

ADRIAN J. WALKER

Catholic University of America in Washington, USA

e-mail: ihe@cua.edu

ORCID: 0000-0001-6928-3668

DOI: 10.48224/COM-207-2019-151

Communio 39(2019)3, s. 151-181

## O TEOLOGII „PONOWNEGO FILOZOFOWANIA”

### ON „REPHILOSOPHIZING” THEOLOGY

#### Abstract

I began this essay with William Portier’s assessment of the potentialities of what he dubs „evangelical Catholicism” I also noted Portier’s concern of „retheologizing” theology, too long a captive to the secular social sciences. I then tried to build a case that any such retheologizing, if it is to be successful, must include a „rephilosophizing” of theology as well, while attempting to show how this concern for philosophy emerges organically from the very work of retheologizing theology itself. The philosophy that so emerges, in fact, is nothing but an articulation – itself concretely embodied – of the concrete, primordial act of thinking enfolded within the Christian experience of assimilation to the body of Jesus in the Church. In this way, I hope to have allayed some of the deep suspicion of philosophy shared by many older Catholic theologians, who associate philosophy with bad memories of rationalistic Scholasticism, and many younger ones, whose post-modern proclivities incline them away from what they take to be „grand narratives” Philosophy is not ideology, but engagement with the whole: ressource-ment, in a transparency that is akin to the childlikeness that Jesus asks of us in the Gospels.

**Keywords:** William Portier, theology, joy, rephilosophizing, evangelical Catholicism

#### Streszczenie

Zacząłem ten esej od oceny Williama Portiera o potencjale tego, co nazywa „ewangelicznym katolicyzmem” Zauważyłem również zaniepokojenie Portiera teologią ponownego „spekulowania na tematy teologiczne”

(ponowne teologizowanie), zbyt długiego zmonopolizowania świeckich nauk społecznych. Próbowałem następnie zbudować przypadek, że każde takie ponowne teologizowanie, jeśli ma się powieść, musi obejmować również „ponowne filozofowanie” teologii, jednocześnie próbując pokazać, w jaki sposób ta obawa o filozofię wyłania się organicznie z samego dzieła ponownego teologizowania samej teologii. Tak wyłaniająca się filozofia jest niczym innym, jak tylko wyartykułowaniem konkretnie wcielonym konkretnego, pierwotnego aktu myślenia zawartego w chrześcijańskim doświadczeniu asymilacji z Ciałem Jezusa w Kościele. W ten sposób mam nadzieję, że rozwiąłem pewne głębokie podejrzenia filozofii podzielane przez wielu starszych teologów katolickich, którzy kojarzą filozofię ze złymi wspomnieniami o racjonalistycznej scholastyce i wielu młodszych, których postmodernistyczne skłonności odciągają od tego, co przyjmują za „wielkie narracje” Filozofia nie jest ideologią, lecz zaangażowaniem w całość: *ressource-ment*, w przejrzystości zbliżonej do dziecięcego podobieństwa, o które Jezus prosi nas w Ewangeliach.

**Słowa kluczowe:** William Portier, teologia, radość, refilozofowanie (ponowne filozofowanie), ewangelicki katolicyzm

„Precisely in order to think with the ‘mind’ of Christ, the theologian has to assume the guardianship of human wonder – to enter into it, remain in it, and cultivate it”

## Introduction

William L. Portier’s „Here Come the Evangelical Catholics”<sup>1</sup> offers a „preliminary account” of a younger generation of American Catholics who do not fit into the „Left-Right” polarity that has framed conventional accounts of the last forty years of American Catholic history. Portier dubs these younger Catholics „evangelical”: for them, Catholicism is not a burdensome relic, but is as novel and as fresh as the Gospel itself. For them, indeed, it *is* the Gospel, in its inseparable ecclesial incarnation.

---

<sup>1</sup> William L. Portier, „Here Come the Evangelical Catholics”, *Communio* 31, no. 1(Spring 2004).

Portier acknowledges that the „evangelical mode” has its perils in a voluntaristic religious culture. Nevertheless, the impulse animating Portier’s evangelical Catholics is best understood, not as a collapse into an Evangelical Protestant ethos (although the risk of such a collapse is there), but as an incipient desire for the sort of *ressourcement* – retrieval of the living core of ecclesial Tradition beyond „Left” and „Right”, indeed, beyond all superficial dichotomies – to which Henri de Lubac, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and the other founders of this journal devoted their lives. In my opinion, such *ressourcement* represents the deepest intention of the Second Vatican Council, an intention that the conventional „Right- Left” dichotomy of the immediate post-conciliar years only tended to obscure.

Portier undergirds his account of the „evangelical Catholics” by discussing the effects of the dissolution of what he calls the immigrant Catholic „subculture” (meaning a clearly defined sociological form in which American Catholics maintained a curious relation of distance from, and closeness to, American culture up until the 1960s). Portier’s thesis touches on a whole range of important questions about the relationship between the catholicity of the Church and American culture. Unfortunately, I cannot take up these questions here. My main focus in the following pages will be, instead, on the implications of the call for a „retheologizing” of theology that Portier issues at the end of his article.

I suggested just now that the spirit and program of *ressourcement* offers the best framework for realizing the rediscovery of ecclesial identity animating the younger Catholics whom Portier calls „evangelical” Similarly, I would like to propose that the same project of *ressourcement* provides the best framework for the „retheologizing” of theology which Portier rightly hopes for.

That having been said, I will approach the topic of „retheologizing” theology from a perhaps surprising point of view: that of the role of philosophy in theological reflection. It seems to me, in fact, that any successful effort to „retheologize” theology (at least insofar as it is made in the spirit of *ressourcement*) will have to involve the retrieval of the great tradition of philosophical, indeed, metaphysical, thinking which Pope John Paul II calls for in *Fides et Ratio*. My principal aim in the following pages will therefore be to show that the „retheologizing” of theology, when

done in the spirit of *ressourcement*, requires a „rephilosophizing” of theology as well. At the same time, I also want to show that the philosophy Catholic theologians need is not so to say a „foreign body” within theology, but rather grows organically out of theology’s primordial responsibility to give an intelligent account of the Gospel – in its C/catholic integrity (once again, the concern of the *ressourcement* theologians). This will involve reflecting on the nature of intelligence as it is lived – and brought „into its own” – from within the heart of the ecclesial „fullness of truth”

The Christian’s witness to the Gospel is, as I see it, an embodied exhibition of its truth, so much so, in fact, that this very exhibition is itself ingredient in the truth of the Gospel. Such exhibition occurs, however, only to the extent that one „lives one’s way into” ever fuller incorporation in the ecclesial Body of Christ. This incorporation, in fact, opens the individual more and more to the fullness of the Gospel in its C/catholic integrity, and, in so doing, makes of the individual, body and soul, a living representation of, and participation in, that fullness. Enfolded in this incarnate witness is a responsibility for what St. John calls „the whole truth”, a responsibility that both engages thought and shows it for what it is: not abstract, technological calculation, but embodied understanding. At the very heart of Christian life, and of Christian theology, as enfleshed witness, then, human intelligence comes into its own at its best, deepest, and broadest. But human intelligence at its best, deepest, and broadest is what has classically been meant by philosophy, as John Paul II reminds us in *Fides et Ratio*.

