

MARIAN ZAWADA OCD

## TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF DESIRE AS A *LOCUS THEOLOGICUS*

Drawing out the *significance* of desire and according it theological *import* enables us to grasp it in this way as a new *place* of encounter.<sup>1</sup> The case with desire can be similar to that of awareness. It was understood only as an awareness *of something*, until Descartes made of it a significant philosophical category, thanks to which phenomenological thought later became possible.

Considering the subject in general, the issue of desire did not awaken any special interest among theologians, whether on the part of the Scholastics (where it was considered an irrational element), or on the part of moral theology, which viewed it above all as covetousness or lust, making it a threat to the life of grace. The views of Sigmund Freud lead to this conception, in that he made desire a confused and predatory element of the subconscious.

In addition, just as it was at one time with the term “awareness,” so also here we have to deal with an idea which does not fit easily into a particular category, that is, it requires a semantic context in the form of “for something” or “for someone,” and is therefore an idea often understood as the desire *for something*, and one’s attention usually focuses on this latter term of the expression.

In the area of desire, we must point out that it is also a *diffused* idea, divided among the senses, heart, and will, revealing itself in the entire anthropological structure, but only as a *strengthening* of these aforementioned categories.

By way of introduction, it is worth mentioning that desire is an internal anthropological dynamism, which allows a person to reach out towards reality, establish contact with it, and realize his personhood. That which *is* at the same time awakens

---

<sup>1</sup> This article is an attempt to share the theological consequences of the concept of desire as discussed in my post-doctoral work: M. ZAWADA, *Homo desiderans Deum. Dynamika pragnienia Boga w wymiarze antropologiczno-duchowym*, Kraków 2011.

a desire, in which the known part of reality becomes *assimilated*. *He who Is* awakens the greatest desire and seeks *assimilation* in the union of persons.

The hierarchy of desires is a reflection of the values which a person *encounters* within or outside himself and at the same time attempts to respond to them: from the most basic ones of protecting and sustaining the life of the family and community, through cultural, intellectual and finally religious values and goods. It is desire in the religious sense which concerns us here.

In taking up the task of resolving here the question of desire, we define the “status” of desire, of which we wish to speak in approaching the idea itself and in reference to human structure. Next, the specific notion of desire from the point of view of human experience will be singled out. Finally, by means of the concrete *manifestation* of desire, it will be approached as a theological commonplace, so that in conclusion we may grasp the opportunity to take advantage of its strength not only in theology, but also in pastoral care.

## 1. THE PHENOMENON OF DESIRE

We can define desire in the Biblical sense as an orientation and striving toward that which *is above* (Col 3:1), in contrast to the chaotic craving (*appetites*) directed to things of the present, to what is earthly, and at the same time distinct from those forms entangled in evil (covetousness as a type of *concupiscentia* or *cupiditas*).

*Desiderium* (desire), which derives from the Latin word *sidus* (meaning ‘heavenly body,’ ‘star,’ ‘height,’ ‘splendor’), may convey an appropriate reference to the greatness of man, in contrast to those cravings which are directed to the earth (cf. Col 3:2), that is material and temporal goods. Desire perceives reality as *something to be wished for*, is united with it, and is nourished, “by that beauty, which is indissolubly linked with the truth of the thing.”<sup>2</sup> It does not derive from what is earthly. It is one of the most significant manifestations of personhood.<sup>3</sup> Desire *is awakened in the presence* of something which appears and comes as a good, a value, and is thus sensitive to the sphere of values. It awakens a person to make of these values something *which is his very own*.

For this reason, we must *extract* desire from its Freudian enclosure in the dark recesses of the subconscious and make of man above all a *homo desiderans*-a *being who desires*, where the whole dynamism of *being* derives precisely from that *aspiration* for what is above. Desire brings into the subjectivity of the person the principle of *transcending oneself*. It receives the form of *original longing*, of one’s own memory of lost greatness and praise; it becomes a search for *the original image*, the arche-

<sup>2</sup> A. CENCINI, *Świat ludzkich pragnień*, Kraków 2001, p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> See A. MANENTI, *Żyć ideałami. Między lękiem a pragnieniami*, Kraków 2005, p. 81.

type, and also – in a theological sense – is governed by the *intuition* of something, to which one wishes to *cling*.

