

Articles

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The Crisis of Truth, and Its Impact on Human Actions

Abstract

Not only does Moral Theology tell us what we should do, but it also provides the reasons why we should do some things and avoid others. Over the centuries Christians paid attention to God's creatures because they realised that He speaks to us through them and reveals His will as well (Rom 1). This issue also became the object of metaphysical inquiry. The concept of the truth of all things explained how man gets knowledge about God's will through his creatures, which he subsequently should take into account in his moral conduct. The Enlightenment proclaimed human freedom from religious beliefs and restrictions. Its philosophy, known as modern philosophy, tried to „conquer” metaphysics and the notion of the truth of all things. This paper presents these efforts and their consequences.

Keywords

human moral conduct, metaphysics, the truth of all things, modern philosophy, ontology, Enlightenment

1. Introduction

We might find ourselves subject to some confusion should we consider that there is nothing constant in man and his behaviors; that all his values and consequently his moral attitude depend on the culture any given person may belong to. If many people in any particular culture acknowledge as good a certain action which has been recognized as morally good for centuries, everything seems to be in order. However, when large numbers of citizens begin to acknowledge as morally good, or at least acceptable, something that in the past was acknowledged as morally wrong, some confusion arises. The main problem is who decides what is good and what is evil, and on what basis. Is it the prerogative of the citizens to make such a decision? If so, do they state it on their own or do they rely on some authority, religious or secular, e.g. the Church, the government or a supreme court? Western civilization has long recognized a set of moral rules known as God's commandments, and some people will also include the natural law as an authority for determining the legitimacy of actions. Moral solutions given by the latter are compatible with the Decalogue. Nevertheless, we are recently witnessing another moral attitude, known as ethical pluralism, i.e. that there may be many different moral solutions for the same situation (IVF, abortion, same sex union, transsexualism, etc.). Catholics are aware of this situation, and it requires some reliable comment or explanation.

A review of the history of Western culture confirms these observations. There was a time when nearly all moral convictions were unequivocal and compatible with the Bible and with the moral teaching of the Church. This does not mean that there were not sinners at that time. They were there, but they also were aware of their sins, i.e. when they sinned, they, and the society at large, knew they had done wrong. Today we also have sinners, but many of them do not admit to that fact, nor recognize that what they do is wrong. This is one of the reasons why the common awareness changed so dramatically; why so many people lost their moral compass; why instead of unequivocal moral judgement, ethical pluralism is invoked, i.e. the outlook that there are many different solutions to any given moral situation, and that they are all equally acceptable, even those solutions that contradict each other. Although we acknowledge that some changes in the moral evaluation of human actions may take place, it seems that some changes are so radical that they must have been the result of a shift that caused them. This paper intends to show how the evolution within Western philosophy contributed to the new moral environment.

2. Moral theology and its relationship to philosophy

Moral theology is the branch of theology that deals with human moral behavior in light of God's revelation. However, moral theology does not refer exclusively to the Holy Bible and its complement known as Tradition. It also refers to any philosophy that helps to better understand moral requirements in a specific time and within a specific culture. This relationship in particular concerns the New Testament which, unlike the Old Testament, requires a person to make greater use of reason in moral conduct. As St. John Paul II expresses it in his encyclical letter *Fides et ratio*, „Moral theology has perhaps an even greater need of philosophy's contribution. In the New Testament, human life is much less governed by prescriptions than in the Old Testament. Life in the Spirit leads believers to a freedom and responsibility which surpass the Law. Yet the Gospel and the Apostolic writings still set forth both general principles of Christian conduct and specific teachings and precepts. In order to apply these to the particular circumstances of individual and communal life, Christians must be able fully to engage their conscience and the power of their reason. In other words, moral theology requires a sound philosophical vision of human nature and society, as well as of the general principles of ethical decision-making” (FR 68). Since there are many philosophical trends, we also need to be careful because we need „a sound philosophical vision of human nature and society” which is to help us to better understand moral obligations. That is why in moral theology we very often refer to St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274)¹ and his moral teaching.