Of course, insofar as philosophy is born from within enfleshed theological existence, it by that very fact maintains an intrinsic unity of bodiliness and rationality in the face of every rationalistic attempt to detach reason from incarnation (which only diminishes reason itself). But, precisely for that reason, philosophy is not simply absorbed into theology. It remains philosophy, and, as such, is an essential component of the persuasive force of lived Gospel witness. Embodied philosophy, in fact, is an indispensable, and irreducible, part of the Christian theologian’s showing, *in actu exercitu*, how the light of Christ illumines the whole of man’s being in its relation to all other beings in the universe. An enfleshed philosophy is at the core of theology as an unfolding,

in the whole person of the theologian, of the integral fullness of C/catholic reason.

But let us begin at the beginning. Our question in the following pages is this: why should Catholic theologians concern themselves with philosophy, as the Catholic Tradition up through *Fides et Ratio* has consistently said that they should? In order to answer this question, we need to understand what theology itself is. According to Anselm – here drawing on Augustine – theology *is fides quaerens intellectum*, that is, „faith seeking understanding”. What, then, is faith? What is the role of understanding in faith? How is this role illumined by the notion of „seeking”? These are huge questions that we cannot expect to answer to our full satisfaction here. We will have to be content with sketches of answers.

## 1. Faith as incorporation into Christ

Let us begin with *faith*. Faith, we could say, is the response to God’s self-revelation in Jesus Christ, the response that God himself wishes man to make. Faith is correlative to revelation, which in turn presupposes a „speaking” God, concretely, „the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph 1:3), who speaks about himself and his plan in his word, concretely, Jesus Christ, who *is* God’s Word in person. Note that it is Jesus Christ who is the revealing Word of God *par excellence* in his own person: body, blood, soul, and divinity. We also call the Bible „the Word of God”, of course, but *its* being word depends on Christ’s prior being Word. The Bible is the incarnate Word of God „made letter” by the Holy Spirit. This is meant in the sense of Origen’s idea that Scripture is a kind of body of the Word. The words of Scripture are not primarily the letters on the printed page, but exist first with, and as extensions of, the risen body of Jesus in the Holy Spirit. This is why Jesus can say of his own words that they will „not pass away” (Mt 24:34), and mean more than that these words – or the words of Scripture in general – are „immortal gems of literature”

It is important to see why the speaking God should be said to „reveal” himself. This term means that he makes himself manifest to us in a way that he was not before – and could not have been apart from that unveiling. To be sure, the Catholic tradition,

in agreement with the Bible itself, has consistently maintained the possibility, in principle, of a „natural knowledge” of God from creatures. Moreover, as Romans 1:18ff and Paul’s homily at the Areopagus suggest, the God whom this natural knowledge knows, or should know, is none other than the „God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph 1:3). It can do this because creatures reflect, and participate in, the Word through whom God creates them – the same Word who, in the fullness of time, becomes incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth. As Irenaeus suggests, the Word’s creative act is already the beginning of his mediation of the Father’s saving selfcommunication to human beings.

That having been said, it remains that the natural knowledge of God from creatures does not yet know him *as the Father of Jesus Christ*. In order for man to be able to recognize him as Father in this unique sense, the Word must (freely) take the further step of Incarnation. Only Jesus, the Word made flesh, can mediate to us the knowledge of God *as his Father*. Jesus’ Incarnation thus constitutes a specific sense of revelation transcending natural knowledge of God – one indissolubly bound up with the event of the enfleshment of the Word that Jesus is. This is why Catholic theology has always maintained that what is revealed in this specific sense lies beyond the reach of the merely natural knowledge of God – that it cannot be discovered by us, no matter how smart we are, but can only be received from God as a free gift. What God reveals through the Incarnation, the content of „revelation” in the specific sense, can only be „taken on faith”, and this faith stands or falls with the incarnate Person of Jesus Christ himself.

It is important, however, to avoid any hint of dualism between the natural knowledge of God and faith. After all, the God natural knowledge attains is none other than the Father – insofar as the Word has manifested him on the face of creation. Therefore, just as the Word becomes flesh in order to complete this „creational” manifestation of the Father, so, too, faith – for all of its gratuity – is the intrinsic completion of the natural knowledge of God itself. The natural knowledge of God is full of intimations of his trinitarian fatherhood. True, we can fully recognize these intimations for what they are (only) from the perspective of faith. And yet, faith allows us to do just that: recognize, and not arbitrarily retroject because of wishful thinking. To have faith in the Father

is to realize (ever more deeply) what it means to glimpse God through his creatures. More on this below (see the final section: „Why theologians should study philosophy”).

Now, one conventional and very common understanding of faith holds that it is simply the act of believing things as true that we cannot verify on our own, and so take on trust – because God backs them up with his authority. This conventional account of faith is not false. It just is not complete. „Taking God at his word” – because it is God speaking, and he always knows better than we do – is certainly a necessary condition of faith. But it does not exhaust faith. There is a further and, if you will, even more fundamental and encompassing, dimension of faith. This dimension is based on the fact that God’s revealing Word is, first and foremost, Jesus Christ himself, who is the eternal Word of God *made flesh*. For this reason, our faith is, first and foremost, a response to *that* enfleshed, personal Word of God. This fact determines the basic modality of faith, which accordingly is that of a surrender of the whole, enfleshed believing person into the incarnate Word. Such surrender necessarily includes assent to what God says about himself and his plan, but it also determines the fundamental character and content of all „assent” in the first place. There is such a thing as „intellectual assent to propositions”, of course, but it is most basically the act of surrendering oneself into the enfleshed Word, whose incarnate presence is prolonged by and as that very proposition, as we have already noted apropos of the words of Scripture. This is perhaps why the New Testament often couples faith and baptism as twin necessary conditions of salvation. Baptism is the sacrament of faith. It is the concrete form faith takes as a being plunged into the death, descent into hell, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Faith justifies (only) because faith is „baptismal” incorporation into the body of Jesus Christ. It justifies „apart from the works of the Law” (Rom 3:28) (only) because it itself is also a human act of obedience that (entirely by grace) in one stroke fulfills the Law – indeed, is already the germ of the „supernatural” charity that sums up the whole Law (see Gal 5:14). „This is the work of God, that you believe into [eis] the one whom he sent” (Jn 6:29), and such belief is already „faith working through charity” (Gal 5:6) beyond the distinction between „circumcision [and]... uncircumcision” (ibid).

