining to the methodology of theology and the natural theology. These include: the theology of science, logic in theology and the theological naturalism. Heller's treatment of the systematic theological issues in which the truths of Revelation become the subject of analysis from the perspective of the scientifically updated picture of the world is limited to a few selected themes such as creation and eschatology. While commenting on the theological import of the theory of evolution, however, Heller does not hesitate to state that it will necessitate the reconsideration of such theological questions as evil and suffering as well as the reinterpretation of a number of fundamental religious truth such as the original sin and redemption.³⁶

Moreover, Heller indicates several theologians who have already taken up the challenge of reformulating theology in view of the evolutionary picture of the world and made contribution to the emerging discipline of theology known as the *evolutionary theology*. It is not at all surprising that the pioneering position is granted to Teilhard de Chardin who is followed by Karl Rahner and Jorgen Moltman. It turns out, however, that this particular expression of the scientific rationality in theology continues to receive increasing attention in the theological milieu as

36 M. Heller, *Sens życia i sens Wszeczeńswiata*, Tarnów 2002, p. 150.

evident in the works of Denis Edwards³⁷ and John F. Haught,³⁸ who has been already mentioned at the beginning of this essay. Moreover, the problem of the original sin has been the subject of the ongoing discussions from both historical and systematic perspectives offering a variety of solutions in regards to its historicity and its metaphorical character portraying the imperfection of the human condition.³⁹

In order to substantiate the claim that the shift to the scientific picture of the Universe equips theology with rationality superior to that proper to the pre-scientific one and thus offers a deeper insight into the meaning of Revelation, the change in the specificity of the theological expression upon the alteration of the picture of the Universe from the static to the dynamic (evolutionary) will be briefly surveyed. The vertical static picture of the Universe of the pre-scientific era rests mainly on the dualist vision of reality comprising the immutable and timeless realm of the celestial spheres with their proper perfections and the earthly temporal zone in the state of becoming whose perfection only analogically reflects that of the celestial spheres.⁴⁰ The human destiny acquires its significance in the longing for the liberation of the human soul from the material world and the ultimate union with the atemporal Absolute. As Haught suggestively points out, such a picture of the Universe underpins most of the traditional Christian theology emphasizing the need of flight from the temporal existence and fostering the integrity of the original creation consequent upon the the profound sense of defilement and corruption following the Fall. Ultimately, it leads to the moralistic perfectionism and to the cult of the exaggerated shame and expiation.⁴¹

37 D. Edwards, *The God of Evolution. A Trinitarian Theology*, Minnesota 1999.

38 J. Haught, *Is Nature Enough?: Meaning and Truth in the Age of Science*, Cambridge 2006; J. Haught, *God After Darwin: A Theology of Evolution*, Boulder CO 2008; J. Haught, *Making Sense of Evolution: Darwin, God and the Drama of Life*, Louisville 2010; J. Haught, *The New Cosmic Story: Inside Our Awakening Universe*, New Haven–London 2017.

39 E.g., M. Majewski, *Grzech pierwotny. Nowe modele lektury Księgi Rodzaju w teologii katolickiej w kontekście współczesnych nauk przyrodniczych*, "Ex Nihilo. Periodyk Młodych Religioznawców" 2017 nr 17, pp. 1–31.

40 E.g., J. Mączka, *Przedkopernikańska kosmologia a teologia (średniowieczny obraz świata)*, in: M. Heller, Z. Liana, J. Mączka, W. Skoczny, *Nauki przyrodnicze a teologia*, op. cit., pp. 127–139.

41 J. Haught, *Resting on the Future*, op. cit., pp. 17–28, 60–61.

Haught quite rightly insists that such a theological stance lacks biblical foundation for it reduces the economy of salvation only to humans thereby disregarding the promise of the *new creation* so abundant throughout the Holy Scriptures.⁴² The new creation means that not only the humans but the entirety of creation will be brought to the state of future perfection. It turns out that this biblical teaching finds its better support in the scientific dynamic picture of the Universe where the evolution of the human species constitutes part of the history of the whole Universe from the moment of the Big Bang. The incorporation of the dynamic picture of the Universe into the theological thinking has been pioneered by Teilhard de Chardin and encouraged by the Constitution of the Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*.⁴³ In such circumstances, one can attempt to rationally combine the destiny of man with the destiny of the Universe and thus perceive the entirety of the Universe's history in view the salvific work of God. This seems to be corroborated by the specificity of the Darwinian mechanism of the *natural selection* which makes the state of the initial perfection unlikely. Interestingly enough, Haught goes as far as to propose his own *metaphysics of the future* to justify the course of the Divine action as drawing the Universe into its perfection from the future and thus strengthening the sense of the Christian hope. This proposal has been provoking both enthusiastic affirmation⁴⁴ as well as harsh criticisms mainly due to the lack of the proper grounding of his metaphysics of the future in the achievements of the contemporary sciences.⁴⁵ Although the perspectives of the evolutionary theology reach out