In the broad sense, desire signifies a *tendency*, its dynamism, covering the path from *the one desiring to the desired*. It departs beyond the stable structure of the subject, *it sets out* on the path, and carries a person into a new field. It is a general and concrete expression of transcendence, the possibility of being *beyond*, which in spirituality is connected with the *ecstasy* of being.

Because man is by nature *incomplete* (classical philosophy calls this the imperfection of being), desire is manifested as the capacity *to be more*, it is manifested in movement towards something fuller and *more* intensive. The existence of desire convinces us that there is no end to this dynamism, as St. Gregory of Nyssa grasped in the form of *epektasis* – an unquenchable, burning sense of longing, present as well in eternal life.<sup>4</sup> In its *final outburst* into eternity it confirms its internal, everlasting state of accepting – it enables a knowledge and love of God that is ever new on the principle of the distinction of natures. Desire, as it encounters this distinction, is awakened once again.

In nature, desire finds an inherent lack of fulfillment, that is to say, that each successive realization of desire does not so much satisfy as open up to new desires. Luigi Giussani speaks of “the inaccessible Unknown.”<sup>5</sup> The *desired* has the form of an *invitation*, it awakens desire, and within it appears an awareness of the inadequacy regarding that to which it corresponds.

Desire is by nature unending in the sense that it is not bound either in its capacity or its contents and manner of operation, since every new desire that arises is intensified by its capacity to attain what is “higher” or “deeper.” It contains within itself an awareness that being was not formed in its totality, that it can *still be more*, insofar as it is inscribed in the “I am” of God. It is therefore a kind of progressive realization of its ever newer *not yet*.

In the theological sense, desire assumes the form of a coherent inclination towards God (*humanum desiderium Dei*), but this desire is only *a type of hunger* for God; it is a response to the desire of God (*desiderium Dei*), who desires man. Thanks to this *desire*, man can *realize his own subjectivity* in God, and the spiritual life thus attains its fullness. *Desiderium* encounters the unchangeability of God, and comes upon the truth that man is unchangeably *desired* by Him, because it is in the Eternal that man in some way finds his confirmation. Desire, thanks to God and in Him, will in the end be liberated.

<sup>4</sup> See J. DANIELOU, *Platonisme et Théologie Mystique*, Paris 1953, p. 298ff.

<sup>5</sup> L. GIUSSANI, *Chrześcijaństwo jako wyzwanie. U źródeł chrześcijańskiego roszczenia*, Poznań 2002, p. 14.

## 2. THE PLACE OF DESIRE IN THE HUMAN STRUCTURE

Desire possesses its own *history* – it first *has a beginning*, it next *makes its mark* in the subject, reveals itself, *sets out* towards something new, and in the end aspires to participation. This occurs on three levels: ontological, anthropological, and relational (axiological, psychological).

The first we can recognize as essential, since we treat desire most basically as an ontological potential. It is expressed in the capacity of passing over from potency to act. Desire then assumes the form of *the capacity to exist*. In that case, it forms its own type of *ontological axle*, and the domain of desire is the category of *potency*. In the history of philosophical thought it was known as the Platonic *dynamis*, a kind of inexhaustible power which moves all things toward their proper goals.<sup>6</sup>

What also comes into play here is also the essence of *inclination* itself as a force giving ontological direction. St. Edith Stein explains “[...] only something which becomes something can tend towards it, that is to say, something real which is not yet complete (and therefore not fully real, but is in fact real and at the same time possible – actual and potential).”<sup>7</sup>

Inclination is a *movement towards* desire; it is a kind of going out of what is *actual* and demanding something *more perfect*. In some manner, in the face of what is possible, it demands existence, it demands an act. The actual – that which is – becomes taken in brackets in desire, in some sense annulled so as to *make* a place for that which defines a higher degree of being.