We have seen that faith is the surrender of the whole enfleshed person into the body of Christ, and that this surrender includes, forms, and gives meaning to all „assent to propositions”. But what room is there in this enfleshed self-delivery to God’s Word for „*intellectus*” for understanding? After having described at some length the Christian’s baptism into the Paschal Mystery, Paul says this: „But thanks be to God that you were slaves of sin [but] you obeyed from the heart the form [*typos*] of doctrine (in) to [eis] which you were handed over” (Rom 6:17). Revelation, then, does convey a „doctrine” And doctrine implies intellectual content. Once again, faith contains an essential component of assent to propositions. Note, however, the to us curious phrase „(in)to which you were handed over”, which refers to the „form of doctrine” To be handed over (in)to suggests delivery to something bigger, something more encompassing than the individual subject who is handed over. It is as if Paul were saying that the believer is one who has been inserted inside of the form of doctrine itself, which then acts as a kind of mold that reshapes the believer’s whole being. Into what? Into the living image of Jesus Christ himself, as Paul says explicitly elsewhere: „As many as he foreknew, he also predestined [to be] conformed [*symmorphous*] to the image of his Son, so that he might be the first-born among many brethren” (Rom 8:29). If this interpretation is correct, then it would seem to follow that the understanding of faith as self-surrender of the enfleshed person does not take away faith’s intellectual content, but simply gives it a surprising, and arguably much richer, meaning. It is not that revelation has no intellectual content, or that the believer does not assent to it intellectually. It is that the intellectual content of revelation is inseparable from its bearer – the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ – and that the believer’s intellectual assent to that content is inseparable from surrendering incorporation into, and conformation to, that bearer.

## 2. Theology of the body

The first answer to our question about the place of understanding within a faith that has been thoroughly enfleshed, then, is that there is plenty to understand in revelation, but that understanding

itself, in its primary sense, is a matter of being „con-formed” to the image of the (incarnate) Son. The experience of embodiment is not foreign to spiritual understanding, because the body itself is an „organ” of that understanding, which itself means to be „incorporated” into Christ, to indwell the One you love bodily until you are shaped by him through and through, until he has become „all in all” in you. Faith is the germ of spiritual understanding (see 1 Cor 2:10-15), which is to say, of theology, but this spiritual understanding includes a renewal of lived bodiliness within the „spiritual”, but still very bodily, body of the risen Jesus. The Spirit does not bestow intelligence of revelation by disembodiment of the believer, but by creating a mutual immanence between his body and the Eucharistic body of Jesus – thus incorporating the believer into the Church: „Do you not know that he who cleaves to a prostitute is one body [with her]? But he who cleaves to the Lord is one Spirit [with him]” (1 Cor 6:16-17: note the implication: the theologian has to be virginal, in whatever state of life, because virginity is participation in the „mind” of the Church as Bride). This does not make our experience of embodiment at any given moment the ultimate criterion of truth (even of the truth about embodiment itself). The point is rather that Jesus’ experience of lived bodiliness is part of his being the truth in person – so that our experience of embodiment, re-configured to the risen body of Jesus, becomes an element in the understanding of that truth. John Paul II’s nuanced emphasis on the subjective experience of bodiliness in the *Wednesday Catecheses* seems to go in this direction:

When Christ referred to the „beginning”, he asked his questioners to go beyond, in a certain sense, the boundary which in Genesis passes between the state of original innocence, and that of sinfulness, which started with the original fall... [T]he „historical” state... plunges its roots in every man without exception, in his own theological „prehistory”, which is the state of original innocence... Historical man is, so to speak, rooted in his revealed theological prehistory... Christ did not merely indicate the state of original innocence as the lost horizon of human existence in history. To the words which he uttered with his own lips, we have the right to attribute at

the same time the whole eloquence of the mystery of redemption... In the same way . historical man also participates in the history of salvation... Precisely this perspective of the redemption of the body guarantees the continuity and unity between the hereditary state of man's sin and original innocence... In the context of the theology of corporeal man... we can think of the method of further analyses about the revelation of the „beginning”, in which it is essential to refer to the first chapters of Genesis... In the interpretation of the revelation about man, we must, for understandable reasons, refer to experience, since corporeal man is perceived by us mainly by experience. In the light of the above mentioned fundamental considerations, we have every right to the conviction that this „historical” experience of ours must, in a certain way, stop at the threshold of man's original innocence, since it is inadequate in relation to it. However, in the light of the same introductory considerations, we must arrive at the conclusion that our human experience is, in this case, to some extent a legitimate means for the theological interpretation...

If we put ourselves in this position [of waiting for the redemption of our bodies] – so deeply in agreement with experience – the „beginning” must speak to us with the great richness of light that comes from revelation, to which above all theology wishes to be accountable. The continuation of these analyses will explain to us why and in what sense this must be a theology of the body<sup>2</sup>.

Revelation, the pope is saying, is not only the revelation of God in Christ, but, therein, of man. Theology, then, includes a retrieval of who man is before God – who he is most deeply, „below” sin, in his „theological prehistory”. It is a retrieval that man himself, on encountering the enfleshed divine Word, has to be personally involved in performing. And this personal involvement necessarily passes through his own experience of embodiment – as this experience is (re)given in the context of encounter with the

---

<sup>2</sup> John Paul II, „The Boundary Between Original Innocence and Redemption”, in *The Theology of the Body. Human Love in the Divine Plan* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1997), 32-34.

enfleshed divine Word. Christ reveals man to himself<sup>1</sup> – in part by enabling him to participate in that revelation, and in such participation man (re)discovers first-hand who he is as an embodied being. By the same token, this discovery is impossible apart from the „hope for the redemption of the body” that Christ reveals. This hope, the pope is saying, is the only thing capable of preventing the conflation of our bodily nature with its fallen condition, and thus of overcoming the dualistic contempt for the body that would remove it from the center of spiritual understanding. Conversely, hope for the redemption of the body gives man access to the primordial sense of spiritual understanding, in which the body in fact plays a central role.

And it gives him this access, as we have just seen, by enabling him to participate, through embodied awareness, in the revelation of the enfleshed divine Word. We can thus say with the pope that hope for the redemption of the body is what enables man to retrieve, not only the truth of his being, not only the truth of the embodiment of that being, but also lived bodiliness itself as an indispensable component of the perception of this truth, indeed, of any truth.

At the same time, the pope also insists that, although the hope for the redemption of the body enables man to glimpse the truth of his being apart from sin, and so to recover his lived bodiliness for spiritual understanding, it does not authorize him simply to (re)claim possession of „original innocence” It does not exempt man from having to finish out his days in the travails of historical existence, in which concupiscence, dissolution, and death remain at work. It is by looking at Christ, not at himself, that man sees what he is in his truth, apart from sin. In Christ he has a mirror in which to see, indirectly as it were, that his bodily finitude is a precious gift expressing God’s love, and to recognize that concupiscence, dissolution, and death can never entirely nullify its abiding positivity. Christ, then, does not simply baptize lived bodiliness „as is”, as if the heap of passions, images, and desires floating around in us at any given time were somehow normative for the truth of his revelation either of the Father or of us. Rather, he purifies lived bodiliness into its essential truth, by plunging the whole man through baptismal faith into his own sinless, risen body (without our ever being able to claim that we have definiti-

vely reentered our essential truth and are now in tranquil possession of it).