There are at least two important features that make the philosophy of St. Thomas particularly suitable for resolving the ethical problems we confront. Among these are the objectivism of knowledge and its openness to transcendence. Objectivism consists of a specific attitude of a philosopher, which J. Pieper describes as follows: „Knowledge is the relation between the subject and the object, determined in its 'that' by the subject, in its 'what' by the object. (...) The content, the 'what', the nature of the knowledge, is determined solely by the matter, the thing, the object—insofar as we are dealing with true knowledge. If, then, any determination of the content by the will of the subject enters into the knowledge, if the subject wishes one thing to be so, something to be different, and something else not to be at all; then, as far as this personal

¹ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio*, 83, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp_ii-enc_14091998_fides-et-ratio.html/ (20.03.2024).

subjective influence extends, there is actually no knowledge at all.”² Openness to transcendence consists of the recognition of God’s existence and His role in the world we live in. One of the most important traits of the reality that surrounds us and of which we are a part, is God’s creation of all things.³ There are many things produced by man. However, there are many things that do not come from him. He is not their author. These are things like planets, including the Earth, climate, man himself, life, health, sexuality, and many others. Man finds them, but he does not create them. Since he wants to employ them to various purposes, he also wants to know them. The knowledge about them may be objective or not. The problem of the time and place that we live in is that many directives given to citizens by those who govern states and/or their confederations (such as the European Union) are not based on objective knowledge. This paper intends to demonstrate that the decisive shift in the history of philosophy, as well as those consequences that have influenced human life in the West (its moral dimension in particular) has not resulted from objective knowledge about the world and mankind.

3. The role of philosophy and theology in human knowledge

There have been some basic convictions among the people living in Western civilization that seemed obvious for everybody who completed elementary education. Nowadays, we notice more and more often that these convictions disappear. People generally want to know the world they live in, their rights and duties concerning various communities they belong to, and rights and duties involving their own life. However, acquiring this kind of knowledge requires the expenditure of some effort. This is because most of the information we need is not obvious; it is hidden. Over the centuries certain methods of gaining suitable knowledge were established in the form of basic education, or, if somebody needed better knowledge, in the form of higher academic activities. During that time many great observations were made that have become the heritage of all

² J. Pieper, *Reality and the Good*, in: *Living the truth*, San Francisco 1989, wyd. Ignatius Press, p. 135.

³ The notion of „things” used here refers to its Latin meaning which is a gift to us from the Romans—as J. Pieper names it. In the Latin, *res* is more than a material thing. It is rather *ens*: everything that is, everything that exists. Cf. J. Pieper, *The Truth of All Things*, in: *Living the truth*, San Francisco 1989, wyd. Ignatius Press, pp. 32–33.

humanity. For instance, Aristotle (384–322 BC) noticed that many things have complex structures. This means that if we want to get full knowledge of them, we need to employ different kinds of science.⁴ E.g., if we want to get a perfect knowledge of the human being, biological sciences are not enough. We also need history, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, theology, and several others. The great problem of our time is that some representatives of empirical sciences, infatuated with their own achievements, overlook Aristotle's basic observation. They often deny the scientific usefulness of any kind of science other than their own.⁵ The „victims” of this approach are first and foremost Christian theology and certain trends of philosophy, specifically the philosophy that refers to classic metaphysics, to the philosophical position of Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas, which in this respect is compatible with Christian theology. Supporters of the peculiar apotheosis of empirical sciences say that theology and philosophy are not science at all, because they do not follow the scientific methods that are identified exclusively with those of empirical sciences. According to these people, the lack of any possibility for empirical verification of the results of theological and/or philosophical inquiries makes both these sciences useless. However, empirical methodology is not the only valid method of scientific investigation. There are different types of content people learn, e.g. values, meanings, aims, truth, etc., that are not explored by the empirical sciences. The latter answer rather the question as to *how* some things are built and *how* they work, but not what their relative values are among other things (i.e. which thing could be sacrificed for another in a morally correct way), what their meaning is for man, what their aims and especially what their truth is. The empirical sciences are blind to these issues which also can be investigated in a scientific way. That is why people who want to know the answers to questions concerning the value, meaning, goals, and truth of various things man copes with, need to refer to philosophy and theology.