Considering this first dimension as essential, we can state that desire as an *original ontological dynamism* is *prior* to the movement of one’s faculties, it is this movement, and more precisely – *it is in this movement*. For this reason, the second area of desire (let us call it *potential*), in which openness to reality is accomplished, refers to the movement of individual faculties. And so we have: the desire to perceive (the dimension of the senses), the desire to know (the intellectual dimension), and the desire to love (the volitional dimension).

Desire lies at the roots of *movement* itself, and at the same time is itself a movement. We must understand it in such a way that first there is, for example, the desire for knowledge, which spontaneously opens up to reality, and only later the process of knowing itself. Desire *precedes* the action of the faculties, it stands in their openness to the act, at the gate of access to reality, is a bridge, confirmation, and strengthening of the dialogic structure of man. This structure opens itself up in

<sup>6</sup> See M. ANDOLFO, *Concetto di „dynamis” ad Arystobulo a Plotino. Linee di sviluppo*, “Rivista di Filosofia Neoscolastica” 1(1996), p. 699–700.

<sup>7</sup> E. STEIN [TERESA BENEDICTA OF THE CROSS], *Byt skończony a byt wieczny*, Kraków 1995, p. 335–336.

desire, knowing and embracing with love, while at the same time making itself accessible to what is known and loved.

In the area of faculties we have to deal with the cycle of desire, its three stages. In the opening up of the faculties there follows: first, the *going out* to what is known (or intuited); next, its own way of *embracing* what is known, and then *returning* to oneself as enrichment.<sup>8</sup>

On this level, it is worth noticing that desire by its nature *aspires* and at the same time, in forming this *aspiration*, forms man himself. The format of man depends on these desires.

Finally, a third dimension of desire, which is manifested concretely as the area of relation, where the *entrance* into another subjective space is carried out (a personal or objective relation). This dimension makes us aware that reality itself is not neutral, that it is *active* in relation to desire, and refers to it as well. There exists also in the relational field a principle of *harmony*, of the correlation of what is desired with the desired. In the area of relation one can discern an element of *pretence*, leading to the point of forming and retaining bonds. Finally, in desire on the level of relation, there appears a particular *reconstruction of fullness*, as well as a *projection of wholeness*. We can find intellectual support on this level in the theory of participation.<sup>9</sup> This theory is useful especially in the theology of mystical union, where it leads to the participation of what is imperfect in the perfect.

Desire is in a certain sense the *axle of relations* as well as *the manner of grasping them*. In its *projection* it conquers division and otherness, *it goes forth* and *aspires* to union with the desired, coming to rest in *wholeness*. However, in the end, it does not lead so much to declaring the blissful state of achievement as to *readiness* to further opening, a confirmation that a person wishes *to remain* in that relation.

On the religious level, harmony is found in likeness, in some type of kinship, and going out “towards” may assume a form of *casting oneself* – an ecstatic disinterestance; and yet the full wholeness – of transforming union.

### 3. DESIRE IN THE STRATIFICATION OF EXPERIENCE

For the sake of experience, we can attain a new perspective thanks to *making a place* for desire among other important philosophical and theological categories.

In the theory of experience I would like to draw attention to one dimension. We understand it as a fundamental form of human knowledge. The Greek word

<sup>8</sup> Cf. M. ZAWADA, *Homo desiderans...*, p. 48.

<sup>9</sup> See J. HERBUT, *Partycypacja*, in: *Leksykon filozofii klasycznej*, ed. J. Herbut, Lublin 1997, p. 421; A.L. SZAFRAŃSKI, *Partycypacja, Geneza i rola pojęcia uczestnictwa w teologii św. Tomasza z Akwinu*, Warszawa 1973.