The body is both a (partial) content of revelation and a *sensorium* of the spiritual understanding of revelation. By the same token, theology – for theology is just that spiritual understanding – is always (in part) a theology of the body, not only insofar as the body is a central topic of theology, but also insofar as lived bodiliness is internal to the intelligibility of the act of theological thinking. But lived bodiliness can play this double role in theology only if it is purified. Which is to say: only if our experience of it does not close in on itself, but is opened from within to the Father by hope for the redemption of the body. Theology *tout court* is a theology of the body, but only to the extent that the theologian's body is conformed to Christ's, which is formed from inside out by his, Christ's, trinitarian relation of sonship to his Father. And yet, this opening in self-transcendence itself corresponds to the deepest nature of bodiliness, which is an embodied gift both received and to be given. This is why, in the *Catecheses* on the theology of the body following the one cited above, the pope emphasizes the *nuptial* character of the body, and stresses that the sexual difference images the Trinity as Trinity, in its character as a communion of persons held together by the logic of mutual giving and receiving. It is as if the pope were saying that the wonder of the „beginning” (Mt 19:4), when man and woman encountered each other for the first time in the light of God, was a created echo of the wonder of God that God himself experiences – and *is* – in the eternal encounter between Father and Son in the Holy Spirit. Which is as much as to say that this „beginning”, with the lived experience of sexuated bodiliness it entails, needs to be retrieved as an element within, and as a locus of, the theological understanding of the revelation of the Trinity (and of the world in the light of that revelation). Only, the pope adds, it is Christ who first does this retrieval. We merely (but really) share in his action of retrieval through the hope for the redemption of the body that he is.

### 3. Faith contains the understanding the theologian seeks

The incarnate Word, we have said, reveals man to himself, in part by (re) constituting his lived bodily awareness as a locus of the theological understanding of revelation. The incarnate Word does not simply tell man about the importance of his bodiliness, but makes man aware of this importance from the inside. He enfolds man in the embrace of his own body – the body in which, after the Ascension, the incarnate Word is „in(to) [eis] the bosom of the Father” (Jn 1:18). Theological understanding, as embodied knowing of God, is born from this experience of being comprehended by the incarnate Word as he performs his act of comprehending, and being comprehended by, the Father in his own risen and glorified body. If we return from this point to our earlier discussion, we see a surprising implication: faith itself is, in germ, *understanding*, because faith is nothing other than the embodied awareness of being thus comprehended – of „knowing God, or rather, having been known by God” (Gal 4:9). „Not that I have already grasped or have already become perfect. But I strive that I might also comprehend as I have also been comprehended by Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:12). To comprehend is to be aware of being comprehended – and, in that awareness, to *participate* in the comprehension of the one who comprehends. It is to „have the mind [nous] of Christ” (1 Cor 2:16).

Now, we „have the mind of Christ” when we heed Paul’s injunction to „think in yourselves what [was] also in Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at, but emptied himself” (Phil 2:5-6). As this passage suggests, the „mind of Christ” is, first and foremost, Christ’s fundamental attitude before his Father, which Christ himself sums up when he says to his disciples, „my food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to complete his work” (Jn 4:34). This attitude defines Christ’s „mind” because it is the attitude of the Son, and Christ is the Son of God made man. „Amen, amen, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself unless he sees the Father doing something” (Jn 5:19). „Wherefore, upon coming into the world, he says, ‘sacrifice and offering you would not accept... Then I said, behold I come; in the head of the book it is written of me, that I should do your will, God’” (Heb 10:5-7).

But what, again, is the role of *understanding* in all of this? If the „mind of Christ” is just an „attitude”, how can it be said actually to *know* anything? Well, the „mind of Christ”, as we have said, is the mind of the Son, and to say „Son” is to imply „Father” The Son, by becoming man, has revealed to us the „mind of the Father”, *his* inmost „attitude” How has he revealed it? By enfleshing, in living, threedimensional fullness, what that „attitude” looks like – by being, in the flesh, the revelation, even more, the deed, of the Father’s love, reaching all the way through the Son’s Incarnation to his death, descent into hell, and Resurrection. The Son is, in person „the effulgence of [the Father’s] glory and the character of his *hypostasis*” (Heb 1:3), which is nothing but love. This status as representation does not put the Son outside of the divine nature, but keeps him inside of it, as „God from God consubstantial with the Father” This is because there has never been a moment when the Son has not already been wholly present to participate subjectively in the entire act of the Father’s loving. To be sure, the Son is in some (transcendent, but real) sense the *result* of the Father’s self-giving. Nevertheless, he results in such a way that the paternal self-gift is fully, undiminishedly present and active in the result – no longer, then, as the Father alone, but as the Father appearing in a distinct, co-equally divine person, the Son. The Son himself is a co-subject (a *hypostasis*) who „does” the Father’s selfgiving by displaying it in himself in the mode of sonly self-reception from the Father. The Son, then, is the expression of the Father’s love, first because he is the Father’s act of love itself as displayed, manifested, and „bodied forth” in his own sonly person – which implies, among other things, that the eternal generation of the Son is the precondition, and the deepest meaning, of his embodiment and, indeed, of all bodiliness in general – and, second, by being the „recapitulation” (Eph 1:10), both in eternity and in time, of the Father’s plan for us, from creation, to Incarnation, to the *parousia*. Christ is the Son who, together with the Father (and the Spirit), wills all things into being as God – and, in that very act, *is* the living, breathing model of all things. Christ is the Word who sums up, and displays in three-dimensional fullness, both eternally and temporally, all that the Father has to say about himself and about us. Christ is „the image of the invisible God, the First-born of all creation... all

things were created through him and for him” (Col 1:15; 17). Or, as Maximus the Confessor puts it: „[T]he Logos of God himself has become the messenger [of the divine counsel] by becoming man, in order thereby to make manifest, if it is right to say so, the inmost ground of the Father’s goodness, and to display in himself the end on account of which creatures clearly took their origin toward being”<sup>3</sup>.