⁴ Cf. A. Maryniarczyk, *Odkrycie wewnętrznej struktury bytów* (The discovery of the inner structure of beings), Lublin 2006, wyd. Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, p. 23.

⁵ It is particularly well seen in scientism. Cf. M. Stenmark, *What is scientism?*, “Religious Studies” (1997), vol. 33, no. 1, pp. 15–32.

4. The concept of truth in philosophy

The main issue of philosophy is the truth of things. It concerns their value, meaning, and goals. That is why it is also the main issue I want to address. However, before I do so, I need to recall some basic information about philosophy as a cognitive activity.

Philosophy, as we noted above, is the part of science that searches for the fundamental principles upon which reality is based and according to which it functions. Philosophical research requires some peculiar skills that make it a sophisticated and, to a certain extent, an exclusive human activity. These particular conditions contribute to the special place and recognition philosophy has taken over the centuries. These conditions have helped what philosophy has said about the world and man to be accepted. However, an incorrect understanding of these basic principles has contributed to the creation of incorrect worldviews and ideologies. „Incorrect” here means first and foremost any understanding that does not mirror reality; that is not based on things in all their dimensions, e.g. not reduced to their phenomenal plane as dealt with by empirical sciences. There are some authors who expose social problems created by erroneous descriptions of the phenomenal dimension of reality.⁶ Nevertheless, something similar or even more significant and dangerous may result from the improper philosophical description of reality. One of such cases is presented by J. Pieper in his essay *The Truth of All Things*. He writes about the truth of all things and about what happened to that truth within modern philosophy.

We need to remember that the classic philosophy, which in the last mainstream period was known as the ‘scholastic’, distinguished between two kinds of truth: the truth of cognition and the truth of things.⁷ Both referred to the same classic definition of truth: *veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus*. We refer to the truth of cognition when our mind (*intellectus*) adjusts to the thing we want to know. When compliance between our mind and the thing occurs, we say that our knowledge is true. When we think about the truth of things, it is not the human intellect that adjusts to the thing, but the thing that adjusts

⁶ The essay *Degenerate Moderns. Modernity as Rationalized Sexual Misbehavior* by E. Michael Jones. San Francisco 1993, wyd. Ignatius Press, provides many examples of such descriptions.

⁷ The term „classic philosophy” is the same as used by M.A. Krąpiec. Cf. M.A. Krąpiec, *Czym jest filozofia klasyczna?* (What is classic philosophy?), „Roczniki filozoficzne” 45: 1997, n. 1, pp. 156–165.

to the mind. Let us imagine the painter who paints a picture. During his work he constantly adjusts the figures and colors on his picture to fit some idea he has in his mind. Thus, conversely to what we have in the case of the truth of cognition, this is not the human mind that adjusts to the thing, but it is the thing that is adjusted to the human mind. Finally, the painter accepts what he did, i.e. that what he painted mirrors his ideas concerning the picture; that there is full compatibility between his mind and the thing. In this case, in regard to the nature of truth, we also say that: the picture is true, because it mirrors the painter's intellect. There is *adaequatio rei et intellectus*. Here, we have also distinguished truth.

Subsequently, the picture is exposed to the public in one of the famous galleries. We may be surprised at what the public wants to know when it observes the picture. People may admire the external forms of the work: its physical dimensions, even its weight and the chemical components of the colors, i.e. all the elements of the picture that are usually the object of empirical science. However, it seems that what is most important for the visitors is not these elements, but rather the artistry of the picture. This artistry refers to the idea the painter had in his mind when he created his picture. We also know, that the people may learn about that artistry because the picture is true, i.e. it mirrors the ideas of the artist's mind. Because of this truth, i.e. the truth of this thing, we need here to repeat it, and emphasize that we are able to know the ideas the painter had with regard to his picture.