*peira*, from which the work *empeiria* derives, signifies *that which is lived through*, what a person has gone through, and more precisely – what *has passed* through him. Another important Greek word with this same meaning is *dokimasia* – that which has happened.

We must be aware that experience comprises everything which is known, through which a person has been guided, what he *has lived through*, and what has become a part of his own being. Embracing his experience, a person understands where he has arrived and what has formed him, and recognizes his *becoming*. Experience consists of what has been *assimilated*, incorporated into his life, and in some way taken root in his existence.

In experience, what dominates is a reference to the past, to that *which has already happened*. Such experience is the subject of philosophical or theological reflection. There is in mysticism a witness which is either confirmed or rejected as a testimony of faith or a special action of God. In experience, we have accumulated everything; in it we embrace that history which *allows understanding*.

However, when we clearly delineate what is desire, it seems that it does not regard history as such (although many times it results from it) and is directed to the future, to that which does not yet exist, and which did not exist, which did not happen.

Desire leads in a completely different direction from experience, and sometimes its contents are a contradiction of experience. It is to some degree *virginal*, untouched by time and history, and it regards what is *expected* or *longed for*. Desire manages to put in brackets what is *present* as well as what is *past*, and to live in some way in opposition to it. For example, someone who has not had the experience of familial love or the love of God may, in desire, create a *route* leading to love and religious experience. We speak then explicitly of *nourishing* a desire.

The line of demarcation is constituted by the *here and now*, the present moment. From the present moment, the future is embraced, but also leads out from the present towards the future. Thus, there are two different *points of view*. Perhaps they need a different foundation. It is difficult to speak of experience as directed toward the future. Therefore, what is *before us* requires its own formulation.

Experience comprises that which in a certain sense (historical) is already fulfilled, while desire connotes a promise. The shape of this promise is attainable, but in (historical) reality is still *undisclosed*, not concrete. However, desire offers not only an *outline* of the promise, its contour; it likewise makes it present.

In this regard, we have two types of becoming present, of grasping the moment, of actualization: one originating from experience (from the past), thanks to memory, and the other originating from the future (from what is expected), thanks to desire. In the first case we deal with the act of recalling, in the second with the staging of what is desired (the imagination). Imagination is understood as the *self-revelation*

of desire. Desire in the imagination, in apprehension, *awaits* the Real. Desire – not only experience – possesses a real influence on the *shape of this presence*.

Desire is an anthropological dimension for that which is endured in supernatural hope, understood as a theological category. It is a special relation to that which is possible. Desire *draws to itself* what is possible and makes it concrete (longed for). The reality of desire is accomplished not only in history as fulfillment, but is likewise carried out beyond history as a promise. A promise, despite being concrete, is not firmly entrenched in time. Thanks to desire, a person may create a new space for *fulfillment*, and give voice to the *possibility*, which is God, His providence, generosity, and love.

Desire, theologically speaking, has a special meaning in the area which was indicated by St. John the Apostle: “Beloved, at present we are children of God, but what we are to become has not yet been revealed” (1 Jn 3:2) The object of desire is that yet-to-be-revealed state of what man will be. In desire, the apprehension of something *greater* comes back to life, the revelation of that which is hidden in man, the expectation of the *unrevealed*. This receives the form of theological openness. Desire is located in that most wonderful vantage point, from which we can shed new light on our problem. Experience then would be that *which has already been revealed*, while desire, on the other hand, is concerned with what is still *unrevealed*.

The psychological consequence of this state of affairs is a unique disturbance of one’s identity, because it signifies a test of building that identity not on that which we already know about ourselves (in which, for example, psychoanalysis specializes), but on that which we still do not know. This draws behind it the necessity of thinking about man by taking into account a category that is undefined and clouded in Mystery at its very center.