Looking at the incarnate Word in faith, then, we see fleshed out, all at once, the whole meaning of God and of creation. We thus „comprehend” everything: God and all things in the light of God, for „in him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:3). We do not comprehend Christ from the outside, however, but from inside of him. This is why Paul says that we are to „know the love of Christ that transcends knowledge” and so „be filled into [eis] the whole fullness of God” (Eph 3:19), which „dwells in” Christ „bodily” (Col 2:9). After all, to comprehend Christ is to comprehend that *he* comprehends *us*. Now, this means concretely: to consent with our whole being – and it is in this consent that we discover for the first time the wholeness of our being – to incorporation into Christ’s human body. This incorporation brings us into the „moment” when that human body, rising from the dead, becomes transparent to the Son’s eternal act of bodying forth the Father’s love. To put it another way, incorporation into the body of Jesus brings us through the „window” of the Resurrection into the „moment” of the intra-trinitarian life where the Son comprehends the Father’s love, and all things in light of the Father’s love, by receiving his own person, and all things together with it, as the expression of that love – and by extending this reception into the embodiment of his Incarnation, passion, and Resurrection. Which brings us back to the question about the place of understanding in faith. If, in fact, theology is embodied faith seeking understanding, faith is itself already the beginning of the understanding that it seeks, because it is participation in the risen Christ’s intimate, bodily knowledge of the Father in the Spirit (and of all things within that intimacy), which John expresses when he says that the Word is „in(to) the bosom of the Father” (Jn 1:18).

<sup>3</sup> Maximus the Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* (PG 90), 621C.

#### 4. Theology is Jesus Christ (and our participation in him)

Having ascertained something of this relationship between faith and understanding, we can already discern two interrelated meanings of the term „theology”. First, and primarily, theology is Jesus Christ himself, insofar as he is the eternal Word – *Logos* – of God – *Theos* – made man. Jesus is the truth, God’s self-revelation through the enfleshment of his Word, and as the truth, as the unique self-revelation of the Father, he is the unique „theology”. Second, theology is *our* participation in Jesus’ being theology. As we have seen, this participation occurs in faith, which is not just intellectual assent, but an intellectual assent understood as a surrendering incorporation into Jesus, the enfleshed Word. To be a believer is to be an embodied representation of *the* truth-event par excellence: the self-unveiling of the Father through the Incarnation of the Word. This is why the embodiment of faith is already theological understanding *in nuce*. Conversely, this embodied participation in Christ’s theological being reveals the deepest meaning of lived embodiment from within, so as to make this lived embodiment, purified into its integral truth, an indispensable ingredient in, an essential *sensorium* for, theological understanding. We understand theologically by „sensing” the truth we theologize about, thus becoming a living manifestation of it. Our archetype in this regard is Mary. Mary’s archetypal status is important because it compels us to bear constantly in mind that theologizing is an intrinsically ecclesial act. Mary, ecclesiality incarnate and spotless (see Eph 5:27), guarantees the undivided presence of the Church from the first moment of the Incarnation. She represents, in the strong sense of „represent”, the Bride who is taken up (see the dogma of the Assumption) into Christ’s bodily knowledge of the Father in the Spirit – without ever fusing with Christ, but remaining just that, the Bride for whom the Bridegroom remains always other, even in the deepest „one-flesh” union. Indeed, only this difference-within-unity is theologically fruitful, for only it inwardly completes the Bride-Bridegroom relation as what it is: the concrete communication of the *communio* of Father and Son in the Holy Spirit as bond and fruit of their love. The nuptial mystery of the „beginning” the pope speaks of in the passage cited above reacquires its theological relevance here, where the

man-woman relation becomes transparent to the „great mystery” of the Christ-Church relation as the self-communication of the trinitarian *communio* (see Eph 5:32).

Theology in this second sense is intrinsic to faith itself. Christian faith is embodied theological existence, whether or not one is a „theologian” in the academic sense. Or, to speak with Hans Urs von Balthasar, there is no division between theology and holiness, by which Balthasar means the life of faith as surrendering incorporation into Christ. Once again, to believe is to be a theologian, and to be a theologian is to prolong in one’s own embodied person, *Jesus’* being the truth in his own enfleshed divine person, to let his incarnate truthfulness radiate out of one’s every pore just as Mary let him shine forth from her womb. Theology so understood clearly exceeds the bounds of what has come to be called „academic theology”. Not only is it an understanding within incarnate faith, but for that very reason it has a universal scope that keeps it from fitting tidily into conventional disciplinary divisions: how can one confine it to just one part of one’s existence or thinking, when it claims the whole?

This is why the great tradition of theology has always maintained that, just as Jesus Christ is the Word in whom the Father declares himself and creatures, so, too, our theology, being a participation in Jesus’ being theology, is a knowing of God and of all things through and in God himself: „[N]o one knows the Son but the Father and no one knows the Father but the Son and to whomever the Son wishes to reveal him” (Mt 11:27). Thomas Aquinas presents a version of this claim at the very beginning of the *Summa Theologiae*, where he notes the overlap between philosophy and „sacred doctrine”, which he explains thus: „Sacred doctrine, while remaining one, can consider the matters treated in the different philosophical sciences from a single point of view, insofar, that is, as they are divinely revealable. *Thus, sacred doctrine is like a kind of impression of the divine science, which, one and simple, embraces all things*”<sup>4</sup> This statement takes on its full depth of meaning when we read it together with Aquinas’ definition of „sacred doctrine” as a participation in „knowledge

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* [– ST], I, 1, 3, ad 2; emphasis added.

of God and of the blessed”<sup>5</sup>: the genitive here (*scientia Dei et beatorum*) indicates not only that theological knowing is about God, but that it is an earthly anticipation of the blessed’s sharing in God’s own knowledge of himself in and through God. Jumping ahead to the *tertia pars*, we find Thomas saying that Christ fulfills both sides of this definition. Christ has divine knowledge as the Word of God, and his humanity, by reason of its union to the Word, contains the fullness of the beatific knowledge of God, and of all things in God<sup>6</sup>. Our theology, Thomas is saying, is participation in Christ as theology *par excellence*: God’s knowledge of himself and of all things through his Word – communicated maximally to humanity in the person of the Word to whom the humanity is hypostatically united. Going beyond the letter of Thomas, we can add that, just as Jesus is the theological truth because he is the Word made flesh, so, too, our participation in his theology translates into an enfleshed theological existence in which, with Mary, we *become* the womb out of which Jesus’ existence as theological truth shines forth into the world, and, as we will see, into the culture in which we live.

### **5. The renewal of the mind and the cultural dimension of theology**

If the foregoing is correct, then theology, before being an academic discipline in the conventional sense, is the working out of a renewal of the mind that is implicit in the very act of faith itself as surrendering incorporation into Christ: „Do not be configured to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of the mind [nous]”, Paul tells us (Rom 12:2). Note that this renewal occurs in the process of becoming un-configured to „this age” and becoming conformed to Jesus Christ – within the act of faith, in other words. Note, too, the scope of this renewal: „Do not be configured to this age”, that is, this world. The renewal of the mind leads to a new „worldview”, not in the sense of an ideology, of course, but rather in the sense of a perception of the world with the em-

---

<sup>5</sup> *ST I*, 1, 2.