Now, we need to think about things we meet in our life. Some of them, like all artefacts, come from people as their works: cutlery, table settings, various electronic devices, vehicles for transportation, armory, and others. We may know how to use them, because they mirror the ideas of their constructors. If we have some difficulties in using them properly, we can read user's manuals in which these ideas are explained. The same pattern applies to God's creatures, because they also mirror His mind, and we can recognize the ideas He had with regard to His creatures, i.e. to such things as man, human life, human sexuality, marriage, etc. If we encounter difficulties in this recognition, we have a unique „user's manual” which is the Holy Bible, along with the assistance we have from a “help desk”, that is, some people whom God called to help others to know His mind. Thus, knowledge about God's plans for creation is possible thanks to the truth of things. If anybody wants to act rationally (i.e. in a way proper to the human being), he or she needs first to have some knowledge about the things we deal with. This knowledge should be as full as possible, which means it should not

be reduced to what empirical science says about the things in question. If possible, we also need to know the meaning of the thing, its value among other things, and its right purpose as determined by God. All this means that rational human conduct requires serious consideration of the truth of all things.

Unfortunately, we also know that this kind of knowledge about things may prohibit a person from some actions, and because of that it may be troublesome knowledge. The knowledge about marriage as an exclusive, faithful, and indissoluble union of a man and a woman may prohibit a spouse from committing adultery. Accurate knowledge about human life and the meaning given to it by God may be a real obstacle to any attempt against human life, such as abortion or euthanasia. The truth of things created by God disturbs some people in their plans. That is why it seems to them that it would be better if such truth disappeared from philosophy and from the public discourse. Modern philosophy played a major role in achieving this goal.

5. Modern philosophy and the truth of all things

In the already-mentioned essay by J. Pieper (1904–1997) *The Truth of All Things*⁸, the German philosopher traced the way the modern philosophers achieved their goal, which was the rejection of the concept of the truth of things from the mainstream of philosophical discourse. Pieper begins his essay with a description of the climate in which modern philosophy developed. Its representatives were opponents of scholasticism (the predominant philosophical mainstream trend prior to the advent of modern philosophy). Modern philosophers despised the achievements and theorems of scholastic philosophy. The main victim of this attitude was classic metaphysics together with the truth of all things.

Generally, any new philosophical trend tries somehow to contrast itself with the intellectual weaknesses or incorrect and untrue views of the previous one. This is very much the situation of modern philosophy, which took its place in mainstream philosophy after scholasticism. The modern philosophers were convinced that their philosophy was much better than scholasticism. Among other things, this self-esteem was based on the achievements of empirical science, which had succeeded in negating a variety of scientific convictions from the time of scholasticism. Scholasticism seemed to undermine modern philosophy's

⁸ See footnotes 2 and 3.

scientific methodology. However, not everything that was recognizable as acceptable within empirical science was equally acceptable within philosophy, especially as far as issues of metaphysics might be concerned. In Pieper's essay, he presents the reasoning behind the basis on which modern philosophers arrived at the total negation of the truth of all things. But in a break with the usual practice, they imposed this negation despite lacking the customary arguments asserting the shortcomings of the previously accepted standard.

The truth of things, as we already know, is that which fulfills the requirement of the truth; that is, the agreement (*adaequatio*) between the intellect and a thing that embodies the ideas present in the intellect of its creator. In the case of God's intellect, all his creatures are true, because they embody the ideas that God intended for them. What is more, the human intellect, as created by God, is able to get to know those divine ideas. Also, things are created in such a way that they are open to the knowing mind. Thus, we have here two important relationships: the first between the divine intellect and a thing, and the second between that thing and the human intellect. In this way, things contain within themselves a kind of a mean to find out about them and about their Creator.⁹

The first major inroads into the description of the truth of all things come from St. Augustine (354–430) who said that a thing is true when it conforms to its idea, i.e. to the idea of that thing. This statement introduces the idea of that thing's existence separately from the idea of that thing in God's intellect. We can abstract that idea from a thing, but it does not mean that in God's creatures that idea exists on its own, i.e. that it has its own existence independent from what God intended for it to have. St. Albert the Great (died 1280), who was St. Thomas Aquinas' master, presented a point of view similar to that of St. Augustine. He maintained that a thing is true if it conforms to its proper essential form.¹⁰ However, in both cases Pieper underlines that neither of those thinkers understood that conformity as being the thing's independence from God and His creative mind.