The difficulty in working with desire results from the fact that of its very nature it introduces into the very center of thinking an element that is undefined, unclear, and mistakenly identified as irrational. It is on the other hand near to the contents of faith, in which we have data that surpass the capacity of the intellect to absorb them. Likewise in this case there appears a mystical, dark, general apprehension of the promise of revelation, which transcends the capacity to receive it on the part of man. For this reason, God imparts his instrument, which is theological hope. This is at first the gift of *extricating oneself* in the course of time from the narrow vision of oneself, limited and confined by his own experience. It makes possible a life in harmony with his Mystery, and not merely *being embedded in the world*. Next, man discovers new *possibilities of being*, which grow beyond measure thanks to hope. A person here ceases to function in reference to his own capacities, and now comes into play the act of trusting in God, on whom the richness of the revelations depends.

#### 4. DESIRE AS A *LOCUS THEOLOGICUS*

A theological commonplace is a place in which God reveals Himself and acts, and from where faith is drawn: this includes the Sacred Scripture, Tradition, papal teaching, liturgy, etc. It is a place where the acting God of mystery *bends down*, where the Church *is recognized*; a place which enriches it. The Second Vatican Council considers experience to be a *locus theologicus* (cf. DV 8).<sup>10</sup> Experience becomes something helpful in a deeper understanding of faith.

A theological place allows us to confirm our faith, to grasp God's action, becomes a sign of His explicit presence, sends man forth to his ultimate destiny, and strengthens the message of salvation. These are signs of the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

The *locus* fulfills this role, since it leads even more to God, and *gives witness* to His reality. Next, as it draws God near, it allows us to know Him better. Finally, it leads to the animation of faith. Let us attempt to show desire in the context of faith and deepening of spirituality.

##### 4.1. The natural desire for God

Man bears in his nature a special type of openness to ultimate reality. This ultimate reality may be named the highest good (in classical philosophy understood as *capax summi boni*, happiness, God, *capax Dei*). Classical philosophy states unambiguously: "the natural desire of every intellect is the vision of God's substance."<sup>11</sup> It likewise maintains the affirmation of the *natural desire to see God*. It results from this that already in the very subject of natural desire, it leads into the question of God. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* assures us: "This desire has its origin in God. God implanted it in the heart of man, to draw it to Himself, since He alone can satisfy it." (1718). For his part, Amadeo Cencini completes this notion, stating that man's task is "the discovery within himself and bringing to the surface of this one desire which God Himself placed in the heart of every mortal being. A desire which is indestructible despite all the deformations and falsifications to which it may be subject in the course of human life. Underneath this longing is hidden in essence a desire which concentrates all the energy of man, which gives him the capacity to unmask the illusions and falsehoods and triumph over disappointments – only the desire for God."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Cf. K. KOWALIK, *Funkcja doświadczenia w teologii*, Lublin 2003.

<sup>11</sup> As in: Z.J. ZDYBICKA, *Religia drogą spełnienia się człowieka*, in: *Osoba i realizm w filozofii*, ed. A. Maryniarczyk, K. Stępień, Lublin 2002, p. 99.

<sup>12</sup> A. CENCINI, *Świat...*, p. 16. Cf. P.M. GALOPIN, J. GUILLET, *Pragnienie*, in: *Słownik teologii biblijnej*, ed. X. Léon-Dufour, Poznań 1990, p. 760-762.

Entering into the subject matter, we should notice that the natural desire for God discloses the eternal plan of the *return* of creation to the Creator, is the realization of that plan, and in the depths of desire it is *divine attraction* which is functioning, a *drawing near to God* of its own kind. Emmanuel Lévinas proposes to us an even more profound perspective, establishing that desire is awakened by the infinity of God: “Infinity occurs as Desire. Not as a desire which can be appeased, embracing in its possession the desired being, but as Infinite Desire, which the Desired One never satisfies but only awakens. A desire that is perfectly selfless – goodness. This Infinite awakens in man that Desire which is impossible to satisfy. Between this awakening and opening up to it the drama of man’s freedom is played out.”<sup>13</sup>

The natural desire for God – a *divine aspiration*, is in essence a claim for wholeness – for the *wholeness* of God, for which reason it is inexhaustible and dynamically increasing. God is given in the *crevices of perception*, Martin Heidegger would say – in its sparkle, and this is why desire awakened *in the crevice* develops a measure of attainment, *being nourished* by God. The desire for God is governed by the law which St. Augustine expressed by the verb *extenditur*: the intellect is protracted (*extenditur*) by the desire for the object of that desire.”<sup>14</sup> If it is not drowned out, taken over by troubles or otherwise stolen (cf. Mk 4:19), it manages to be weaved into the entire framework of desires and to *cement* human striving.