<sup>6</sup> *ST III*, 9, 2.

bodied „mind of Christ” And such perception, as we have seen, is first and foremost our configuration into an integral participation in Jesus Christ’s being theology in the flesh. Furthermore, it is not just the individual „mind” that is transformed, but the „mind” of the culture that the individual mind inhabits. Cultural reflection is intrinsic to the doing of theology, for what is culture if not a cultivation, through manifold, interlocking institutions, of a certain „worldview”? The quality of lived bodiliness „institutionalizes itself” by its very nature, and this self-institutionalization is the very genesis of culture itself.

Acknowledgment of the cultural dimension of theology is all the more urgent given that the culture we inhabit today is defined precisely by an attempted disembodiment of personal consciousness. Acts like genetic engineering, homosexuality, and contraception all presuppose a dualistic anthropology in which intelligence stands over against the body as raw material to be reconfigured at will. What we need to see is that this attitude is bound up with a technological understanding of reason that subtly informs a whole range of institutions and practices that even those who are (rightly) opposed to genetic engineering, homosexuality, and contraception often have less, or no, problem accepting (for example, the computer). True, few people explicitly rejoice in the raw brutality of the technological mindset. Nevertheless, it is pervasively present in a guise that deflects attention away from itself and so conceals the extent of its influence. The technological mindset is incarnated in institutions that shape our basic stance towards reality before we have a chance to decide in an explicit act whether to accept or reject that shaping. Indeed, our culture is to a large degree the self-institutionalization of the technological mindset itself – under the guise of a „neutrality” that is itself an expression of that very mindset. To the extent that we have committed ourselves to that neutrality – through the mostly unreflective acceptance of the almost universally held claim that culture is the production of neutral methods and tools that we then use for our purposes – we are just so far under the sway of the technological mindset without even realizing it. We have just so far subscribed to the view that culture is . . . technology.

The neutrality claim, in fact, is just another name for how technology attempts to remove reason from embodied awareness

of the whole. This removal entails the (attempted) reduction of reason to an instrumentalistic calculation aimed at manipulation of what now becomes an indifferent heap of raw material. Not only that, but if technological reason is (an attempted ) self-removal of the knower from his embodiment, the raw material in question necessarily includes his own body as well (hence the connection with homosexuality, contraception, and genetic engineering). By the same token, one of the primary tasks of the theological „transformation of the mind” in our cultural context is to get back into embodied awareness of the whole as the primary mode of understanding. The transformation of the mind obliges us to win back the true nature of rationality from the technological mindset. Theology thus entails a critique of technological rationality that is not limited to theology in the academic sense. Rather, it extends across the whole range of academic and professional disciplines, whose concrete form the technological mindset has thoroughly shaped. Theology contains a transformative critique – of the a-theological conception of rationality that informs the thinking of technological culture in all of its academic and disciplinary expressions.

## 6. Faith seeks because it understands

The transformation of the mind we are speaking of here is sustained by an *elan* that has to do with the third component of the Anselmian definition of theology: the „*quaerens*” in the „*fides quaerens intellectum*” The Bible is full of the injunction to „seek the Lord” This is especially true of the Psalms. What does it mean to „seek the Lord”? It means, first and foremost, to follow through with an impulse contained in faith itself. Faith is, of course, an immovable adherence to the person of Jesus Christ and, therefore, of the Father who reveals himself through Jesus Christ. But, within this immovable adherence itself there is a movement – the movement of „seeking” We have been comprehended, and our participation in that comprehension takes the form of a movement to „catch up” with our comprehender. Note, however, that the „catching up” aims at becoming more and more aware of what it means to *be* comprehended *by* him. It strives to let this awareness saturate one’s whole self with awareness of his ever-greater

fullness – so as to know intimately the love that transcends knowledge. This does not mean that we never get to „possess” God. We do. But we do only because he gives himself. And, in giving himself, he gives himself in his inexhaustibility. Thus, to possess God is, at one and the same time, to embrace him tightly and to be exceeded by him. It is to comprehend him and to be left in incomprehension of him. It is to understand him and to be left wondering at his mysteriousness. Or rather, his mysteriousness is itself this very unity of comprehensibility and incomprehensibility. All of which leads to a crucial point: the movement of seeking, which goes on forever within stable having (even in heaven), is not simply a reflection of the fact that we fall short of God. No. What generates seeking is the perception of the divinity of God himself. Seeking, we could say, is an expression of delight in the fact that God, in his divinity, is always more, always greater – not simply for us, but in itself. Even the Son himself, at the eternal „moment” when he comprehends all things in the bosom of the Father’s love, wonders at the bottomless depth of that love. He is thus the uncreated model of *our* eternal seeking-within-having-been-found.

Faith, we have just seen, is not just a „conviction” [*elenchos*] (Heb 11:3), but also a „seeking” Significantly, the philosopher, too, is a seeker. To be sure, some philosophers claim that to seek is to *question* conviction, which they often present as a commitment made on the basis of non- or pre-philosophical evidence that may or may not withstand philosophical scrutiny. Leo Strauss expresses this view in our own day as eloquently as anyone else when he writes: „The first things and the right way cannot become questionable or the object of a quest, or philosophy cannot emerge, or nature cannot be discovered, if authority as such is not doubted or as long as at least any general statement of any being whatsoever is accepted on trust”<sup>7</sup> Strauss is not entirely wrong, even from a theological point of view. After all, questioning comes into being when what has hitherto been taken for granted loses its seeming obviousness. What Strauss does not say, though, is that a thing can become *questionable* without becoming *doubt-*

---

<sup>7</sup> Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1950), 84.

*ful*. To become questionable, in fact, means: to reveal a surprising strangeness that requires us to look more deeply into things, that is, to question them. Not because they are dubious or suspicious, but because they are inexhaustibly deep. To put it another way: the very strangeness of things is really their deepest familiarity. It is like the wild smell of the open air that reassures you that, at last, you are no longer in an artificially controlled environment, comfortable and deadening, but back in the real world. The inexhaustible depth of meaning in things exceeds the human mind, yet it is only when it is bathing in the flood of this excess that the human mind is in its proper element. It is like an unexplored ocean where, once you have gotten into the middle of it on your tiny raft, you feel more at home than you did when securely fastened in your comfortable routine on dry land.

## 7. Philosophical seeking: the natural knowledge of God

Seeking is sailing into the wonderful strangeness of the world, and this sailing is the deepest impulse animating the desire to understand. If it were not, the dignity of the person would be reduced to something less than himself: genes, drives, emotions, the struggle for survival, and the like. As it is, the desire to understand is a defining mark of the dignity of the human person in his transcendence. It has an *ethos* of its own that, if we disrespect, we disrespect the person himself. It is the *ethos* of taking questions seriously on their own terms, of trying to understand the properly intellectual reasons why the questions arise, and so of taking a fresh look at reality as a whole. Of course, in doing that, one finds, or often finds, the beginning of an answer to the question, because what one sees when one looks at the whole picture is just that – the whole picture, including, then, the elements that are needed for answering the question. But this is like saying that answering the question means becoming re-acquainted with the whole as a whole in its inexhaustible originality. For this inexhaustible originality is itself the very intelligibility of the real that makes answers (and questions) possible in the first place.