42 J. Haught, *Resting on the Future*, op. cit., pp. 17–28, 60–61.

43 Vatican II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, in: *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, op. cit., Art. 5, pp. 906–907: “The scientific mentality has wrought a change and in the cultural sphere and on habits of thought, and the process of technology is now reshaping the face of the earth and has its sights set on the conquest of space. The human mind is, in a certain sense, broadening its mastery of the time—over the past through the insights of history, over the future by foresight and planning [...]. And so mankind substitutes a dynamic and more evolutionary concept of nature for a static one, and the result is an immense series of new problems calling for a new endeavor of analysis and synthesis.”

44 E.g., G. L. Schaab, *An Evolving Vision of God: The Theology of John F. Haught*, “Zygon” 45 (2010) no. 4, pp. 897–905.

45 W. P. Grygiel, D. Wąsek, *Is the Universe Impregnated with Meaning? A Critical Survey of John Haught's Metaphysics of the Future Based Evolutionary Theology*, “Zygon”,

today much broader,⁴⁶ the selected remarks just discussed yield sufficient background to appreciate the increase of the depth of the theological insight upon the implementation of the dynamic picture of the Universe as the foundation of the theological expression. Thus the deposit of faith continues to reveal its content as it falls upon conceptual frameworks capable of unlocking its hidden meanings that become evident through the dynamicity of Tradition.

CONCLUSIONS

A famous 19th century German physicist, Heinrich Hertz, the discoverer of the radio waves uttered a famous phrase that has been often cited by philosophically inclined theoretical physicists: “the equations are wiser than those who wrote them.”⁴⁷ This phrase is most frequently quoted in the context of the general theory of relativity to indicate that its mathematical formalism contains in itself the conceptual potential to yield solutions far beyond the expectations of those who stood at the theory’s origin. By way of analogy one can propose that the inquiry carried out in this study has shown that, in accordance with the conciliar constitution *Dei Verbum*, the “wisdom” of deposit of faith handed over to the Apostles manifests itself through the deepening of the insight into the Divine mysteries as this deposit falls upon conceptual frameworks refracting greater penetration into the Book of Nature. Since the degree of this penetration achieved by the contemporary sciences significantly exceeds that which was at the disposal in the times of antiquity, theology constructed on the conceptual foundation of these sciences most naturally qualifies as the *par excellence* continuation of the doctrinal tradition developed with the use of the pre-scientific conceptual bases. What is most important, however, is that this continuity does not rely on any arbitrary methodological principle or convention but its soundness has its direct source in the rationality of the Universe as the expression of the immanence of Logos. The privileged status of the scientifically

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46 W. P. Grygiel, *What is invariant? On the possibility and perspectives of the evolutionary theology*, “Studia Koszalińsko-Kołońskie” 2018 nr 52, pp. 83–101.

47 M. Heller, *Co to znaczy, że przyroda jest matematyczna?*, in: M. Heller, J. Życiński, *Matematyczność przyrody*, Kraków 2010, p. 9.

driven theology in comparison to theologies founded hypothetically on other conceptual frameworks is additionally justified by the fact that this theology rests on concepts having clear relation to experience. Should such relation be not detectable, there arises a danger that a given conceptual framework acquires a status of an *a priori* necessity thereby blocking further progress of theological insight and hindering the dynamicity of Tradition. Also, the lack of an obvious relation of concepts to experiment may lead to a risky situation in which they will cease to yield any representation of Logos immanent in nature and thus become pure fantasy. Consequently, a major distortion of a given theological expression may result. Last but not least, the scientifically driven theology provides a solid tool for the re-hellenization of the contemporary culture through which theology can reclaim its place and meaning in the minds of those who experience their professional lives – scientific, political or business – as devoid of any reference to Transcendence.

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