#### 4.2. *Humanum desiderium Dei*

When the natural desire for God becomes mature on the level of faith, we are then dealing with God’s own desire (*desiderium Dei*) implanted into human structures. This is not only a human desire, for it bears the divine element of *desiderium Dei*. In order for it to exist, it arrives between faith, desire and knowledge to *intentional union*.<sup>15</sup> St. John of the Cross sees in faith the only direct means to union with God (*Ascent of Mount Carmel* II 8,2). St. Gregory of Nyssa for his part considers desire to be an indispensable *mediator* in uniting a person with God.<sup>16</sup> We therefore have two mutually reconcilable conceptions, and their resolution can be found in the weaving together of these two visions of union. In this way, desire is connected with the *sensus fidei*. In desire, after all, we are dealing with that which Karl Rahner called *pre-apprehension* (*Vorgriff*), which “embraces the original wholeness of

<sup>13</sup> As in: M. JĘDRASZEWSKI, *Homo: capax alterius, capax Dei. Emmanuela Lévinasa myślenie o człowieku i Bogu*, Poznań 1999, p. 148.

<sup>14</sup> AUGUSTYN, *Objaśnienie Psalmów*, PSP 38, Warszawa 1986, p. 87.

<sup>15</sup> See L. WCIÓRKA, *Elementy antropologii filozoficznej*, in: *Chrześcijańska wizja człowieka*, ed. A. Hartliński, B. Walczak, Poznań 1997, p. 46.

<sup>16</sup> See M. CANÉVET, *La nozione di desiderio nelle „Omellie sul cantico dei cantici” di Gregorio di Nissa*, in: *L’Antropologia dei maestri spirituali*, Cinisello Balsamo 1991, p. 89–90.

possible reality.”<sup>17</sup> Likewise, faith, as a supernatural gift, guides a dark, general knowledge of God, since it surpasses the perceptive capacities of the human intellect.

Pre-apprehension is like an *internal observation*, in which desire refers to the personal God (in distinction from the desire for things: heaven, happiness, etc.), and decides that this is a *desire for a Person*.

*Humanum desiderium Dei* refers to the personal God (Trine) and all that He intends in His desire. It is a reflection of the Divine desire in man. For this reason, it is necessary to discover nature and the contents of Divine desire (*desiderium Dei*). In the mystery of the *desiderium Dei*, of the interior desire for God, we must draw attention to the intratrinitarian relations (the mutual desire of the Divine Persons in love) as well as the desire directed toward creation (the desire for creation) and redemptive desire, expressed most fully in the words of Christ “I thirst.” (Jn 19:28)

Divine desire is *hidden* in the expression “God’s will.” The Son communicates the will of the Father to us: “It is not the will of the Father, who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.” (Mt. 18:14). Likewise, Christ manifests the world of His desires, as for example at the Last Supper: “I have earnestly desired to share the Passover with you before I suffer” (Lk 22:15).

Christ also discloses before us the principle of Divine desire: “No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him.” (Jn 6:44). This spiritual *drawing* is the influence of God on our desire. The sphere of desire is most sensitive to this kind of Divine action.

At this point, we also arrive at the discovery of the *mechanism of desire*, which we can formulate in the following way: *humanum desiderium Dei* is a response to the *desiderium Dei*. It would be fitting therefore to draw up a certain theological model. The desire for God does not so much *spring forth* from the hunger for spirituality, the search for absolute values or from disappointment with earthly reality, but awakens in the face of Divine desire whose origin is in God.