All of which is to say, in our own words, what Plato and Aristotle said when they affirmed that wonder is the principle [*arche*] of philosophy. To wonder is to be awakened, with sudden force,

to the new, the unexpected, the ever-greater. When the wonderful appears, I am, so to say, thrown back on myself by the shock. I am forced to stagger backwards from my usual concerns, and it is just then that enough space opens for the world to emerge. By the same token, the world that opens up to me is not simply a projection of my intentionality, a horizon that indefinitely withdraws the more I advance. The world is a horizon, but it is a horizon in which the fullness we seek, the fullness whose finding is the comprehension of the world as a whole, has already been given, as a promise, in the experience of wonder that opens the horizon of the world in the first place.

The metaphor of shock, of shuddering, that we have just used is really much more than a metaphor. This is why Socrates defines wonder as a *pathos* in the same passage of the *Theaetetus* where he calls wonder the beginning of philosophy (155d2 – 3). And yet, though the impact of the wonderful comes from outside you, it is not simply an exterior blow. In fact, wonderment makes you *interiorly* aware of yourself – as someone who cannot be confined within the strict limits of a conventional routine, but whose wonder opens him to the inexhaustible fullness of being, to the world in all its breadth. The shock of wonder thus gives you to yourself – as a seeker, a thinker, a creative doer, as a person (who partially constitutes the „horizontal” of the world). At the same time, all of your seeking, thinking, and doing is awakened, sustained, and shaped by the impact of the wonderful itself.

Wonderment gives you to yourself. It is thus the condition in which you discover who you are, body and spirit. Wonderment is an experience of lived bodiliness. Indeed, it is *the* constitutive matrix of lived bodiliness – which is among the reasons why Plato calls it a *pathos*. What is at stake, however, is not just any lived bodiliness. There is no such thing as „just any lived bodiliness” If there were, the technological mindset would be right about the indifferent neutrality of embodied being. Since, however, it is not right, we have to say that wonder constitutes lived bodiliness as our primary, concrete mode of being in the world and so of understanding. For to understand is precisely to give the world’s irreducible otherness back to itself in and through the intimacy of our lived bodily awareness of it. This is why, for example, the Bible describes sex as a „knowing” It is also why, to take ano-

ther example, philosophers have much to learn from craftspeople, whose patiently acquired skill is a highly refined, sensitive, and delicate organ for being intimate with the world in its surprising strangeness (unlike the technologist, the craftsman has to become lovingly familiar with, and respectful of, the nature of the materials he works with).

When I come to myself as a whole in the *pathos* of wonder, I am being given to myself by something *in* the world. Implicit in this experience, though, is the awareness of being given to myself by God *through* the world, which God opens for me in that very giving, constituting me and the world as correlates by means of his creative action. This suggests that the desire to understand is the desire to see God appearing *as God* from within the world. It is, in principle, already the „natural knowledge of God” But, as we have just seen, this natural knowledge does not bypass embodiment, but arises within, and is shaped by, lived bodiliness. And this, in turn, suggests a stunning implication. For, once we see that God in fact fully intends to appear as God from within the world in the Incarnation of his Son, we can say that the desire for understanding, the „natural knowledge of God”, unbeknown to itself, is an echoing answer, buried in the depths of man as *imago Dei*, to God’s own appearing, indeed, speaking as God from within the world through the enfleshment of his Word, Jesus Christ. The desire to understand is the beginning of the natural knowledge of God, and the natural knowledge of God is the beginning of faith.

We noted above that the „natural knowledge of God” is a response to the Word’s manifestation of the Father in creatures, which is in turn the first step on the road to his Incarnation. We could go so far as to say that the natural knowledge of God *is* the act of faith, so to say „before” the decisive criterion that formally constitutes faith as faith is finally given through the Incarnation of the Word: the revelation that the „unknown God” whom we had been seeking was really the Father of Jesus Christ all along. True, it is only in hindsight, from the perspective of faith, that we can say, with the deepest satisfaction, „Ah, yes, I was seeking someone just like him, only I did not know, could not have known, that that was what I was doing”. And yet, that is just the point: within the ever-greater discontinuity between natural knowledge of God

and faith, there is also a continuity between them, because natural knowledge, looking back from the vantage point of faith, is able to see, indeed, is the ability to see, that it was secretly hoping that the God it perceived in creatures would be just like the Father whom Jesus reveals him to be. By the same token, we can say that faith is eminently reasonable, indeed, is the inner culmination, the highest act, of reason itself. The „natural knowledge of God” that is reason’s core (see *Fides et Ratio*, fn. 28) is nothing other than the innate capacity, implanted in us by God, to make an intelligent act of faith in him as the source of all meaning when he reveals himself in the flesh of Jesus as the Progenitor of the Word.

### 8. Why theologians should study philosophy

This suggests that there is a deep connection between philosophical seeking and theological seeking. Precisely for this reason, Anselm – and all of Catholic theology with him – insists that theologians have to be *seekers*. Indeed, theologians like Anselm know that the philosophical quest is the same as what is called the „natural desire for God” that can be sated only in the beatific vision: „For there is a natural desire in man to know the cause when he sees the effect, and this is what gives rise to wonder in human beings. Therefore, if the intellect cannot attain to the first cause of things, the desire of nature will be frustrated”<sup>8</sup>. „Grace presupposes nature”, as the old Scholastic axiom says, and human nature is a seeking one. The desire to understand *is* the natural desire for God: „The God who made the world and all things in it... established that all nations] might seek [*zetein*] God, if perchance they might grope their way to him and find him, since he is not far from each of us, for in him we live, and move, and have our being, as also some of your poets have said, ‘for we are of his race’” (Acts 17:24-28).

God addresses his enfleshed Word to intelligent seekers (all human beings, for man, by nature, is an intelligent seeker), and he does not wish them to accept it without being inwardly satisfied

---

<sup>8</sup> ST I, 12, 1.

that yes, indeed, it corresponds to their seeking. Corresponds, not because it answers all their questions in a way that eliminates seeking, but precisely because it shows God to be ever-greater than whatever they could explicitly understand and desire at any given moment. Paradoxically, the only God who could truly satisfy the desire to understand is a God who is infinitely more than the satisfaction of human desire, just as, conversely, the only desire to understand that could be worthy of the name is a desire to be perpetually exceeded by the infinite, which is to say, to acknowledge, in praise, reverence, and service, the majestic glory of God *as God*.