Modern philosophy renewed the view of the thing's identity as conforming to that thing's idea. However, it presented its view in such a way as though the ideas had had their own existence independent from the Creator and His mind. Thus, things were viewed as being dependent on their ideas,

⁹ This observation is confirmed by the Apostle St. Paul in his *Letter to the Romans* (1:20).

¹⁰ J. Pieper sees here the influence of Avicenna. Cf. *The Truth of All Things*, in: *Living the truth*, San Francisco 1989, wyd. Ignatius Press, p. 68.

but the ideas themselves gradually became independent from the Creator. In the XVII and XVIII centuries some philosophers followed the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas concerning the truth of all things understood as conformity between those things and the mind of their Creator, while others interpreted it as conformity between the thing and its idea as identified with the thing's essence. Although initially no modern philosopher purported the independence of the ideas of things from God (they followed what was said by Augustine and Albert the Great) this understanding became more and more common.

One of the representatives of this view was Rudolf Goclenius (1547–1628) who maintained that the truth of things is the conformity of all things with God's intellect and with their own essence. Christian Wolff (1679–1754) omitted the first part of this statement but preserved the second one. Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) found a new solution for the truth of all things: he stated that the concept of this truth is „fertile and tautologic” and removed it from the philosophical discourse. This position was accepted by mainstream modern philosophy which resulted not only in the renunciation of the concept of the truth of all things, but also of classic metaphysics in its entirety.

Since we already know that any new trend in mainstream philosophy is usually built on perceived mistakes or incorrect views of its predecessors, we want to observe how this rule works in the case of modern philosophy and the truth of all things. Pieper's essay suggests that the antimetaphysical position of modern philosophy was not based exclusively on a misunderstanding of the truth of all things. The main reason for that position did not come from philosophy. Pieper says that there was then a strong desire to abandon the existing dependence on some old views of man and the world. Richard Kroner (1884–1974), another German philosopher, indicates a strong will for the „conquest of the metaphysics of being, the transfer of the center of gravity from the object to the subject.”¹¹ Thus, things (beings) should have lost their role as means in our dialogue with God. They were thereafter divested of their function of communicating His will to us. Now it was man who decided everything without being subject to influence from any outside authority. From that point on, things could no longer tell us anything about themselves, at least nothing meaningful that should influence our moral decisions and

¹¹ Cf. J. Pieper, *Reality and the Good*, in: *Living the truth*, San Francisco 1989, wyd. Ignatius Press, p. 142.

their implementation. It was thereafter we, and only we, who should decide about our moral choices. It might be said that there is some logical connection between this affirmation and other crucial statements in Kant's philosophy, namely that practical reason (employed by man in his actions) and theoretical reason (employed for knowing reality) are independent, and that it is not possible to get to know a thing in itself.

6. Classic metaphysics and ontology

As it was said above, any new stage in the development of philosophy is based on its opposition to its predecessors. However, this opposition should be founded on scientific arguments which prove incorrectness or mistakes in the earlier views of the world. The problem with modern philosophy is that it failed to identify falsehoods in either classic metaphysics or the concept of the truth of all things. Classic metaphysics was nevertheless deleted from the mainstream of philosophical discourse. The main problem is that this redirection was not based on rational premises proper to changes in philosophy or science. It was rather a voluntaristic shift; philosophers took this new course, but neither in the way proper to science nor to philosophy (if we recognize the latter as separate kind of science). Thus, they determined a new way in which we should see man and the world.¹² In taking this new direction, the concept of reality which was the object of classic metaphysics was removed from the human experience as though it had never existed. This decision is nonetheless compatible with the well known Enlightenment adage *sapere aude!* which means *dare to be wise*. „To be wise” came to mean that philosophers should take the lot of humanity in their own hands, to follow human reason, and to leave previous human beliefs and views of the world behind. In this case, previous human beliefs and views means beliefs and views based in religion. This decision was a kind of encouragement to mankind: emancipate yourself from your religious beliefs and religious restrictions. Empirical sciences will

¹² This does not mean to indicate that the only reason for such a change was what happened within philosophy itself. There were other factors that also contributed to this process, e.g. religious movements and the Reformation. They are described in: B. S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation. How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2012, wyd. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

provide you ever-growing knowledge of all fields of human activities as well as the possibilities for controlling them.¹³