Therefore, drawing some conclusions, we notice that the desire for God is formed by God, and is a place where He acts in a special way. We should add that conversion – the most eloquent expression of the work of grace – is most powerfully formulated in the transformation of desire.

In addition, desire can appear in the area of the most radical response to God, especially when external conditions make a personal or public fulfillment of the way of faith impossible.

Pursuing yet another thread, the eschatological thread, in asking whether the *humanum desiderium Dei* is possible after death, we can make use of the opinion of St. Gregory of Nyssa: “The true vision of God after all consists in this, that he who raises his sight toward Him, never ceases to desire Him. [...] Therefore, the one who

<sup>17</sup> *Bycie*, in: K. RAHNER, H. VORGRIMLER, *Mały słownik teologiczny*, Warszawa 1987, col. 46.

states that Divinity is limited, places Beauty under the authority of its opposite, and this is absurdity. One must therefore recognize that nothing encloses being, which has no boundaries. From this we draw the conclusion that infinite being by nature is unfathomable. Therefore, every constant increase of striving toward the Beautiful never stops in its pursuit. The true vision of God consists in this, that the desire to look upon Him will never be satisfied. Looking further as to how this is possible, we must enkindle in ourselves the desire to see Him more. And no impediment may disturb this rising up to God, because on one hand Beauty is infinite, and on the other, the increasing desire that leads to Him can never be satisfied.”<sup>18</sup>

We have to become aware that the desire for God is *liberated* in death and develops into infinity. An additional theological trump card of desire is its becoming eternal.

#### CONCLUSION: DESIRE AS A PLACE OF ENCOUNTER

At this point, I will try to propose several trends connected with the eventual “coming into being” of desire for theology. Introducing desire into theology, at the same time we introduce a way of thinking by mystery and a way of thinking by hope. Desire brings into our life the mystery of the future. Desire brings into our life the mystery of the future, and therefore is a search for that same *nearness* of the Kingdom of God (Lk 10:11) which is already “at the door.”

Desire, the calling forth of *that which is desired*, is a completely different attitude than dreaming, wishful thinking, or a utopia. It is in itself a concrete desire. Desire as such introduces into theological thinking a very beneficial *ferment* which is not so much on the plane of wishing as it is on what is *desired*. It indicates such a shift in the concept of love, that it embraces not only that which *is*, but the future as well in its newness. The opening of theology and the Church to the future, which is approaching, is situated in the same place where the Bride calls out: “Come!” (Rev 22:20) The future is no longer depicted as full of fears, but becomes something desired, which bears God. It seems that the *near future* is theologically not completely brought to cultivation.

Such an attraction helps us to formulate the future as a concrete task and treats it as a place for theology rather than eschatology. After all, it deals with the *near future*, and not the *distant* one, beyond present reality. Theological hope attains in this manner a powerful anthropological “ally.”

Desire possesses likewise a clear pastoral dimension. Ascribing to desire its proper place among other elements in the formation of man, we become aware of

---

<sup>18</sup> GRZEGORZ Z NYSSY, *Życie Mojżesza*, Kraków 2009, p. 82–83.

introducing a new theological tool which is beneficial whether in the new evangelization or in the encounter of various spiritualities, and finally in the area of encounter on the subject of interdenominational or ecumenical dialogue.

The nourishing of healthy desires: of peace, of development, of exchange of goods, including those that are typically religious is an essential part of the area of relations with people, whom the Church willingly calls people of good will. Thanks to the desire *for better times* and a renewed world, the company of those who in the expansion of values and goods (including religious ones) recognize their own ideal in life can significantly widen.

We are accustomed to prayer meetings, the exchange of theological views, and common charitable initiatives. In the case of meetings focused on meditation or religious experience, it explicitly approaches a separate area, which we can call – a meeting in *desire*. As we have shown, this is a style of thinking and speaking about reality that is separate from experience.