The theologian, for his part, has a responsibility to do his work from the perspective of the intelligent seeker to whom God's Word is addressed. Indeed, he has to be *the seeker par excellence*. He has to *be*, in an embodied way, the philosophical desire for understanding receiving its fulfillment in revelation on behalf of all intelligent seekers. But, someone might ask, hasn't theology *replaced* philosophy as the *highest* form of knowledge available to human beings? To be sure, when God speaks about himself and his plan, what he says does possess a supreme authority for us. God's self-revelation in Christ is what determines the basic meanings of all things, just as Christ himself is the basic meaning of all things, in the sense explained above. And yet, God's speaking to us in his Word is inseparable from the Word's enfleshment in the womb of Mary. Which means that the Word himself has already incarnated himself into the human wonderment of the philosopher, and it is the theologian's job to catch up with him. The theologian, precisely in order to be a good one, has to feel his way into the attitude of the truly human man (which comes to the light for the first time in this act), into the lived *pathos* of wonder, because in doing so the theologian encounters God as he can be encountered in no other way, namely, in the divine humility manifested in the Incarnation. The theologian, as John Paul II has told us in the citation from *The Theology of the Body* above, is the one who rediscovers lived bodiliness as constitutive of rationality from within participation in the lived bodiliness in which Christ revealed the Father's love. The very thrust of this participation is thus to make us want to be true human beings, to love humanity passionately, ours and others, as the pope himself does. And yet

this is no vague humanism, either for the pope or for us. It is precisely the pure humanness of the image of God that makes it a mirror in which God can appear *in his pure divinity*. As Maximus the Confessor says, God and man are *paradigms* for each other<sup>9</sup>. And yet, when God appears in his pure divinity, what the pure divinity shows itself to be is a love that so desires the image to be itself that it itself becomes the image in order to show itself therein. The theologian, then, is not being a theologian unless he participates in God's incarnatory love for the image – first and foremost by reentering it and rediscovering its true nature in his own person from within Christ's own embodiment. And central to this rediscovery is the experience of embodied awareness, an experience of which philosophy is a central expression, as we have seen. In a word, the theologian has to be a philosopher because he loves God's incarnate Son above all other things.

Our opening question was why the theologian should concern himself with philosophy. Some might answer the question by arguing that philosophy is a mine of „conceptual tools” that are „useful” for the theologian. Others might point to the supposed apologetical value of theology: philosophy „proves” certain „preambles of faith”, such as the existence of God, and so assures theology a solid rational basis on which to make its „supernatural” claims. Both of these answers contain some truth, but they are incomplete. They are incomplete because they overlook the way in which the theologian has an *ex professo* interest in philosophy *for its own sake*. If the theologian knows by participating in the body of the incarnate Word, his theology necessarily thrusts him into the place where the Son of God himself wonders humanly at the greatness of his Father – where he becomes „reacquainted” with the Father from the human point of view at his mother Mary's knee: „In that hour, he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, «I confess to thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for so it was pleasing in thy sight»” (Lk 10:21). But, as we saw above, it is just in this human wonder that the Son expresses in time his eternal self-reception from the Father, in which all of reality is comprehended and gets

<sup>9</sup> See Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua* 10 (PG 91), 1113B – C.

its intelligibility. Thus, precisely in order to think with the „mind” of Christ, the theologian has to assume the guardianship of human wonder – to enter into it, remain in it, and cultivate it, so as to keep open a space for Christ to enter in and use to gather up, and express in time, *the* eternal event in which he comprehends the whole universe as his Father’s gift (and so grounds as Word its intelligibility).

It is precisely from the vantage point of the „supernatural” that the natural (finally) appears in its true light, as an inexhaustible depth to be wondered at, that is, to be philosophized about. To be a theologian is to be where philosophical wonder springs eternal (and where it alone can be sustained). Jesus therefore calls theologians to show the intelligibility of faith by displaying, in their own theological practice, how philosophy comes to fruition *as itself* precisely at the extreme point of revelation, where God’s Word becomes flesh. Theology, rightly understood, does not replace philosophy, but, instead, lets itself be taken as the place for the philosophical attitude to be born, to be maintained, and to come to fruition as itself – which it does precisely by being given over to the human expression of the Son’s eternal wonderment at the Father. By the same token, the theologian is not someone who, having found God, now has all the answers that the philosopher, who has not yet found God, is still seeking. Rather, the theologian is someone who is obliged to keep alive the philosophical attitude precisely where it is most pure, namely, in its posture of wonder. Indeed, the theologian needs philosophy. Note: *needs* it. The theologian is not just doing philosophy a favor. The theologian has to learn from the philosopher, just as the Son of God had to learn how to wonder humanly at his Father from his Mother. Unless he can wonder *humanly*, unless he can be philosophical, the theologian will fail in his most proper task, which is to be at the service of the eternal wonder of the Father and Son in the Holy Spirit – who *is* the trinitarian wonder – and to let this eternal wonder shine forth as what it is, the light that „illumines every man coming into the world” (Jn 1:9).

## Conclusion

I began this essay with William Portier’s assessment of the potentialities of what he dubs „evangelical Catholicism” I also noted Portier’s concern of „retheologizing” theology, too long a captive to the secular social sciences. I then tried to build a case that any such retheologizing, if it is to be successful, must include a „rephilosophizing” of theology as well, while attempting to show how this concern for philosophy emerges organically from the very work of retheologizing theology itself. The philosophy that so emerges, in fact, is nothing but an articulation – itself concretely embodied – of the concrete, primordial act of thinking enfolded within the Christian experience of assimilation to the body of Jesus in the Church. In this way, I hope to have allayed some of the deep suspicion of philosophy shared by many older Catholic theologians, who associate philosophy with bad memories of rationalistic Scholasticism, and many younger ones, whose post-modern proclivities incline them away from what they take to be „grand narratives” Philosophy is not ideology, but engagement with the whole: *ressourcement*, in a transparency that is akin to the childlikeness that Jesus asks of us in the Gospels.

**Nota o Autorze:** Adrian J. Walker jest wizytującym profesorem teologii Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family at The Catholic University of America in Washington. Jego zainteresowania obejmują naukę i religię, filozofię przyrody oraz kwestię technologii. Jest także profesjonalnym tłumaczem. Jego najbardziej znanym przekładem jest pierwszy tom *Jezusa z Nazaretu* papieża Benedykta XVI. Jest redaktorem amerykańskiej edycji Międzynarodowego Przeglądu Teologicznego *Communio*.

## **Bibliografia**

- John Paul II, *The Boundary Between Original Innocence and Redemption, w: The Theology of the Body. Human Love in the Divine Plan*, Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1997, s. 32-34.
- Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua* 10 (PG 91), 1113B – C.
- Maximus the Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* (PG 90), 621C.
- Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* [ – ST], I, 1, 3, ad 2.
- Portier W.L., , *Here Come the Evangelical Catholics*, *Communio* 31, no. 1(Spring 2004).
- Strauss L., *Natural Right and History*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1950.