Many people have been convinced that the Christian worldview was attacked and restricted in Western culture on the basis of proper philosophical and rational reasoning, i.e. that human reason required that shift. The history of philosophy, however, shows that this change did not result from rational inference. It was rather a further step in the realization of a new conviction that Western culture adopted during the Renaissance, that man himself should be the measure of all things.¹⁴ Modern philosophy seemed to confirm this conviction. Modern man became sure that in his world there was no room for both himself and God. It was to be man alone who was to become the only lord, and thus the only measure of all things. Thus, hostility against Christianity does not have any scientific foundation. It is the result of anger against God that enemies of the Church tried to justify by referring to wickedness perpetrated by certain people within the Church. This kind of justification nevertheless seems far from sufficient. It was rather an excuse to make a cultural change in which the most important role was to be played by the „enlightened” people appealing to the possibilities of human reason. Religion and theology were obstacles to the implementation of these intentions. „Anti-theological ire’ is not accidental to what modern philosophy is, it is its essence. To assure that the possibility of the truth of revelation is excluded from reason, reason must be self-constituted. Reason can be self-constituted and close off the possibility

¹³ „Beginning gradually in newly successful ways in the seventeenth century, science became the means by which to realize this ambition for control in the service of human desires, from Enlightenment *philosophes* through nineteenth century progressive liberals to present day eugenicist transhumanists. The greater the scientific understanding of nature, the greater is science’s power, and the greater are the ambitions to which human beings can aspire—and the fewer the limits, provided God is not in the picture.” B. S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation. How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2012, wyd. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, p. 58.

¹⁴ In the XIX century this idea was clearly expressed by R.W. Emerson (1804–1882): „Not God but the self-reliant, self-assertive individual was ‘the centre of things. Where he is, there is nature. He measures you, and all men, and all events.’ Indeed, ‘every new mind is a new classification’, and if ‘of uncommon activity and power... it imposes its classification on other men.’ (...) Prophetic words, those.” These are Emerson’s words as quoted by: B. S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation. How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2012, wyd. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, p. 121.

of revelation by constituting itself as a rule. And it constitutes itself as a rule by denying the immanent teleology of the mind towards truth.”¹⁵

In this context, the rejection of the truth of all things and of classic metaphysics in its entirety is not the result of progress in science (proper human reasoning that rejects whatever is untrue), but as a necessary step to give man the opportunity to take over God’s place. In this view then, it is man and only man who decides what the meaning and the purposefulness of particular things are; what is good and what is evil; what should be done and what should be avoided; and who should be promoted for acceptance of, and who should be punished for opposition to this new order. What may cause us anxiety is that this description mirrors contemporary mainstream Western culture, at least that culture that manifests itself in the majority of the social media and political agendas.

It may be said that the changes we are currently witnessing are not as radical as in this description. Even if metaphysics seems to be „conquered” we should not worry. Meanwhile, the reason for anxiety is not that there are changes in philosophy. The reason to worry is that these changes consist of an intentional rejection of truth in our culture in order to establish a new world without truth. Metaphysics has its own object and this object does not disappear when people „conquer” metaphysics. Metaphysics searches for the most basic properties of things: their essence, nature, value, and meaning. Thus, if we remove metaphysics, along with its contents, some fundamental questions concerning man and the world remain unanswered. Since life abhors a vacuum, modern philosophy prepared a substitute for classic metaphysics: this is the ontology that appeared in the XVII century.

Some people think that metaphysics and ontology are the same. However, there is a fundamental difference between them. Metaphysics is concerned with what already exists, with what is real; while ontology is concerned with the conditions previous to the thing’s existence. Ontology intends to establish the conditions for the existence of various things. Thus, the beginning of metaphysical reasoning is empirical, and moves towards some content that is hidden at first sight—the basic rules for what we can come to know. Ontology meanwhile does not start with *empiria*. It starts with some *human* reflection *a priori* in order

¹⁵ F. Slade, *Was Ist Aufklärung? Notes on Maritain, Rorty, and Bloom, With Thanks But Not Apologies to Immanuel Kant*, in: *The Common Things: Essays on Thomism and Education*, D. McInerney (ed.), Washington, DC 1999, wyd. American Maritain Association, p. 64.