An encounter in desire is to that degree necessary and effective, that realism often sadly deviates from its stipulated state, if only to mention the presently insurmountable divisions in the “one flock.”

An encounter in desire would help with greater audacity to draw up a vision of a renewed world, to formulate the truth about our common future, avoiding mutual accusations.

Finally, an encounter in desire strengthens the reality of hope, since desire most powerfully *works* in hope and is internally connected with it. Hope and desire allow us to make a more beautiful present reality, introducing into its very center the promise of a better world. It is an extraordinarily powerful element of consolation, leading us out of discouragement and rebuilding our enthusiasm.

*Translated from Polish by Michael Gibson*

## STRESZCZENIE

MARIAN ZAWADA OCD

*Ku rozumieniu pragnienia jako „locus theologicus”*

Celem artykułu jest uświadomienie teologicznego znaczenia pragnienia w życiu człowieka, a także w doświadczeniu religijnym. Aby mówić o pragnieniu w sposób wystarczająco zintegrowany, należy dostrzec jego obecność i funkcjonowanie na każdym z istotnych poziomów w strukturze człowieka: ontologicznym, potencjalnym

(poziom władz duchowych) oraz relacyjnym. Takie ujęcie gwarantuje całościowy ogląd pragnienia jako czegoś, co w sposób zasadniczy „porusza” człowieka.

*Locus theologicus* odsłania swe znaczenie w stosunku do Boga i wiary. W dziedzinie pragnienia można wyróżnić na poziomie naturalnym – *naturale desiderium Dei*, oraz na poziomie nadprzyrodzonym – pragnienie ożywione łaską i wiarą.

Pragnienie Boga (*humanum desiderium Dei*) jest w swej naturze nie tyle sygnalizowaniem jakiegos religijnego braku, co odpowiedzią na Boskie pragnienie, pragnienie Tego, który człowieka zapragnął (stworzył i przeznaczył do zbawienia).

Pragnienie Boga osiąga swe właściwe znaczenie, gdy dokonamy rozwarstwienia doświadczenia, rozróżniając w nim to, co przeżyte (gr. *empeiria*) i co wyraża istotę tego, co „przeszło” przez człowieka, od tego, co jeszcze nie zostało przeżyte, ale jest dane w upragnionej przyszłości. Należy wydobyć tu odrębną relację wobec tego, co doświadczone, a tego, co ma nadejść czy jest spodziewane. Wydaje się, że teologia nie posiada właściwego narzędzia (i aparatu poznawczego), by obcować i kierować się ku temu, co nadchodzi. To „bycie rozpiętym” pomiędzy skierowaniem się ku temu, co już historyczne, a tym, co nie zostało jeszcze dotknięte i osadzone w czasie, pozwala wypracować nową perspektywę teologiczną, która rozróżnia „minione” od „nadchodzącego” i stara się zaofiarować i wypracować nowy klucz dla tych dwóch kierunków oraz wykorzystać tę różnorodność ukierunkowań.

Pragnienie Boga ze swej natury wchodzi w przestrzeń najbardziej intensywnego kontaktu z Bogiem i będąc potwierdzeniem dla wiary, może w sensie osobistym czy wspólnotowym (eklezyjalnym) stanowić odrębny typ doświadczenia religijnego. Może stanowić, obok doświadczenia (które obejmuje to, co przeżyte), inny typ religijnej aktywności, ogarniającej to, co jeszcze się nie dokonało. Pragnienie Boga jest więc optymalnym wyposażeniem antropologicznym, w którym może objawiać się skutecznie nadzieja.

Tak ujęte pragnienie Boga może być wykorzystane jako nowa przestrzeń w teologii. Pragnienie samo w sobie może być nowym narzędziem teologicznym, przydatnym czy to w nowej ewangelizacji, czy w spotkaniach różnych duchowości, wreszcie w przestrzeni spotkania na rzecz dialogu międzyreligijnego bądź ekumenicznego.