to establish the basic rules for the existence of things. It is very important to notice that these rules or proprieties are invented by the human intellect, which is finite and prone to errors. If it is to establish the basic rules, these rules might also be wrong. Thus, in the place of rules imposed on things by God, i.e. the rules that already exist and that we can know, some people desire to impose their own rules, rules that they invented themselves for things they encounter.¹⁶

Are the advocates of the changes in question completely wrong? Could their intentions and inventions be completely arbitrary? In order to answer both these questions we need once more to realize that it is not man who creates the majority of the things we encounter, nor is it he who creates basic rules for their existence and functioning. His thoughts and intentions do not have power similar to that of God. In the Bible we find that God speaks His word and things come into being according to that word (Gen 1–2). Man, despite all his efforts, can do neither the same nor anything like it. V. Possenti writes: „It is a need for some unusual phantasy and a significant level of contempt of being and life to claim that the thought of an individual—or the thought of the hypothetical transcendental ‘I’—can create the thing when it thinks about it, subordinating it to the logical constructions of the pure apriorical thought which while creating its mental object as it wishes (...), it expects that the thing subordinates to it: What hubris and illusion! What incredible reversion of the direction of knowledge! This is not the existing thing which must subordinate to logical and apriorical mental object but contrary to that.”¹⁷

If the human efforts to establish basic rules for things are based on knowledge of the thing—of what is real—we could accept such an approach, since these efforts resemble what metaphysics does. If instead, some people follow the assumption that we cannot get knowledge about things (their essence, value, meaning, and basic rules of their functioning), and we need to reinvent these things according to our purposes which have nothing to do with reality, then

¹⁶ The way ontology works is described by A. Maryniarczyk. Cf. *Metafizyka a ontologie. Próby przewyciężenia metafizyki i ich paradoksy* (Metaphysics and ontologies. Attempts to overcome metaphysics and their paradoxes), Lublin 2015, wyd. Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu. It may happen that the rules invented by some ontology may be logically correct but unreal. The real existence of those rules is not their most important feature.

¹⁷ V. Possenti, *Powrót do bytu. Pożegnanie z metafizyką nowożytną* (Back to being. Farewell to modern metaphysics—quotation in the text is my translation from Polish), Lublin 2020, wyd. Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, p. 41.

various kinds of problems, including moral problems, begin. In contemporary life in the West we have many such examples, for instance in bioethics.¹⁸

7. Conclusion: A great danger to our civilization, and hope against all odds

When we seriously consider the changes that have taken place in philosophy, we should not sleep peacefully. This is because some people want to change our world and the rules of its functioning. While such people (it is a great paradox) encourage others to practice ecological life, i.e. life according to environmental rules, they intimidate and disturb them from living according to the most basic „ecological” rules, which are the ideas that God has for His creation (the world foremost among them). Since God speaks to us not only directly, but also through things He created, we are able to know His rules.

Humanity knows many Promethean ideas which seemed to change our world for the better. The word ‘Promethean’ here means intentions against God’s will. As far as we know them from history, their results were usually deplorable, resulting in human suffering and death. We know, especially here in Poland, what Marxism and communism are. There were also other antichristian ideologies which brought disastrous consequences: fascism, eugenics, and various nationalisms. All of them proved their irrationality. What might create anxiety is the fact that, surprisingly, some of them are currently experiencing a renaissance in the West. If we can say anything about human misfortune, it is difficult to imagine a more inhumane treatment than being forced (e.g by politicians in power) to live in an irrational way. And such a fate seems to be the most likely prospect for today’s generation, if politicians do not abandon their dream of replacing the truth with their irresponsible projects of a new world “created” against God’s will. Our only hope is to cling to God, who desires human good. We are conscious of God’s plans for us both from His revelation and as a result of our intellectual efforts within metaphysics with its basic issue which is the truth of all things.

¹⁸ E.g instead of recognizing the human embryo or fetus as an innocent human being as is the case, numerous „ontologists” in parliaments and hospitals try to establish that the embryo and/or fetus is not a human being, or at least that, although it is a living being it is not worthy of human rights.

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